The International Journal of Management Education 15 (2017) 219–237

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

The International Journal of Management Education

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijme

Room for improvement: Using GRI principles to explore potential for advancing PRME SIP reporting

Chantal Hervieux*, Margaret McKee, Cathy Driscoll

Saint Mary's University, Sobey School of Business, 923 Robie St. Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H3C3, Canada

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 2 December 2016
Received in revised form 12 March 2017
Accepted 21 March 2017

Keywords:
Responsible management education
PRME
PRME champions
Sustainability
Reporting
GRI

ABSTRACT

We analyse the Sharing in Progress (SIP) reports of 14 signatories to the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) to explore how reporting might be improved in ways that are both credible and useful for business schools and their stakeholders. We apply the broad principles of the G4 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines of the Global Reporting InitiativeTM, a widely used international reporting standard, to assess our sample's first and third reports in terms of content and quality. Our longitudinal analysis reveals some improvements in signatory reporting, including significant inclusion of stakeholders, expanded discussion of local and positive impact, timeliness in reporting and clarity of language. However, we find Champion reports include limited reporting of social and economic impact, challenges faced in PRME implementation, and information to facilitate comparability and external assessment of report reliability. We see potential for improving SIP reporting and offer suggestions in support of PRME's goals to promote continuous improvement, a learning community and useful progress reporting to stakeholders. We also present ideas for future research.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Business schools have an important role and responsibility in creating and influencing the mind-sets of present and future business leaders (Gitsham, 2011). Some go so far as to suggest that business schools have a “duty” to restore a systematic nurturing of the ethical capacity in students at all levels (Akrivou & Bradbury-Huang, 2015). A focus on responsible management education has been described as representing a “wave of change” related to these efforts (Forray & Leigh, 2012, p. 297). Many business leaders today recognise that it is through responsible management education that organisational change can be stimulated, and that this change needs to happen if ethical leadership and sustainability issues are to be effectively addressed (Lilley, Barker & Harris, 2014: Sroufe, Sivasubramaniam, Ramos, & Saiia, 2014; Gitsham, 2011). However, there is a concern that some business schools are engaging in responsible management rhetoric without responsible management substance (Cornuel & Hommel, 2015; Waddock, Rasche, Werhane, & Unruh, 2011). According to critical management scholars, not only do business schools have a role to play, they have a responsibility to accept their own failings, for they educated the leaders implicated in “many of the recent spectacular failings of corporate governance and financial institutions” (Louw, 2015, p. 185). They must learn how to authentically embed ethics and sustainability within their business strategies (United Nations PRME, Ashridge & EABIS, 2010). In other words, business schools must change their own mind-sets and, from there, the mind-sets of the future leaders they take responsibility to train.

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: Chantal.hervieux@smu.ca (C. Hervieux), Margaret.McKee@smu.ca (M. McKee), Cathy.Driscoll@smu.ca (C. Driscoll).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2017.03.011
1472-8117/© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

The United Nations Global Compact's Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) have been perceived as having the potential to bring important transformation by "broadening the range of institutions engaging with sustainability" (Perry & Win, 2013, p. 49). According to Forray, Leigh, and Kenworthy (2015: 293), "the PRME community is moving forward at an accelerated pace," with currently 650 academic institutions from over 85 countries being signatories (PRME., 2015a). Whereas the relevance of responsible management education is well recognised (Forray & Leigh, 2012; Parkes & Blewitt, 2011), the effectiveness of PRME in promoting the type of paradigmatic change that business leaders and academics are calling for remains to be established (Alcaraz & Thiruvattal, 2010; Louw, 2015). PRME itself acknowledges that since its inception there has been debate over how this should be done, as the six principles simply provide a guiding framework for PRME implementation. They also freely admit that "no one school has yet to successfully demonstrate broad scale implementation" (PRME., 2015b: para 1).

Given the upcoming 10th anniversary of PRME, we thought it fitting to explore and reflect on one important activity of all signatories, their Sharing in Progress (SIP) reporting. With sustainability reporting in general becoming more multidimensional and integrated (Hahn & Kühnen, 2013), we explore how PRME SIP reports fare when analysed against the GRI G4 principles and reflect on how this assessment might help to improve the content and quality of SIP reporting in ways that are both credible and useful for business schools and their stakeholders.

We elected to study the reports of PRME champions as these schools were some of the earliest signatories to the PRME principles. They have also made the conscious decision to publicly commit themselves to being PRME leaders and to devote resources to support the realisation of the PRME mission. As self-declared champions, we felt they were more likely to have high standards for SIP reporting, and be more active than some other signatories. As such, we felt there could be much to learn from this group's reports about their experience in developing and implementing initiatives within their own educational institutions. It would not be surprising for other signatories to look to PRME champions as role models and for guidance in reporting when they choose to become PRME signatories.

Given some of the past studies that have identified shortcomings in SIP reporting (see for example Louw, 2015), we thought it might be informative to assess Champion reports over time to see if any improvements have been realized. We also felt such an approach might also identify possible areas for future improvement We assess the Champion SIP reports using the principles of the G4 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). ™ The GRI is viewed by many as the "global standard" in sustainability reporting (Hahn & Kühnen, 2013, p. 5) and it is the standard that is being used by 82% of the world's 250 largest corporations (GRI, 2016a). These Guidelines are designed "to be universally applicable to all organizations, large and small, across the world" and to promote "a high degree of transparency and consistency that is required to make information useful and credible to markets and society" (GRI G4, 2013, p. 3). Recognizing that reporting according to the GRI G4 standard is not a requirement of PRME signatories, our focus is on the application of the high level GRI reporting *principles* related to report content and report quality rather than a direct application of the GRI structure to PRME SIP reporting.

We aim to contribute to the relatively limited study of sustainability reporting in the not-for-profit sector (Hahn & Kühnen, 2013), as well as answer the call for longitudinal study of sustainability reporting (Fortanier, Kolk, & Pinkse, 2011). More specific to PRME, we build on the limited study of the content and quality of signatory reporting. Thus, our objective is to assess how PRME Champion SIP reports fare when analysed against the GRI G4 principles, and reflect on how this assessment might help to improve the content and quality of SIP reporting in ways that are both credible and useful for business schools and their stakeholders.

We begin our paper by briefly presenting the relevant literature and the contribution our study seeks to make to the developing PRME literature. We then present our study methodology, share our results and discuss our findings. We discuss the limitations of our study, with particular emphasis on our decision to use the GRI G4 reporting principles. Lastly, given PRME's stated focus on "continuous improvement", "learning communities", and "reporting progress to stakeholders", we will also address how we see evidence of schools incorporating feedback, and learning from failure in their reports (PRME., 2015c: para. 4). We conclude with recommendations on what might be done to improve the content and quality of future SIP reporting by PRME champions and by PRME signatories in general. We also present some suggestions for future research.

1. Literature review

In the following section, we briefly review the literature on sustainability reporting (SR), with a particular focus on the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). We also briefly consider the critique of SR and some of the literature on greenwashing. We then briefly review some of the literature on PRME and discuss the requirements for SIP reporting by PRME signatories, as well as the findings of the small number of studies carried out by other scholars of PRME SIP reporting.

1.1. Sustainability reporting

SR, like social and environmental accounting (SEA), developed as a way for organizations to communicate their social and environmental responsibilities to a broader set of stakeholders (Gray, Adams, & Owen, 2013). As such, SR has been described as a "public expression of socially responsible behaviour" (Fernandez-Feijoo, Romero, & Ruiz, 2014, p. 244), and is becoming standard practice among firms from developed as well as developing countries (Barkemeyer, Preuss, & Lee, 2015; Fernandez-Feijoo et al., 2014). It has been described as a form of alternative governance; a soft regulation that can provide an alternative

Download English Version:

https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4938720

Download Persian Version:

https://daneshyari.com/article/4938720

Daneshyari.com