Understanding Responsible Management: Emerging Themes and Variations from European Business School Programs

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Abstract Our literature review reveals a call for changes in business education to encourage *responsible management*. The Principles for Responsible Management Education were developed in 2007 under the coordination of the United Nations Global Compact, AACSB International, and other leading academic institutions for the purpose of promoting responsible management in education. Literature review shows that responsible management as such remains undefined. This gap in literature leads potentially to an absence of clarity in research, education, and management, regarding responsible management among scholars and practitioners. The aim of this research is to develop a preliminary definition of responsible management, exploring the use of the term in literature and practice. Its objective is to define the main characteristics of responsible management aimed at creating a platform for discussion so as to help organizations clarify their own vision of responsible management. It builds on preliminary findings from literature review that responsible management remains undefined. As business school students are primary stakeholders in management education and are future management leaders, and as there have not been empirical studies to date that examine business school students' understanding of responsible management, a qualitative study was conducted with European business school students concerning their understanding of the term. A framework summarizing perceptions of responsible management characteristics and broad approach of responsible management definition were created and used to introduce a draft theoretical platform for discussion on this topic.

Keywords Business school students · Corporate social responsibility (CSR) · Ethics · Management education · Responsible management definition · Soft Skills · Sustainable development · Management triple bottom line · Principles for responsible management

Abbreviations

CDA	Critical discourse analysis
MBA	Master of business administration
MSc	Master of social sciences
PRME	Principles for responsible management education
CSR	Corporate social responsibility

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Problem Definition and Objective Statement

A Call for Responsible Management

Over the last few decades increasing research has been conducted on corporate attention to a diversity of topics and issues linked to what this research will define as *responsible management* (Jeannings 1999; Senge et al. 2004; Webber 2009; Stiglitz 2009, 2012; Nonet et al. 2015).

Since literature does not present a specific definition of responsible management but instead includes diverse

topics in it, our literature review looks at a diversity of definition approaches that are related to the concept of responsible management and summarizes them.

As business school students are primary stakeholders in management education and are future management leaders, and as there have not been empirical studies to date that examine business school students' understanding of responsible management, a qualitative study was conducted with European business school students concerning their understanding of the term. Our study asked business school students to define responsible management. The findings create a basis for potential further research and comparative studies with other groups. During our study, these students' answers include several aspects that are mentioned in the literature (under concepts such as ethics, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable development). Student responses indicated that their conceptualization of responsible management was characterized by an emphasis on enhancing the need for soft skills development, the importance of systemic thinking, and a holistic approach to conducting business; some even mentioned the importance of spiritual alignment as a component of responsible management. Some research about millennials indicates that they highlight the importance of personal and organizational values (Deloitte 2016) and this is aligned with our findings. Their responses indicate their belief that responsible management is developed at the individual level first and then at the group level. As its conceptualization is systemically based and encompasses a number of components, our findings have indicated that a simplistic definition is insufficient, and we have therefore developed what we term a definition set, meaning that a number of criteria are incorporated in the definition. It is based in the development of moral values, soft skills, systemic thinking, and a shared vision that is respectful participative and inclusive. Responsible Management is embedded in corporate practice, and is empowering to stakeholders. It relies on continuous learning and improvement. Our conceptualization of stakeholders is based on Freeman (2010) and Elkington (1997), encompassing both resource-based and market-based views, and refers to anyone who is influenced by a firm's actions, either directly or indirectly.

Increasingly, organizations are innovating worldwide toward various aspects of what we label responsible management including notions such as practical wisdom (Koehn 1995; Holt 2006), ethics, corporate social responsibility, sustainable development, and corporate philanthropy. "Certain firms seem to already believe in a future change of economic paradigm. They create principles of sustainable development or they progressively integrate this new philosophy 'of responsibility'" (Asselineau and Piré-Lechalard 2008, p. 8).

Management is being reinvented by many authors, some of them focusing more on the social responsibilities of business (Avram and Kühne 2008), others pinpointing environmental accountability or ethics and philanthropy (Meijs 2003), and yet others reinventing the return on investment and enlarging the vision from shareholder management to a larger meaning of business responsibility (O'Toole and Bennis 2009; Petrick 2011; Hilliard 2013). The literature seems to reflect current transformations of business as usual toward a new form of capitalism, frequently characterized as a shift from an approach of shareholder primacy toward a more comprehensive and inclusive approach broadly evaluating the impact of business on all stakeholders (McDonough and Braungart 2002; Schwartz and Kenneth 2010; Martin 2011; McGrath 2013; Denning 2013).

As an increasing number of worldwide organizations are moving toward integrating responsible management principles, scholars have turned their attention toward business schools to examine how managers are currently educated and how business schools' curricula could encourage such management practice (Gosling and Mintzberg 2004; Mintzberg 2004; Bennis and O'Toole 2005; Goshal 2005; Waddock 2007; O'Toole and Bennis 2009; Alcaraz and Thiruvattal 2010, Martell Sotomayor 2011; Silver 2012; Kelley and Nahser 2014). A growing number of academicians and business leaders urge for a change in education to better prepare future managers and leaders, by supporting responsible management in business education:

> Today's social, economic, and environmental problems make the social role of education more and more important [...] the retired CEO of Deloitte and Touche...claimed that nowadays the necessity for ethics in the teaching of accounting is undisputable. Experts as well as professors are responsible for the process of restoring the ethics and morals of accounting and auditing, in which setting a personal example has the greatest importance (Amman et al. 2012, p. 19).

By 1977 the impact of Management education on its participants' values was the subject of scrutiny:

> It is no longer possible to retain the image of management education as an objective, value-free transmission of knowledge. The political and ethical consciousness-raising of the past decade has heightened awareness that management education transmits values, whether explicitly or implicitly (Thomas 1977, p. 484).

While the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education have, during the past several years, helped to embed responsible management at

business schools, our research reveals an absence of a definition of responsible management in the literature. As many authors criticize business schools and MBA programs for failing to encourage managers to behave responsibly (Cowe 2000; Etzioni 2002; Garten 2005; Holland 2009; Segal 2011; Osiemo 2012; Hibbert and Cunliffe 2015), our main purpose is to understand how business school students perceive and define responsible management.

Business school education aims at transforming its students and giving them the skills to manage or lead successfully. Some international business schools have recently created programs to encourage their participants to manage or lead more responsibly (Marshall et al. 2011; Crossan et al. 2013; Waddock and Lozano 2013). Although recent research shows that millennials value the role of business beyond profit-making (Deloitte 2016), "millennials feel that most businesses have no ambition beyond profit, and there are distinct differences in what they believe the purpose of business should be and what they perceive it to currently be" (p. 2) no research presents their understanding of business beyond profit-making. Our literature review reveals no empirical research previously done at business schools to assess their students understanding of responsible management (Martell Sotomayor 2011; Nonet 2013). An article recently published in the Journal of Business Ethics comments on the changes suggested by Thomas's 1977 research and show the need for practical research and solutions, almost 30 years later: "The academic discussion on values in management education has been ongoing for decades, yet the topic is seemingly as relevant—and unresolved at least in terms of what it means in practice—as it was in 1977" (Fougères et al. 2014, p. 175).

Prior to this research, a doctoral pilot study was done by one of our authors, in which 21 business school participants (5 faculty members, 6 alumni, and 10 students) were interviewed on their definition of responsible management and the changes they would suggest at their business school to so as to align the school's curriculum to match their understanding of responsible management. Study results showed that the student population has the highest expectations regarding the need for change at their school, and their definition were more exhaustive than those from the faculty or alumni (Nonet 2013). Based on these initial results, further research was conducted with business school students to obtain a deeper understanding of their definition of responsible management. Our purpose is to collect and create a framework and a broad definition set introducing responsible management's main characteristics using empirical data. Empiricism says that "knowledge is based on experience" and that "knowledge is tentative and probabilistic, subject to continued revision and

falsification" (Shelley 2006, pp. 338–339). This broad approach to responsible management's definition could be used as a basis for discussion inside schools and corporate organizations to help them define responsible management through ongoing revision of the emerging definition set offered by this research, as applied to their specific organizational culture.

What is Responsible Management?

Those who conduct research about responsible management will be familiar with a recurring question: What is Responsible Management? Although a growing number of studies on the transformations are originating from the implementation of Principles for Responsible Management Education (Bendell 2007; Rusinko 2010; Stead and Stead 2010; Wals 2010; Solitander et al. 2012; Young and Nagpal 2013), there is apparently no accepted definition, either in a review of the literature or in the Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) for the term "responsible management."

In 2007, the PRME Task Force (developed under the coordination of the United Nations Global Compact and leading academic institutions) developed a set of six principles "to lay the foundation for the global platform for responsible management education" (PRME 2007). Yet, the PRME six principles do not include a proper formal definition of responsible management. A conversation between one of our authors with Jonas Haertle, current Head of the UN PRME Secretariat, confirmed that a definition of responsible management would be useful for discussions and group brainstorming. Recent literature highlights the importance of definitions for the development of students' values:

> We aim to show how this approach, when applied to pedagogy in a business school context, helps both teachers and students in exploring and exposing values in management education by problematizing dominant business school vocabularies, thereby leading to a development of moral imagination (Fougères et al. 2014, p. 177).

Creating a definition set of responsible management's main characteristics would help UN PRME business school members, as well as non-member business schools to define and craft their own approach to responsible management and as well help students and faculty to imagine and clarify their own values.

A recent study about responsibility in China describes the global growing awareness of all levels of responsibility:

> There is then an interlocking network of general responsibilities, consisting of duties and obligations

associated with different positions, arenas, and levels of action. These are supported by legal provisions and moral norms and apply to all dimensions of human being's actions and consequences of these actions. As our practice has developed, so too, has our awareness of consequences and responsibility for our behavior. Hence, we have seen an increasing emphasis on environmental responsibility and corporate social responsibility in recent decades (Lu and Koehn 2015, p. 609).

Responsible leadership (as distinct from management) is defined as standing up for what one believes is right (Hibbert and Cunliffe 2015). Literature mentions the importance of value-based and moral decision-making sharing ideals of societal well-being and a sense of accountability (responsiveness) and stakeholder-orientation (Doh and Stumpf 2005; Maak and Pless 2006; Pless and Maak 2011).

As we enlarged the scope of our literature review to related topics, we found an extensive panorama of theories about *corporate social responsibility* (Klonoski 1991; Melé 2008; Martell Sotomayor 2011), an abundance of approaches (Garriga and Melé 2004; Windsor 2006), and diverse descriptions of the models (Carroll 1999; Fisher 2004). Corporate social responsibility can be called *corporate conscience*, *corporate citizenship*, *social performance*, or *sustainable responsible business* (Wood 1991). Some authors denounce a difference between the Canadian (Montreal school of CSR), the Continental European, and the Anglo-Saxon approaches to CSR (Williams and Aiguilera 2008, p. 453):

> The field of empirical CSR research generally has been hampered by the lack of a consistent definition of the construct of CSR, as well as its operationalization and measurement, as recently pointed out by McWilliams et al. (2006) and Rodriguez et al. (2006).

These authors suggest that the lack of a universal definition about CSR affects research, in that there exist only a few empirical studies that show cross-national differences in managerial attitudes toward CSR. This lack of consistent findings might be explained, in part, by the lack of a universal definition of CSR (Williams and Aiguilera 2008, pp. 467–468). In Europe, the debate regarding the definition of CSR is quite heterogeneous as well (Habisch et al. 2005).

In the French literature, however, the concept of *management responsable* is succinctly introduced. In *Ethique et Responsabilité Sociale* (2010), Anne-Marie Fray and Richard Soparnot explain their view of the responsible manager:

> We can define the responsible manager as a manager who is no longer irresponsible… open to his surroundings, a sense of citizenship, close to his coworkers but able to handle economic measures: in

short, he has a polymorphous profile, hence a complex one (Fray and Soparnot 2010, p. 127)[1].

In addition, a French institution, Kedge Business School, has created a description of the responsible manager which serves the school as a guideline for their strategy:

> A responsible manager is not limited to the 'ecologist' connotation perceived sometimes when sustainable development is evoked, but includes ethical notions of social responsibility and corporate social and environmental responsibility, sustainable development (in its entirety), long-term performance, socially responsible investments, equity, diversity, management in complexity (Kedge Business School 2009).

A virtue-based orientation model of ethical decision-making was developed by Crossan et al. (2013, p. 288) and applies to decision-making in general. It is built around the four-component psychological process developed by Rest (1986) and adapted to the model developed by Crossan and colleagues for ethical decision-making. The Virtue-Based Orientation Model of Ethical Decision-Making emphasizes the necessary circularity of continuous learning in character development (Fig. 1).

As business school students are primary stakeholders in management education and are future management leaders, and as there have not been empirical studies to date that examine business school students' understanding of responsible management, a qualitative study was conducted with European business school students concerning their understanding of the term. Business school students are future leaders and managers. They will face several issues linked to the responsibilities of the corporations they are working for. As our literature review revealed no empirical study aimed at understanding the definition of responsible management as held by business school students specifically studying courses linked to responsible management or of faculty who are designing curriculum, there are potential benefits of research in this area. Such a study would give us an understanding of how business schools students approach responsible management. To that end one of our authors conducted a qualitative study to assess this question.

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[1] Author translation: «on peut définir le manager responsable comme un manager qui n'est plus irresponsable… ouvert sur le monde extérieur, citoyen, proche de ses collaborateurs, mais qui gère également des mesures économiques: autant dire que son profil est polymorphe et par là-même complexe» (Fray and Soparnot 2010, p. 127).
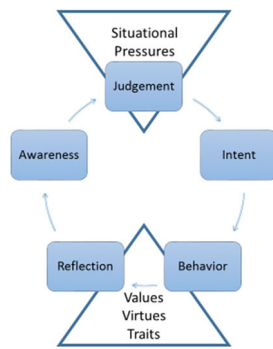
Fig. 1 A Virtue-Based Orientation Model (VBO) of Ethical Decision-Making (EDM) (Crossan et al. 2013, p. 288)

As literature suggests that students should be encouraged to use their imagination to define their values and responsible management (Lourdel 2005; Fougères et al. 2014), the study was conducted using a creative research tool to evaluate students' understanding and definitions of responsible management.

Methodology

Qualitative methods "offer ways to explore and investigate an obscure problem and to generate testable hypotheses while quantitative methods offer ways to verify findings and to test hypotheses" (Laws and Mc Leod 2006, p. 3). This method was selected so as to offer a means to get a broadly empirical understanding of the way business school students understand responsible management.

Our qualitative research was conducted with the aim of generating an initial understanding of how business school students define Responsible Management. Our study was focused on a population of students who had had access to courses linked to responsible management. We visited graduate level classes in responsible management and asked students to participate in a cognitive exercise: the drawing of a mind map to define responsible management. The exercise was completed by 92 students.

Selection of the Participating Classes

The business schools visited were selected based on an analysis, explained below, of the *Financial Times* annual business schools rankings. Their Masters ranking was used only to access a list of international business schools offering masters degrees in business administration. We then evaluated each school on the list to determine whether they had created a masters level graduate program fully focused on responsible management.

Although the Financial Times rankings are criticized for contributing to the current failure of business schools in

creating a culture of responsible management (AACSB International 2005; Burgess and Shaw 2010; Hazlehurst 2011), the Financial Times ratings have been used for previous research on ethics, CSR, and Sustainability education.

> [The *Financial Times* rating] considers a large number of global programs than other ranking entities such as *Business Week,* the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Forbes* magazine. Given its longer history, the *Financial Times* ratings would have a greater potential for name recognition and for including exemplary programs in Asia, Europe, and Latin and Ibero America (Christensen et al. 2007, p. 350).

We conducted a survey of the top 100 business schools as identified as in the *Financial Times* EMBA Ranking 2012, analyzing the schools' curricula and their main strategy, as explained on their websites. The purpose of this analysis was to evaluate whether they have introduced topics related to responsible management in their curricula. The following information was evaluated:

- Selected extracts of their websites (dean's communications, newsletters, rewards, and as well press releases),
- Strategy and mission statements,
- The type of masters of science offered in business administration (title, content, purpose, potential career).

Based on this survey, it appeared some of the studied schools created individual courses to encourage responsible management, while a few business schools have created full masters of science (MSc) programs which formally focus on issues linked to responsible and sustainable management.

In evaluating the rankings, we looked for schools which had created a masters level program fully dedicated to developing critical thinking about management and the current paradigm of capitalism, and which offered the possibility for their students to develop a responsible management mindset. Three MSc programs were selected based on these criteria, as well as for practicality of access. The researching author visited the schools and the specific MSc programs after having been offered, by faculty at those schools, full access to visit, conduct surveys and interviews, and to create a case study on each of them. Additional literature review (Christensen et al. 2007; Kaptein and Yip 2011; Marshall 2011; Triomphe 2010) confirmed that the following MSc programs have been designed to encourage responsible management:

- Masters of Sciences (MSc), *Global Businessand Stakeholder Management*: Rotterdam School of Management—Erasmus University, The Netherlands

- Masters of Sciences (MSc) 2nd year, *Alternative Management*: HEC (Hautes Etudes Commerciales) France
- Masters of Sciences (MSc), *Sustainability and Responsibility*: Ashridge Business School, The United Kingdom

For comparison, a fourth group of business students in a traditional masters of business administration (MBA) program was also visited. This group had received few or no courses regarding responsible management and the students' answers have been analyzed as a contrast to those of the participants in the 3 MSc programs aiming at encouraging responsible management:

- Master of Business Administration (MBA), Rotterdam School of Management.

Mind Maps to Define Responsible Management

For our research we wanted the participants to describe responsible management in a broad and detailed manner. One of our concerns was to create an environment that would help the students to capture as much of their integrated memory and characteristics that they mentally link to the concept of responsible management as possible. Yet a problem quickly arose in terms of evaluating and identifying the breadth of cognitive contents associated with the concept of responsible management in a linear way: Asking the students to define responsible management by writing it from left to right in a linear way limited the participants' ability to be creative. For these reasons, we researched tools to encompass and analyze mind process, to use drawings and colors and to link various concepts together. Instead of asking the participants to describe their definition of responsible management in a more traditional way (writing down their definition on a paper sheet or computer screen), we wanted them to connect the topic to all potential ideas that might emerge. Research by Al-Jarf (2009) reveals that mind mapping improves the ability of students to generate, visualize, and structure ideas. The students involved explained that mind mapping helped them to develop creative thinking and that they were faster at generating and organizing ideas. It is built around the idea that our thoughts start from a central idea and then link with other ideas very randomly,

> [A mind map] consists of a central idea (expressed in the form of a picture of words and a picture) from which radiate ideas that relate to the central idea. The structure is dentric (tree-like) usually with branches of diminishing size – 'thick' toward the center and finer toward the periphery […] Buzan talks about 'radiant thinking' (Brightman 2003, p. 2).

To achieve a rather intuitive and organic process of defining responsible management, we used a method employed in research by Lourdel (2005). To explore and understand the perception of engineering students on sustainable management, Lourdel asked them to draw mind maps.

Mind maps have been used to grasp a concept and aid in the ease of understanding of a contextual and systemic dimension of a concept (Jacobi, Boquillon, and Prévost 1994). The visual representation allows the students to get a broader view of his/her field's knowledge (Nonet 2013). This representation helps to generate a holistic understanding that words may not offer (Soini 2001). Graphical schemes of knowledge are used in various fields: education, psychology, communication, geography, medicine, language, economy, political sciences, sociology, and anthropology (Cossette 1994). The model maps research results, which propose a spatial representation of the concepts as reference models.

As there are different approaches to responsible management, our purpose was not so much to judge or to grade the participants' answers but rather to analyze their answers to evaluate their self-generated, free-form definitions of responsible management, and to assess potential variations between the graduate programs and business schools visited.

As we did not want to influence the students by giving them any type of explanation regarding the terminology, no key words or terminology explanation were offered during the short introduction to the exercise. The introduction was an opportunity for us to explain the exercise but not to comment on the topic, which was presented immediately before starting the exercise. The student participants were asked to create their own mind map based on their understanding of responsible management and were given ten minutes for the exercise. The instructions were given in English to the student participants at RSM and Ashridge, where students are a mix of national and international participants. The central topic given was "Responsible Management." For student participants who were French and studied in a French-language school (HEC Paris), the instructions were given in French. The central topic given was "management responsable" which is the exact French translation of *responsible management*. Their answers were then translated to English so as to be fully comparable.

Population

In total, 92 maps were collected and analyzed for this preliminary research.

- 28 students from Ashridge University (MSc in Responsibleand Sustainable Management)

- 18 students from HEC Paris (Masters Specialization in Alternative Management)
- 27 students from Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (MSc in Global Businessand Stakeholder Management)
- 19 students from Rotterdam School of Management (MBA)

Coding Phase: Critical Discourse Analysis

To code and analyze the mind maps, we used an interdisciplinary approach of discourse analysis: critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA has a double advantage in our study of the mind map linguistic as it opens up to a wide area of methods in discourse studies and as it helps the researcher to relate the structure to the sociopolitical context and related critical theories (Fairclough and Holes 1995; Wodak 2001; Gee 2009).

> Critical literacy involves using discourse analysis in such a way that we see that language is always fully situated in social and political context. It is always caught up with the ways individuals must, in using language give voice to Discourse in interaction, now and throughout history, with each other. These interactions are the sites where power operates. They are also the sites at which humans can make and transform history (Gee 2009, p. 46).

The 92 mind maps were coded according to the three dimensions described by James Paul Gee in "Discourse analysis, what makes it critical?" (Gee 2009): The utterance-type meaning, the situated meaning, social practice inclusion (Levinson 2000; Gee 1996, 1999).

The Utterance-Ttype Meaning   Any word or sentence has a potential meaning, the utterance-type meaning is the study of a general meaning associated with a word or a sentence and not related to a specific situation.

> This task involves the study of correlations between form and function in language at the level at the level of utterance-type meanings. 'Form' here means things like morphemes, words, phrases or other syntactic structures […]. 'Function' means meaning or the communicative purpose a form carries out (Gee 2009, p. 10).

We first created groups of words on Excel spreadsheets. The words given by each student were compared; their appearances, synonyms, wording (sentences or unique words), the links, and the references were evaluated and as well the general outlook of the cognitive map. Five Excel spread sheets were created to classify all the words.

E.g.,: HEC Student 17 mentioned the following words: *planet*, *resources*, *animals*, *forests*, *water*, *air*, *humans*, *biodiversity*, and *access to needed resources*. These words were grouped as their correlation is the natural environment. The same student mentioned the following words: *awareness, personal interest,* and *personal motivation*. These words were grouped as they all correlate to personal development/awareness.

The Situated Meaning (=Utterance-Token Meaning)   In a given context, words and sentences can take a different meaning within the range of their potential meaning. The study of the situated meaning involves a specific attention given to the current context where the participants evolve.

> "This task involves the study of correlations between form and function in language at the level of utterance-token meanings. Essentially this task involves discovering the situation-specific or situated meanings of forms used in specific contexts of use" (Gee 2009, pp. 10–11). We studied the words and terms in our data with regard to the existing literature context describing the necessary changes in management education and managerial skills to encourage responsible management. However, another researcher may compare the results to another type of context and get different results: "there is always the possibility of considering other and additional aspects of the context, and these considerations may change how we interpret the utterance" (Gee 2009, p. 19).

E.g.,: As several authors call for helping business students to develop their soft skills and in particular mindfulness, self-awareness, HEC Student 17 previously mentioned words (*awareness, personal interest,* and *personal motivation*) were classified under the category called *Being-Mindfulness*.

Social Practice Inclusion   The study of the social practice inclusion goes beyond social relationships; it reveals the partially shared (conscious or unconscious) knowledge.

> Critical discourse analysis argues that language-in-use is always part and parcel of, and partially constitutive of, specific social practices and that social practices always have implications for inherently political things like status, solidarity, the distribution of social goods and power (Gee 2009, pp. 23–24).

The students evolve in different cultural models, the classroom setting, their relatives, their geographic culture, their history…

> Cultural models are partially in people's mind (by no means always consciously) and partially in the objects, texts, and social practices that surround them […] A cultural model is a (often tacit) theory or story

about how things work in the world (Gee 2009, p. 35).

To evaluate the proximity between existing literature on responsible management and the students' chosen language on the same topic, words were compared to existing literature and to the approaches of responsible management developed inside each graduate program. Two additional measures were created (c.f.: Appendices 1 and 2): The percentage of respondents in each created category and the average amount of words/respondents mentioned for each topic. Our classifications have been presented to, and verified by, several managers and academics to verify the validity of our choices.

E.g.,: Ashridge students' answers have several words/ sentences referring to critical thinking. 81 % of the students mentioned words referring to it. Their curricula emphasize the importance of developing critical thinking. A category called *Knowing-Critical Thinking* was created. Words such as *greenwashing* (Ashridge S8), *quality importance and balance with quantity, discrimination, not enough money for quality, problem* (Ashridge S10) were grouped and included under this category.

Ten main classifications emerged out of the process

1. Environment
2. Social
3. Economic
4. Governance and Leadership
5. Understanding and Knowing: Critical thinking
6. Understanding and Knowing: Educationand Research
7. Doing
8. Being: Mindfulness
9. Being: Inspiring and Caring
10. Being: Responsible and Ethical

An additional eleventh category was specifically created for the MBA students:

11.
   Image and Marketing

To verify the validity of our discourse analysis, we presented and confirmed, our results to a group composed of some of the students visited in the 3 different classes.

Findings

The results obtained from the mind maps revealed both some common and some distinctive characteristics indicated by our student participants focused on responsible management, and by faculty involved in responsible

management programs. Each program has a distinctive manner of defining responsible management, as each presented a different profile in their responses.

What is Responsible Management According to BS Participants?

Importance of the Triple Bottom Line

All mind maps present a strong concern for social, environmental, and business aspects of management. Indeed, caring for the natural environment, for the social aspects of management, and for society, as well as conducting a responsible economy, are often mentioned. These data well-align with the *triple bottom line* theory (Elkington 1997) and the notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR). According to *The Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions—A renewed EU strategy 2011–2014 for Corporate Social Responsibility* (European Commission 2011), CSR is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis. The social responsibility is presented as considering the expectations of the stakeholders and being accountable for the impact of its decision process on the related stakeholders.

The following selected quotes illustrate the importance given by the students to the triple bottom:

Environment, Planet, Sustainability

Environmental responsibility, renewable resources, sustainability (*GB&SM S1*). Sustainability development, environmental rights, ecology, deforestation, organic food, climate change (*GB&SM S25*). Nature, use of forest, use less water, use land, less forest, limited space, water, responsible nature, do not use plastic, use least paper, reuse water, good for environment" (*MBA S5*). Planet, resources, animals, forests, water, air, humans, biodiversity, access to needed resources (*HEC S17*). Save planet, no CO_2 emission? Use few/no resources, no waste? Earth (*Ashridge, S22*).

Economic, Strategy, Shareholder, Management, Business Innovation

Innovations, supply chain, shareholders, ways of working, employees (*Ashridge, S23*). New standards, KPI key performance indicators, products/services

(*Ashridge, S28*). Fair trade, cooperative, green technologies, micro credit, Human resources, employees & working conditions (*HEC, S6*). Create company with responsible management as core value, green products, work & career, fair trade, labels, employment, effectiveness (*GB&SM, S9*). Net present value, return on investment, product quality, good package, people consume feel good, loyal customers, establish good companies, efficiency (*MBA, S3*).

Social, Equality, Diversity, Welfare, International, Stakeholder

Responsible toward society, work/life balance, family, kids, free time (*MBA, S14*). Philanthropy, community investment, equity, charity donation (*GB&SM, S10*). Helping each other, philanthropy, think global act local, respect for local community (*GB&SM, S24*). Single mothers help, social integration & young unemployed, culture, flexible schedule for parents, child care at work, access for disabled, family spirit (*HEC, S8*). Social justice, community, health, people health (*Ashridge, S9*) (Table 1).

Importance of Governance, Leadership, Systemic Vision

Students in all of the graduate programs reveal a great interest in governance, and in an approach of management that is broad and systemic. Literature highlights the necessity of developing a vision and working transversally to reach out to the stakeholders that are involved (Mintzberg 2004; Chesnut 2010; Amman et al. 2012).

As Sarah Murray explains in a recent article *MBA teaching urged to move away from focus on shareholder primacy model* published in the Financial Times, most MBA teaching remains shaped by the shareholder primacy model, for the sake of the society and to improve business results, it needs to move to the stakeholder model (Financial Times, July 7, 2013: online edition). The following selected quotes illustrate the importance given by the students to governance, leadership, a vision and a systemic approach.

Governance, Leadership, Systemic/Holistic Vision, Stakeholder

Embodied, geography, stakeholder, systemic, more than human world, intended & unintended outcomes (*Ashridge, S1*). Integration, connection, holistic (*Ashridge, S17*). CSR, meaning, stakeholder approach (*HEC, S16*). Use core activities to help out, CSR, stakeholders instead of shareholders, people planet profit (*GB&SM, S10*). Future generations, stakeholder, together (*GB&SM, S8*). Future children, save for future generations (*MBA, S6*). Corporate governance, global locations, leadership (*MBA, S11*) (Table 2).

Importance of Understanding and Knowing

Several authors mention, as did our participants, the importance of developing a critical thinking and of acquiring knowledge. Some authors criticize the actual context of business schools, where they say students tend to be taught rather than invited to learn and develop critical

Table 1 Importance given to the triple bottom line by our respondents

	HEC Alter M.	RSM GB&SM	Ashridge Sust. and Resp.	RSM MBA
Environment	83 %	81 %	74 %	**89 %**
Average # words/student	**6**	3	5	5
Social	**100 %**	92 %	93 %	89 %
Average # words/student	6	6	7	**13**
Economic	78 %	**92 %**	74 %	84 %
Average # words/student	6	6	**9**	6
Triple bottom line	87 %	88 %	80 %	88 %

The highest figures are highlighted in bold

Table 2 Importance given to governance, leadership, systemic/holistic vision, and stakeholder management by respondents

	HEC Alter M.	RSM GB&SM	Ashridge Sust. and Resp.	RSM MBA
Governance	89 %	**92 %**	81 %	79 %
Average # words/student	5	6	**7**	5

The highest figures are highlighted in bold

thinking (Pfeffer and Fong 2002; Ackoff and Greenberg 2008).

Understanding and Knowing: Critical Thinking

Definition of management, philosophy of company, consumerism (*MBA, 10*). What needs to change, do we learn it - grow it? (*MBA, S11*). What is wrong – what is right – why? Think more than ROI (*GB&SM, S8*). Marketing as a tool for good and bad use, danger of windows dressing (*GB&SM, S10*). Failed management, Enron, BP Gulf of Mexico, bad governance (*GB&SM, S16*). Critical thinking, questioning (*HEC, S2*). Wild capitalism, capitalism crisis (*HEC, S5*). Corporate greed desk killers, the myth/lie of infinite growth, compartmentalization, not machine or the corporation (*Ashridge, S12*).

Understanding and Knowing: Research, Education, and References

Deep understanding, Fred Kofman, Fridjof Capra, Arne Naess, Kahlil Gibran 'work is love made visible', Tim Mac 'Embercombe', Bill Torbert action logic, Patagonia (*Ashridge, S5*). Universities, education, books (*Ashridge, S8*). Research, studies, French National Center for Scientific Research (*HEC, S3*). Bourdieu, Marx, Communism, Management theory, history (*HEC, S13*). Self-information, stay informed, curious and active in searching information (*MBA, S6*). Knowledge, try to learn more, spread the knowledge in the organization & the society (*MBA, S12*). Learn, Global Business & Stakeholder Management Master (*GB&SM, S18*). Science, experts, skills, education (*GB&SM, S26*) (Table 3).

Importance of Doing

Literature review presents more concerns than our respondents regarding the needed level of experience. Indeed, authors such as Mintzberg (2004) explain how experience is needed and warn us about the negative consequences of business school curricula disconnected from real life experience. The importance was indeed mentioned by our respondents but it was less emphasized compared to the opinions voices within the literature review.

Doing-Importance of Experience, Acting Upon

More field experience, milestones (*MBA, S8*). Common sense (*MBA, S1*). Acting slowly, deep experience (*Ashridge, S1*). Action, relations, outcomes (*Ashridge, S6*). Experiments in truth: action inquiry (*Ashridge, S18*). Acting, not just seeing or reporting (*Ashridge, S25*). Experiences (*GB&SM, S2*). Management skills, daily applicability (*GB&SM, S17*). Real projects (*HEC, S1*) (Table 4).

Importance of Being and the Development of Soft Skills

The importance given by the respondents to soft skills in responsible management is very high.

Soft Skills and even love are mentioned in literature as needed for managers (Stefano and Wasylyshyn 2005). Fry and Slocum (2008) define spiritual leadership as the pursuit of a vision of service to others; through humility as having the capacity to regard oneself as an individual equal but not greater to other individuals; through charity, or altruistic love and through veracity, which goes beyond basic truth telling to engage one's capacity for seeing things exactly as they are, freed from subjective distortions. In his review of *Making money while making a difference: how to profit with a Non-profit partner*, Meijs presents the positive impact on attitude for employees through utilizing soft skills at work: "employee participation in community programs leads to improved employee satisfaction and morale" (Meijs 2003, p. 293). Participants often mentioned necessary values (such as ethics, integrity, and honesty). Indeed Fry and Slocum (2008) define the three pillars upon which ethical leadership rests: the moral character of the leader, the ethical legitimacy, the morality of the choices and actions. Navarro (2008) explains the need for ethical managers, responsible and trained in corporate social responsibility.

Table 3 Importance given to understanding–knowing by respondents

	HEC Alter M.	RSM GB&SM	Ashridge Sust. & Resp.	RSM MBA
Critical thinking	72 %	54 %	**81 %**	21 %
Average # words/student	6	5	**11**	8
Research and Educ.	**72 %**	50 %	30 %	53 %
Average # words/student	**4**	5	5	5

The highest figures are highlighted in bold

Table 4 Importance given to doing, acting upon, experience by respondents

	HEC Alter M.	RSM GB&SM	Ashridge Sust. & Resp.	RSM MBA
Doing, experience	6 %	8 %	**56 %**	16 %
Average # words/student	2	3	3	**4**

The highest figures are highlighted in bold

Participants mentioned the importance of developing self-awareness and helping others become more aware. Literature review indicated that the first building block of responsible management starts at an individual level: any person who wants to manage others should first be able to manage and know him or herself. Avolio and Gardner (2005) as well as Kernis (2003) explain the necessity of self-awareness, relational authenticity, and authentic behavior/action.

Being: Mindfulness, Self-awareness

Awareness, self-actualization (*GB&SM, S9*). Awareness of issues, internal management (*GB&SM, S14*). Aware, proud of my choices & actions, answer to myself, love as I learn/preach (*MBA, S6*). Personal development (*MBA, S8*). Be the change, whole person, start with self, awareness of own agenda, inner work (*Ashridge, S13*). Mindful, self-identity (*Ashridge, S19*). Personal development (*HEC, S14*). Awareness personal interests, personal motivation (*HEC, S17*).

Being: Inspiring, Caring, Connecting, Communicate, Creative

Love, care, guide people, understand employees' skills, is this love? Enjoy working together, understand their talents, make talents work together, organize people, cooperation (*MBA, S7*). Joy, deep listening, speaking from the heart, understanding, Love, communication, heart (*Ashridge, S1*). Do your best connecting to emotions, human to human, enjoy the day, enchantment (*Ashridge, S22*). Open communication, employees' involvement, dialog instead of debate (*GB&SM, S10*). Empathy (*GB&SM S11*). Colleague happiness, support employees, listening to other (*HEC, S4*). Human inner growth, know its colleagues, reveal their potential (*HEC, S11*).

Being: Responsible, Ethical, Values, Integrity, Courage, Regulation

Convictions, values, respect, legal department, ethical chart (*HEC, S9*). Inner convictions, legal motivations, personal identification to responsible management (*HEC, S16*). Actions have consequences, the butterfly effect, ethics, ethical behavior, ethical values, responsibility, accountability (*GB&SM, S8*). Prevention, regulatory systems: US & EU accounting laws, cooperation between legal systems (*GB&SM, S15*). Trust, regulation, government policy (*MBA, S2*). Be a role model, make a difference, provide example by my own action, without fear, take risks but be aware of consequences, challenge (*MBA, S6*). Be brave, confident, to lead by example, admit mistakes, be honest (*Ashridge, S20*). Accountable for own actions, makes decisions, accountability, accountable for organization-decisions, takes calculated risks, courageous, ethical, integrity, walk the talk (*Ashridge, S24*).

Our results show that the students in our study who are focusing on responsible management in their graduate programs, strongly emphasize the importance of being mindful, inspiring, and caring and ethical. Each class presents slight distinctions (Table 5).

When analyzing the participants' answers and comparing them to the needed skills to encourage responsible management as suggested by the existing literature, we noted a strong similarity between our data, the key

Table 5 Importance given to being/soft skills by respondents

	HEC Alter M.	RSM GB&SM	Ashridge Sust. & Resp.	RSM MBA
Mindfulness	44 %	23 %	**63 %**	26 %
Average # words/student	3	3	**5**	4
Inspiring caring	61 %	46 %	**85 %**	42 %
Average # words/student	3	4	5	**7**
Responsible ethical	78 %	**100 %**	70 %	63 %
Average # words/student	6	5	7	**8**

The highest figures are highlighted in bold

Table 6 Importance given to marketing and public relationship by MBA students

	HEC Alter M.	RSM GB&SM	Ashridge Sust. & Resp.	RSM MBA
Marketing and PR	0 %	0 %	0 %	**37 %**
Average # words/student				**4**

The highest figures are highlighted in bold

management skills, and the suggested changes in business school education in the existing literature. Soft skills are often mentioned in literature as needed for managers (Stefano and Wasylyshyn 2005).

Image and Marketing

This category was specifically added to help classify the MBA's answers as several students of their class mentioned words highlighting the importance of communication, image, and marketing.

Image and Marketing

Reputation (*MBA, S2*). Good image of company (*MBA, S3*). Advertisement to people (*MBA, S4*). Social media, television, radio internet, newspaper, magazines (*MBA, S8*). How it is communicated, public relationship, advertising (*MBA, S8*). Marketing, awareness (*MBA, S14*). Spread the word (*MBA, S15*) (Table 6).

Responsible Management Definition Set

Based on all data from the 92 mind maps, and on the literature review, we created a definition set for the concept of responsible management. This definition set aims at creating a platform for discussions around the topic so as to help organizations clarify their own vision of responsible management. As our data suggest, each responsible management program can have a quite different approach. The definition set is intended for use as a framework for local organizational cultural adaptation to responsible management. Indeed, each organizational culture might have some added input regarding the definition of responsible management: "socially responsible corporate behaviors may mean different things in different places to different people and at different times" (Campbell 2007, p. 950).

Response-Able To be able to respond in an aware and conscious manner, encompassing interaction, knowledge-gathering, and decision-making which is:

- Grounded in the reality of day to day managerial responsibilities,
- Nurtured with self-development and self-awareness,
- Initiated from within the personal, individual level in seeking to understand other individuals,
- Guided by clear moral values, as well as the courage to stand for them,
- Reliant on the development of soft skills (such as inspiring, caring),
- Informed by systemic thinking, with a holistic consciousness of the decision-making consequences (present and future) on all stakeholders (economic, environmental, and social),
- Designed to enculturate a shared vision,
- Respectful, participative, inclusive, and empowering: emerges through empowerment to build up a shared responsible vision at the individual and organizational level,
- With a clear understanding of the issues and the development of appropriate knowledge,
- Reinforced by a process of continuous improvement through self- and group-reflection.

A figure was created utilizing the data collected from both studies. Figure 2 shows the importance of time in the X axis, as well the importance of grounding the managerial decision in the reality of organizational life while aiming at a higher purpose in the Y axis.

Yellow ovals represent individuals. The interview and mind map data suggest that responsible management should start at the individual level (represented by one oval in the center of the figure) and be based on individual self-awareness. The individual in the center is located on both axes: decision-making consequences and practical life-grounded decisions, and purpose of lifeand management. These axes illustrate the different visions the individual may develop, by then encompassing the consequences of decision-making and grounding them in his/her practical awareness of life, as well as keeping in mind how his/her actions respond to a higher purpose in management/life. Based on this knowledge and self-awareness, the individual in the center will then reach other individuals and interact according to his/her own values, goals, and intentions (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 Responsible management definition set, visual representation. This *graph* illustrates the factors influencing responsible management
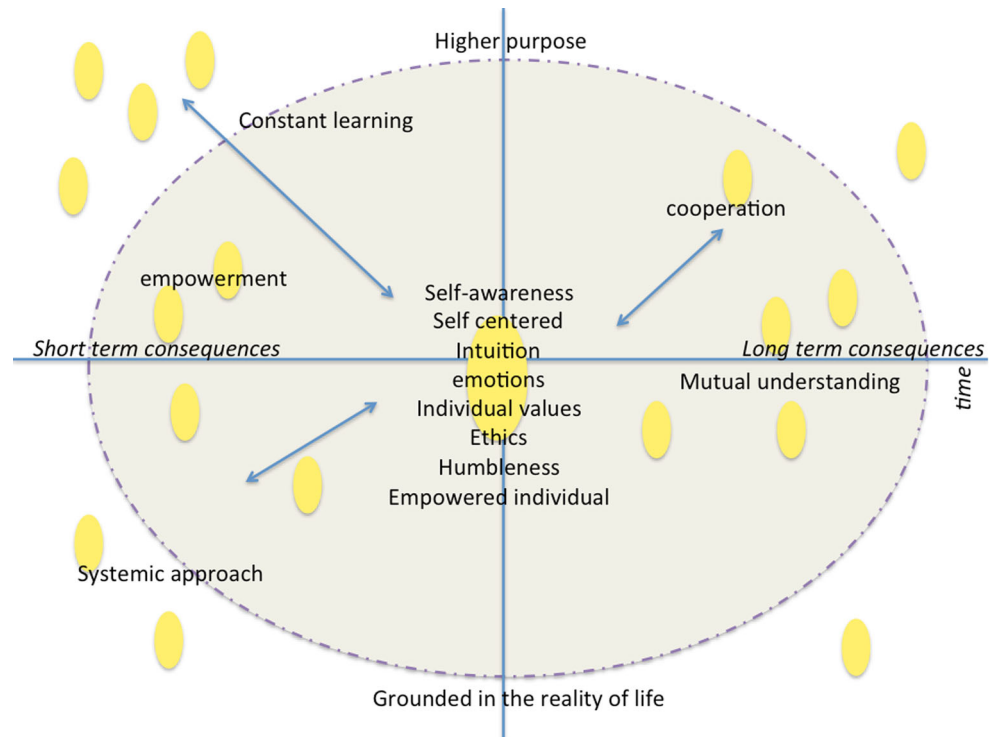
Emerging Theory

As mentioned in this article's introduction, there is a need for a definition of responsible management. Our literature review reveals the absence of a structured definition. Various authors mention different aspects and characteristics linked to the concept of responsible management (Wood 1991; Doh and Stumpf 2005; Fray and Soparnot 2010; Pless and Maak 2011; Hibbert and Cunliffe 2015; Lu and Koehn 2015) but these are reductive and incomplete. Empirical research from this study showed the data obtained from the student participants helped us to compose a rich conceptualization of responsible management that is summarized in a definition set and depicted in a graphic image (Fig. 2). We believe this definition set is better-rounded and less fragmented than those characteristics implicated in the literature. Our definition set offers a preliminary model for responsible management built upon several pillars, which are embedded in the diversity of what humans are and can stand for and are grounded in the environment and the society they live in and interact with. Of particular note are the relevance of the development at the individual level (being, understanding/knowing, and doing), the importance of a systemic and broad approach which incorporates stakeholder impact, the practical application of leadership and managerial skills, the significance of collaboration, and the salience of creating visibility for responsible management-related accomplishments and progress.

Conclusion and Further Research

The purpose of this research was to present a practical approach and definition to the concept of responsible management, as developed through a combination of literature review, and empirical results from mind map construction completed by business school students in responsibility-oriented graduate management programs. The primary research question was the following: What is the definition of responsible management according to business school students? To answer it, we have collected and analyzed 92 mind maps from students at European MSc and MBA business school programs that have emphasized responsible management in their syllabus.

After analyzing our data, several components stood out as indicative of responsible management: the importance given by the respondents to soft skills, the development of formal knowledge and critical thinking, and a broad, holistic triple-bottom-line understanding of management with the development of a shared vision for all stakeholders.

A definition set about *responsible management* was developed after analyzing our data. The purpose of this set is to enable discussion and organizational brainstorming around the concept of responsible management so that further comparative studies can be done with different groups of participants and as well to potentially help schools and corporations clarify their own vision of responsible management. Our results show a clear correspondence between a call for change in business schools' teaching in literature and the student participants' answers. A correlation between the call for more practical education, soft skills, and systemic learning and for the development of personal and organizational values links closely to the definition of responsible management described by the students participating in this research.

Our research has several limitations. Our sample of schools and students was biased in favor or responsible management. To fulfill the goal of our research (develop a definition of responsible management that can e.g., be used in the PRME, by business schools and by students), we deliberately searched for informed and interested respondents. We think this is an accepted policy in this kind of qualitative exploratory research and feel it helped us to achieve our research goal. However, comparative study could be done to evaluate the answers of students who have not been introduced at all to the concept of responsible management. Our research does not encompass all possible cultures worldwide. Indeed, the business schools participants encountered were mostly European or international but living in Europe, and a wider variety of cultural representation approaches to responsible management might yield different results. This would yield further research on social practices and its impact on the definition of responsible management. Therefore, further research is recommended, and could be conducted and compared to our findings.

These studies generated several further questions such as follows: How does the responsible management definition set align with the various contexts created by graduate business programs in reaching similar definitions? How does a business student's own identity influence their definition of responsible management? What is the implication of different social practices on participants' perception of responsible management?

Further research is suggested to help understand how business school education can support responsible management "helping students engage in moral reflexive practice offers one way of helping them responsible managers and leaders" (Hibbert and Cunliffe 2015, p. 177). Are business schools currently helping their students develop these skills and if so, how do they encourage their participants to develop a broad understanding of the triple bottom line related issues, their own values, soft skills, and holistic vision? Additional research is encouraged to examine these questions and understand the various levels of social impact and context potentially influencing students' understanding of responsible management.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Extract of the Language-in-Use for *Responsible Management* from HEC-Alter Management Master Classroom Setting and Compared to Existing Literature

	Planet	# Average words	Economic	# Average words	Social	# Average words	Governance, transversal & systemic understanding	# Average words	Knowing	# Average words	Doing	# Average words	Doing	# Average words
School HEC	Environment, sustainability		Strategy, shareholder, management, business, innovation		Equality, diversity, welfare, international, stakeholders		Leadership & vision, Legal, future generations, inclusiveness		Critical thinking		Research & education & references		Importance of experience, acting upon	
Student 1	Sustainable projects, sustainable development, ecological impact, environment taken in account	10	Green company, local production & local partnership, stop outsourcing	9	Human resources & hiring, diversity, discrimination	6	CSR, long-term vision	4	Not only communication & image	5	Business administration	2	Real projects	2
Student 2		0	Change, social economy, new	4	Multi-dimensional, Human place inside companies, solidarity	7	CSR, companies, NGOs intertwined	4	Critical thinking, questioning	3		0		0
Student 3	Green, ecology, sustainable development	4	Change, transformations, entrepreneurship	3	Society, social, social impact	4	Europe	1	Thinking, walk the talk vs talk the walk	8	Research, studies, CNRS	3		0
Student 4	Planet, humans and animals, protection, sustainable development	7	Micro credit, change consequences analysis, innovation	6	General interest, social impact, social business	6	External and internal impact, in & outside the company	9		0	Mohamed Yunus, Patagonia	3		0
Student 5	Environment, sustainable development	3	Fair revenues for all	4	Access to consumption for all, share, social integration	8	Europe, alter-globalization, new types of growth, transport, train, world institution	10	Wild capitalism, capitalism crisis	4	Business history, Fordism consequences, business history, José Bové	8		0
Student 6	Environment, pollution, future, carbon footprint	5	Fair trade, cooperative, green technologies, micro credit, HR, employees & working conditions	12	Culture, social link, society, social firms, disabled employees, social impact	10	Profit distribution, stakeholders, unions, international	5	Finance & dangers, gender & other discriminations	7	Max Havelaar, education, Emmaüs	4		0

	Planet	#	Average words	Economic	#	Average words	Social	#	Average words	Governance, transversal & systemic understanding	#	Average words	Knowing	#	Average words	Doing	#	Average words
Student 7	Ecosystem, sustainability, sustainable development		4	Improvement, new models, change actors, HR		6	Human		1	Future generations		2			0	Education	0	1
Student 8	Environment at work, water, energy, paper, waste, sustainable development, media, consumers, society		12	Initiative undertaker, efficiency, competitive hedge, value chain, suppliers choice		9	Single mothers help, social integration & young unemployed, culture, flexible schedule for parents, child care at work, access for disabled, less hierarchy, family spirit		24	Children		1	Greenwashing?		1	Education for all	0	3
Student 9	Environmental issues, ecology, climate, plastic pollution		6	Change, innovation projects, micro credit, financial interest		7	Human interests, local initiatives		4	CSR, geography		2	Planet Finance, marketing, unclear motivations, image		6	M. Yunus, Bangladesh, Danone, yoghurt	0	5
Student 10	Ecology, sustainable management		3	To innovate, HR		3	Social cohesion, poverty		3	Long-term, final goal, balanced growth		6	Quality importance and balance with quantity, discrimination, not enough money for quality, problem		13		0	0
Sum		15	83		14	78		18	102		16	76		13	74		1	52
%		83 %	6		78 %	6		100 %	6		89 %	5		72 %	6		6 %	2

Triple bottom line: 87 %

Appendix 2: Summary Responses: Percentage Total Answers/Category & Average Words/Student

school	marketing & PR		PLANET environment, sustainability		ECONOMIC strategy, shareholder, management, business, innovation		SOCIAL equality, diversity, welfare, international, stakeholders		GOVERNANCE, TRANSVERSAL & SYSTEMIC UNDERSTANDING Leadership & vision, Legal, future generations, inclusiveness		KNOWING-UNDERSTANDING critical thinking		research & education & references		DOING Importance of experience, acting upon		BEING mindfulness		connect, communicate, be creative, inspiring, caring		responsible, values, ethical, integrity, courage, regulation	
sum MBA	7	26	17	85	16	206	17	104	15	71	4	30	10	45	3	11	5	20	8	56	12	94
%	37%	4	89%	5	84%	13	89%	6	79%	5	21%	8	53%	5	16%	4	26%	4	42%	7	63%	8
TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE: MBA 88%																						
sum GB&SM			21	61	24	148	24	140	24	134	14	70	13	65	2	5	6	15	12	43	26	117
%			81%	3	92%	6	92%	6	92%	6	54%	5	50%	5	8%	3	23%	3	46%	4	100%	5
TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE: GBSM 88%																						
sum ASHRIDGE			20	92	20	131	25	213	22	160	22	232	8	43	15	51	17	93	23	121	19	132
%			74%	5	74%	7	93%	9	81%	7	81%	11	30%	5	56%	3	63%	5	85%	5	70%	7
TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE: ASHR. 80%																						
Sum HEC			15	83	14	78	18	102	16	76	13	74	13	52	1	2	6	15	11	50	14	84
%			83%	6	78%	6	100%	6	89%	5	72%	6	72%	4	6%	2	44%	3	61%	5	78%	6
TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE: HEC 87%																						

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