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A contribution to the laying of foundations for dialogue between socially responsible management schools

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the outcome of a research process carried out in a public school of management whose strategy from its very origin has been thoroughly focused on social responsibility. The objective was to better map out the socially responsible contribution of the school to its stakeholders in order to enable dialogue with a group of other schools of management. The starting point of the research project is the 6th principle of PRME, according to which "We will participate and support dialogue and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumer, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global responsibility and sustainability".

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1. Introduction

This paper presents the outcome of a research project undertaken in a state-run business management school, with an initial and ongoing strategy focused firmly on social responsibility. The project's objective was to produce a better map of the school's contribution to its stakeholders in terms of social responsibility and to use this as a basis for dialogue with a group of other management schools. The research project's start point is the 6th principle of PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education), which states "*We will facilitate and support dialog and debate among educators, students, businesses, governments, consumers, media, civil society organizations, and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues relating to global social responsibility and sustainability*".

This research project was undertaken by Iaelyon, the in-university management school created sixty years ago at *Université de Jean Moulin Lyon 3*. The school is responsible for contributing to the life of 7200 students, 45,000 graduates, 150 permanent faculty staff and employees, and 800 socio-economic partners. Right from its inception, this business school has strived to embody social responsibility, all the more so given its main state school mission of helping students from various backgrounds access executive positions. The school is also in charge of enhancing diversity and upward mobility among the leaders of a region where companies and organizations are coping with the hurdles and challenges of globalization. The

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school's 60th anniversary was an opportunity to take time out for deliberation and research in order to take stock of the school's achievements in the scope of its founding values and to start a dialogue with several other management schools.

1.1. Rationale behind the Iaelyon research project

The Iaelyon research project in the field of socially responsible business schools follows a somewhat different scheme compared with research into the change process in management schools moving from traditional strategies to socially responsible strategies, as in the case of Aston Business School (Cooper, Parkes, & Blewitt, 2014). In the Iaelyon case, accreditation was not intended to be a driver of change (Scott, 1995), because although Iaelyon, as a state-run management school, needs to enhance its social responsibility (Casile & Davis-Blake, 2002), social responsibility was already at the core of the strategy and of all actions. Indeed, the objective of the research project undertaken by the Iaelyon management school was to give more visibility to a socially responsible strategy that has been implemented in different ways over the last 60 years, in order to facilitate cross-pollination with other management schools, such as Aston Business School and others in the PRME network.

We should point out at this stage that business schools have always claimed an important role in terms of social responsibility (Pierson, 1959). Back in the 19th century, business schools were created to produce well-educated, fair businessmen, responsible for running large companies contributing to the wealth of society (Chandler, 1977). Joseph Wharton insisted in 1881 that business schools students be of "high moral character" (Guyot, 2012).

After the 1929 economic crisis, however, the need for more overt approaches to social responsibility became evident. In particular, Wallace Donham, dean of Harvard Business School, introduced business ethics into business school curricula, along with business education by case study. He consideres hard-and-fast laws to be an insufficient basis for practicing fair business. In the wake of Chester Barnard's advocating the enforcement of elementary conditions for business morals (Barnard, 1938, 1958), Howard Bowen (Bowen, 1953) theorized and taught Business Ethics at the University of Illinois, contributing to academic recognition of the discipline through the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1967, this strategic initiative resulted in the officialization by AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) of Business Ethics as a cross-disciplinary pillar of management education, stating that all management disciplines should include social responsibility in their curricula. Since then, the upsurge in economic and financial crises has contributed to scaling up the widespread of the social responsibility approach in business schools in an attempt to restore their legitimacy, which governments and the general public had been chipping away at (Jones, 1980), in particular after the fall of Enron in 2001 and the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis.

The stakeholder approach to enabling sustainable performance, as formalized by Freeman (Freeman, 1984) and now taught in most business schools (Lepineux, 2005) insists on the managers' role of negotiating performance with a variety of internal and external partners: shareholders, employees, staff representatives, customers, suppliers, subcontractors, non-governmental organizations, and civil society. The integrated stakeholder approach to Corporate Social Responsibility is a response to the traditional Friedman plea for responsibility toward shareholders alone. Clarkson (Clarkson, 1995), has shown that managers do indeed strive for dialogue with a variety of stakeholders and entitle them with the organizations' benefits in order to enable their contribution to company performance. It is therefore necessary to identify and categorize relevant, salient stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997; Hommel & Thomas, 2014), to analyze each one's legitimacy and power, and to advocate the importance of negotiating skills for all business school students.

There are two different ways of ensuring stakeholders are taken account of in business schools:

- Supplementing the business school strategy by further socially responsible actions, e.g., actions aimed at enhancing diversity or recycling waste
- Integrating social responsibility to the stakeholder through a shared strategy (Porter & Kramer, 2011)

We assume that the network members are mainly adopting the second approach to social responsibility. Indeed, an underlying hypothesis is that an integrated, exemplarity-based socially responsible strategy speaks for itself (Rosenwald et al.), as opposed to showing responsibility only when one can afford it (through philanthropy), or when there is next to no limit to public funding of the school (Carnegie).

1.2. Categorization of the Iaelyon management school stakeholders

While inspired by the Freeman stakeholder theory, several authors insist on the need for business schools to incorporate a more integrated and liberal view of management education (Thomas et al., 2014) and to be more proactive (Hommel and Thomas, 2014) by "examining who are the business school key stakeholders and what is the role of a broad stakeholder orientation in business school development". This approach has also been stated in the EFMD principles (EFMD Manifesto of January 24th, 2012): "Business schools should take a multiple stakeholder perspective in the design of their programs and research activities. Schools should be transformed into moral institutions that perpetuate strong values, a clear vision and open processes in governance, and strategic change". Seven categories of business school stakeholder are generally found in relevant literature: Students and graduates (A), Companies and organizations (B), Staff (C), Scholar-practitioner communities

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