

Preamble

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WELCOME TO THE YEAR 2112

Let us tell you a story that began a century ago – in the year 2012 – when globally responsible leadership had just started to emerge. It was an amazing time. After 200 years of intensive development, society had all the economic and technical capabilities necessary to enable 7 billion people to live on the planet. However, they had not focused on living *well*; more than a billion people were starving at that time.

Not only that, but they also held with the peculiar idea that you could design and maintain a system which delivered perpetual growth on a finite Earth. In hindsight it seems a laughable concept, but in 2012 most people actually *believed* in that system. Every country on Earth (except Bhutan) had, if you like, a national goal of growing gross domestic product. At the time it seemed a perfectly logical approach, given how they believed in the fundamental idea that tangible products make you happy.

They expressed the equally odd idea that the primary function of businesses was to make its shareholders as wealthy as possible. People didn't yet understand that the things that make human beings happy and life worthwhile largely involve less tangible aspects, like love, being part of a community, the quality of their relationships, meaningful work, service, and living in an unspoiled, natural environment.

Interestingly, during this tumultuous period a group of people emerged who held a different view. They were working towards the idea of globally responsible leaders. Globally responsible leadership was really built around very simple questions, such as *What kind of world do you want to live in?* and *What kind of world should we create with the extraordinary technical and economic capabilities that we have mastered?* These people had realized that pursuing perpetual growth for its own sake was not ecologically possible, or even sensible from the perspective of human progress and well-being.

The business world further witnessed a new movement around globally responsible leadership. The movement was built on the idea that we

need entrepreneurs – people who could create new initiatives to build the kind of society that we have in 2112; but also statesmen, people who would lead on behalf of society using the resources of their own organizations in service of the common good; and thirdly, above all else, *leaders*. Leadership in the new context was defined as being about *sense-making*, about understanding the real context in which a leader was working. It was also about *sense-giving*, providing clarity about what everybody in the organization was working for. The early twenty-first century saw the emergence of a new type of leadership, a more inclusive and holistic approach where people started to organize more organically. Movements like Occupy and Indignés were early expressions of such new ways of organic organizations.

The crisis in the early twenty-first century was centered on an unsustainable economic system and their collective failure to create a world worth living in for all the people on the planet. At that time they expected the population to reach 9 billion people worldwide. During this period their priorities began to shift, culminating in the birth of globally responsible leadership. With this agenda of global responsibility, people started to explore the fundamental questions of *purpose*, and the purpose of the role of business in particular. In 2012 the common business mantra was all about short-term profit. Despite this collective folly, no chief executive of a great company went to their grave fondly recalling how they had doubled the earnings every year for 10 years. Profit does not feature in the legacy of any leader. Nevertheless, that was how their system determined the fate, failure and success of organizations.

Something new emerged from this crisis of purpose: the idea of purpose-driven organizations that joined the dots between what society needed from a social and environmental perspective; and what their organization was doing – not only the incremental aspects. If you read the history books you'll find something called corporate social responsibility which, as a famous academic jokingly described it at the time, was basically about putting lipstick on a bulldog. The trouble with corporate social responsibility concerned a misdirected mindset, in that “we should try to produce our products with less energy and waste” without ever asking whether the products were *needed* at all.

During this transition, global society, leaders and organizations explored the notion of purpose, their *raison d'être*, repeatedly asking themselves the deeper question: *What kind of world do I want to create?* An increasing number of companies and even business schools saw themselves as stakeholders in the creation of a very different kind of world, a sustainable world where people lived well. *All of them*. Such concepts took them into the landscape of different behaviors, of being entrepreneurs, leaders,

statesmen and, critically, of living true to their values. This is something that we in the twenty-second century tend to take for granted, namely that the journey of responsible leadership always starts with an *inner* journey. If you don't look at yourself you can't effectively consider the potential of your own organization. If you don't know who you are, how can you lead others?

Since the second half of the twentieth century, people in management education and business schools in particular focused on creating diligent administrators, capable managers and, in the political sphere, lobbyists pursuing largely self-interested goals. At some level they wanted to create leaders with the courage, awareness and the inner wisdom to do the right thing, make the right call, to say *yes* to what is right and *no* to that which makes no sense. But, more often than not, people in management education were equally trapped, just like the business organizations they trained, the policy makers and pretty much society at large. Everybody was caught in the twentieth century paradigm of perpetual growth, shop-until-you-drop, and short-term profit maximization.

A small group of people tried to do something about it. They imagined a world where management education was made available to everybody, not only to the elite. They wanted to develop leaders across all kinds of organizations who would contribute to the well-being of those they connected with, and develop solutions that would improve the planet's fragile state. The leaders we have been celebrating over the past decades emerged from this movement, the creators of the learning circle which they called the *collaboratory*. It may well be difficult to imagine, but back in 2012 it was unusual to have students and researchers meet with design engineers, environmental scientists, students and business leaders to work out new solutions. In 2012 the dominant way was the so-called *sage on the stage* – a professor lecturing several hundred students in an antiquated lecture theater. They believed that the role of the teacher was merely knowledge transfer, as if the man (and it usually was a man) standing on the podium had *the* answer: magically attained knowledge of some eternal truth. It was during those heady days that the shift from teaching to *learning* commenced.

The emergence of the Internet brought with it a range of distinctly bizarre products and services. For example, students consulted media-issued rankings on business schools that did *not* take into account what students would *learn* or contribute to society upon graduation. Instead, these rankings measured how much more students could *earn* after graduation, or how many articles from the researchers at a given school were published in specialized journals that were distributed to very few readers – and generally had no requirement for societal value whatsoever.

In the decades before the European and U.S. governments went bankrupt their ministries of education would pay a great deal of money to educational institutions which maintained this perplexing model, rather than pick the best places to fund against any measure of societal *value*. As often as not they simply supported the institutions that had been in existence the longest. Students had to borrow money to pay for their education, money that they were supposed to pay back after graduation. To make matters worse, many graduates failed to find jobs at all. By the mid twenty-first century youth unemployment touched 50 percent in most developed countries. In the United States, student loans grew so bloated that they surpassed the accumulated debt of all households. After the presidential elections in 2016, mounting student debt resulted in a revolution that helped to break the U.S. dollar, which until then had still been the leading world currency. In the decade that followed the higher education system simply collapsed, together with the government. Nobody could afford to pay for education anymore, while those in the emerging nations who needed education most still had extremely limited access.

This period of economic and social turmoil gave rise to a new system.

The upheaval must have been quite something – a time of fundamental change throughout the world. What finally emerged from the shambles were several related initiatives that provided learning to all those who needed it. The collaboratory movement resulted in ‘pop-up’ business schools emerging all over the world. These schools were built around the idea that all stakeholders within a system need to come together to resolve the most pressing issues of this world, and that subject experts had to make sense of the contribution of their fields based on the needs of a given issue. The simple truth was that any given problem always requires the involvement of many different fields of expertise. Research scholars developed new ways to contribute to these issues, collaborating with many people outside their functional disciplines. *Transdisciplinary* research was still a new frontier.

The year 2012 was also the twentieth anniversary of the famous 1992 Rio Earth Summit. How we wish *we* had been present to witness the birth of this transformation! Consider transporting *yourself* back to 2012. *Imagine* what it was like. Think through how *you* would react, and what *you* would have done to create a society which is globally responsible, a future for the kind of world which, a hundred years later, we now can enjoy – a world where everyone lives well, where social inequality is a thing of the past, and where we live in balance with the natural world.

We hope you enjoyed this short history lesson. Now we invite you to further explore the concept of global responsibility and how it evolved. Let us begin the journey.

OUR JOURNEY – A PROCESS OF CO-CREATION

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

50+20 is a collaborative initiative between the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI), the World Business School Council of Sustainable Business (WBSCSB), and the Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME). The initiative reflects the concerns of many students, parents, entrepreneurs, and scholars across the world. Our point of departure is a shared belief that the time is ripe for critical reflection on the role that business and management education plays in society, today and particularly tomorrow.

The manner in which our initiative was born and developed reflects how we believe global issues can be addressed and resolved. 50+20 is a collaborative effort between three organizations, all actively trying to determine how to change management education for the better. Rather than embarking on competitive projects, we traveled to meet each other, to sit together and hammer out the problems. Before long we decided to join forces and work on a common vision. It sounds easy with hindsight, but the road was not always smooth and the collaboration not always evident. Yet again, this is a realistic reflection of how collaboration works in the real world: improvised and (more often than not) imperfectly orchestrated. This is the world. This is life. But it's a start.

Parallel Initiatives

50+20 emerged from two parallel initiatives. The World Business School Council of Sustainable Business (WBSCSB) initiated 50+20 as part of an initiative that was born in a supplementary event at the Academy of Management in Montreal in August 2010. Thirty-five leading sustainability scholars and a few business school deans from around the globe met to talk about breaking the silos in business and management education. Some of these deans gathered in a corner and decided it was about time that business schools engaged in the public debate on sustainable development and reflected on what contribution management education could make to create a better world.

Meanwhile, the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI), a global partnership of leaders from companies and business schools, had launched project SB21: a blueprint for the business school of the twenty-first century. The initial meetings of WBSCSB and GRLI sparked a great

amount of passion, drive and enthusiasm – chemistry and synchronicity at its best. The Principles of Responsible Management Education (U.N. backed PRME) in New York was a natural third partner, given their ambition to sign up as many business schools and management-related academic institutions as possible, and to inspire them to provide more responsible management education, research and thought leadership. In January 2011, the three organizations signed a joint agreement of collaboration; projects SB21 and 50+20 were merged into one with the team members elegantly complementing one another in terms of know-how, skills, global make-up and competences.

Several common themes quickly arose from the partnership. The need to move from incremental to “deep” sustainability recognizes that the mainstream approach to the triple bottom line of environmental, social and economic problems was inadequate to address the global challenges of social justice and environmental sustainability. We recognized that the voice of business schools needed to be heard in the public debate on sustainable development. We saw the need for a *transdisciplinary* approach to bridge different fields, as well as the willingness to question the underlying assumptions of our dominant economic and business thinking. Such issues include responsible leadership, the required metamorphosis of business organizations from maximizing short-term profit to becoming servants of society – and what it takes to develop leaders who are able to embrace such a challenge.

The goals of the PRME signatories and its six principles (as detailed in the Box below) served as a common starting point.

With this background, 50+20 grew into a collaborative initiative that sought to develop new ways and opportunities for management education to transform and reinvent itself. We asked critical questions about the state of the world, the emerging societal issues, the dominant economic logic, the purpose of business, the crucial role of leadership, and the challenges facing management education. We embarked on a process of internal and external dialogue to clarify where and how the boundaries and contours of a new vision for management education must be drawn. As part of this discussion we had to clarify questions concerning stakeholders, authorship and applicability of the vision.

As the stakeholders of this vision include society (future generations included) and the natural environment, we designed a broad consultation process. We commissioned surveys and held meetings with critical stakeholders in order to assure an inclusive “outside-in” approach that informed the “inside-out” visioning process, managed by a core team of 50+20 participants.

Our analysis of the current state of affairs in management education

THE PRME PRINCIPLES

As institutions of higher education involved in the development of current and future managers we declare our willingness to progress in the implementation, within our institution, of the following Principles, starting with those that are more relevant to our capacities and mission. We will report on progress to all our stakeholders and exchange effective practices related to these principles with other academic institutions:

Principle 1 – Purpose: We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.

Principle 2 – Values: We will incorporate into our academic activities and curricula the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives, such as the United Nations Global Compact.

Principle 3 – Methods: We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.

Principle 4 – Research: We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.

Principle 5 – Partnership: We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.

Principle 6 – Dialogue: We will facilitate and support dialogue and debate among educators, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organizations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability. We understand that our own organizational practices should serve as an example of the values and attitudes we convey to our students.

concluded that, in general, there is a very narrow perspective on its societal mandate and in its definition of societal “value-add”. We encountered a great deal of lip service being paid to the teaching of ethics and sustainability when measured against a yardstick of what the world really *needs*.

We accept that our vision to recast management education in a different, more hopeful role will be met with resistance by some established stakeholders in both business and management education. It is therefore important to recognize the moral courage required by the current guard of business school deans and professors to drive change. To re-envision (and by implication put into question) a system that one represents is never easy.

A Collaborative Effort

Envisioning profound changes in management education raises the issue of authorship. The 50+20 process included a number of thought leaders outside the field of management education, including students, philosophers, business leaders, leadership consultants, corporate educators, pedagogical, andragogical and sustainability experts, activists, and artists. All participants made important contributions to the visioning process alongside the core of forward-thinking business school deans, management and leadership educators.

The vision itself was written as an evolving, collaborative process where contributors created a process of continuous integration and exchanges. Our work method reflects the way we envision the functioning of a collaboratory – a concept that rests at the heart of the vision.

An international group of stakeholders in management education met in a number of retreats, working on progressively evolving elements of the vision. At every meeting at least 50 percent of the participants were first-timers, ensuring an inclusive and open approach with fresh perspectives. We further used professional facilitation processes that served different purposes during these retreats:

- The **New York Retreat** focused on visioning what needs to happen in management education to ensure that we contribute to a world worth living in (26 participants, including business school deans, directors and professors, artists, consultants, innovation and educational experts and thought leaders).
- A **Global Stakeholder Survey** clarified expectations and inspired the vision (140 participants from 36 countries, including management scholars, students, business professionals, NGOs and not-for-profit

employees, educational experts and coaches, artists, opinion leaders and concerned citizens).

- The **St. Gallen Retreat** discussed first drafts the visioning team had put together (35 participants, including (in addition to New York) students and representatives of student organizations, NGOs and not-for-profit organizations).
- The **Stuttgart GRLI General Assembly** served to critically evaluate the work's preliminary vision and scope (40 international participants, including thought leaders in responsible leadership from business and academia).
- The **Global Challenge: Future Student Competition** demonstrated how concerned and engaged young adults viewed the future of management education, helping sharpen our vision (1091 students from 79 countries).
- The **Munich WBCSD Conference** tested the preliminary vision and gathered feedback from the business community on the vision (15 participants, including corporate sustainability directors from around the globe).
- The **Lausanne Retreat** was a steering committee and editorial session, assessing the results of an intense collaborative vision writing exercise involving 22 writers and opinion leaders over a period of two months. It was the first time the vision took on a clearly recognizable shape (seven participants from three continents).
- The **Brussels Retreat** created alignment behind the vision and evaluated actions to engage different stakeholders (25 participants from New York, St. Gallen and Stuttgart Retreats took part).

Between the retreats, the main writers wrote and re-wrote the vision and the chapters leading up to it. Each iteration offered new perspectives, highlighted unresolved issues and added more clarity. Critical questions were debated over and over again: *Are we too radical? Are we radical enough? Are we preaching to the converted? What about those who are not in agreement with our assumptions, or those who are still attached to the dominant economic theories?*

In parallel to the vision development, we conducted a global process of harvesting and selecting emerging benchmarks. To date, we have collected more than 80 examples which are displayed for public comments on our website. This process will continue as the 50+20 initiative grows – and we welcome contributions from all parts of the globe.

There are a number of fundamental assumptions which can be summarized into the following key paradigm shifts we believe are necessary in order to reach our goal:

1. The civic organization: a new environmental, societal and economic paradigm

In order to create a world where all citizens live well and within the limits of the planet, we need a different kind of society with a different economic framework that is celebrated for its contribution to society and the world.

2. Globally responsible leaders: a new leadership paradigm

In order to lead business and society to collaborate in the challenges related to creating a world worth living in, we need a new type of leader who can lead organizations through this challenging transformation process.

3. From business school to management education: a new educational paradigm

In order to develop leaders able to lead this transformation, we need to re-define the framework of education that currently educates leaders. The new landscape needs to include all stakeholders who contribute to management education, research and related public interaction.

Given that the very foundations of business and management education are critically examined, the application of the vision concerns business, management and leadership education in general. The stakeholders in this landscape include not only business schools, leadership and executive development programs, corporate universities, but also think tanks, business consultancies and vocational training centers. Likewise, the prospective students addressed in this work not only include current and future business leaders, but also emerging entrepreneurs among the 4 billion people at the “bottom of the pyramid” who present the biggest opportunity for making global societal progress.

The 50+20 vision proposes a framework of a number of different roles to be played by management education. It also highlights key responsibilities for stakeholders in the larger community of management education. The expectation is that different stakeholders adopt this vision in different ways. Some stakeholders may choose to focus only on one element. Others may choose a selection of ideas, while some may embrace the entire vision. We anticipate institutions joining forces to create collaboratories on a regional level, while others may choose to share emerging research practices, develop faculty training and re-training programs, or co-create new educational solutions. Whichever avenue is taken, all such stakeholders will be part of a growing global movement that cares strongly about creating a world worth living in.

THE CONTEXT OF OUR WORK

50+20 is a movement among a growing number of management education providers that critically questions what and how they teach and conduct research. This movement has produced a *work* – in the same sense that one would refer to a piece of music or a cathedral as a work – combining technical and artistic, creative and inspirational dimensions. At the core of this work is a vision of management education that does not aim to be the best in the world, but the best *for* the world.

We took the opportunity to entirely re-envision the field of management education. Whilst every attempt has been made to start with a blank canvas, we recognized the need to take into account the changing global, environmental and business contexts. We have also attempted to draw a picture of the larger community of stakeholders in the landscape of management education. In order to describe the context and background of our vision, some clarifying remarks are needed.

In the 1950s, the Ford and Carnegie Foundations sponsored two reports to promote scientific rigor and academic legitimacy of higher business education in the U.S. Since then, no other initiative has come close to the impact these reports have had in influencing the priorities in management and business education during the past 50 years, worldwide. The majority of business schools, and to a lesser degree management education efforts at large, continue to function in line with an agenda that was set in the late 1950s by these reports and the actions that followed from them. Their widespread adoption is an Industrial Age success story.

Resetting The Management Education Agenda

Over 50 years have passed since the agenda for management education has been set. The RIO+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (June 2012) marked the twentieth anniversary of the 1992 Rio Earth summit: 20 years have passed since governments were urged to rethink economic development and find ways to halt the destruction of irreplaceable natural resources. It is at this juncture in history where the 50+20 project takes action to reset the management education agenda for the coming 20 years and beyond.

Modern management emerged as a response to the challenges faced by organizations who sought to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Industrial Age. The focus of management as an academic subject throughout the twentieth century dealt with issues framed around efficiency, productivity and economic returns. While the development of management as a profession has enabled modern organizations to grow

in size, scope, and complexity, it is severely challenged to come up with adequate responses to the world today – one where natural resources are limited, wealth is poorly distributed and there is a shortage of effective societal leadership. This 50-year-old legacy needs to be addressed.

In 1992 the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio marked a turning point in how governments and business approached economic development. The need to find ways to halt the destruction of nature and pollution of the planet gained the center stage. In an attempt to embrace social, environmental and economic issues, the term *sustainability*, popularized by the Brundtland Report in 1987, was introduced to equip growth with the notion of sustainable development.

Twenty years later, in June 2012, the world reconvened again in Rio to seek new answers to the sustainable development challenges of the twenty-first century. The global agenda is moving towards the three sustainability pillars of social justice, environmental boundaries and economic innovation. This re-framing includes a questioning of the logic of growth as a goal unto itself. Public discourse is beginning to explore the possibility that sustainable development is an inadequate framework. The need to identify and find solutions to human progress beyond economic growth with a social and environmental spin is increasingly apparent in this context, given how management education is out of step with the scale and nature of the challenges we face.

Our work is premised on the view that the world needs a mindful, sustainable approach to the planet's finite resources. We recognize that many societies, both rich and poor when measured in traditional economic terms, are stressed to the point of fracture by shifting demographics, poverty and the rapidity of change itself. We observe a growing global community seeking *purpose* rather than *consumption*. The growth of the cultural creatives¹ provides hard evidence of an emergent large-scale new "level of consciousness" spreading throughout the world. As Tim M. Macartney asks so pertinently "What kind of society is it that would not place the Children's Fire at the very center of its institutions of power?"

In their Earth Wisdom teachings, the elders of the Native Americans talk of The Children's Fire. This fire is a reminder of the promise: "No law, no action of any kind, shall be taken that will harm the children."

Tim 'Mac' Macartney "The Children's Fire"

In this context, the role and fundamental purpose of business is under scrutiny. The pursuit of profit as an end in itself appears at best a poor contribution to society and, at worst, a primary driver in the perpetuation of a failed system. The call is out to expand our understanding of

the purpose of business beyond mere profit-making to sharply defined, value-added contributions to society and the world. Business leaders are being called upon to reconcile an array of competing priorities and to lead responsibly in a time of runaway uncertainty and complexity.

We believe the time is ripe to reinstate the Children's Fire into our society, and our work seeks to contribute to this effort. We believe that a world where everybody lives well and within the limits of the planet is a possible and a desirable goal. To create such a world requires new approaches to how we think about the economy, business, leadership and education, let alone how we actually organize and act and achieve it.

The vision we propose represents not only an incremental shift but a radically new perspective of what management education for the future could look like. We acknowledge that many of the elements may feel familiar. They already exist piecemeal and in partial form in various places around the world. On the whole, our approach to management education and its implementation requires nothing less than a fundamental transformation of the existing model. A transformation is not a revolution, in that it does not seek to overthrow that which is currently in place, but rather to build on it, preserving what was good in the previous model. The deepest purpose of such a management education framework is to create and hold the space for an entirely new world of business to emerge. The world needs engaged, reflective and responsible entrepreneurs, managers and leaders in all sectors and in all regions of the world. We believe it is the responsibility of management education to provide such leadership. We call it *responsible leadership for a sustainable world*.

The vision is intended for those with a deep awareness and understanding of the global challenges we face, who possess a sense of urgency to bring about change and an unwavering belief that we all "own" the responsibility to create such change. We hope that our goals resonate with you, and that you also feel inspired to take action, in your own life and work. Imagine what we could collectively achieve if we act *now*.

NOTE

1. Ray/Sherry (2000).