# A PRME response to the challenge of fighting poverty: How far have we come? Where do we need to go now?

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**Abstract**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encompass the most difficult and complex challenges facing the world today. Heading up the goals, in common with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS), is the eradication of poverty 'in all forms everywhere'. This requires strategies, innovations and actions from all sectors in society and not least from business and education.

With the forthcoming 10th Anniversary of PRME, this paper examines the role of the PRME Working Group, established in 2008, on Poverty, a Challenge to Management Education (referred to as the Anti-Poverty WG) in integrating poverty into management education at all levels worldwide.

As a context for the Anti-Poverty WG, the evolving thinking and approaches to the business role in poverty alleviation are examined. The key areas of the group's work over the last decade are then discussed. This includes the research undertaken to understand the issues and challenges of integrating poverty into management education, the subsequent publications in the form of reports, books and articles and the engagement of the business community and management educators through conferences and other outreach events and activities. Finally, this paper explores the current SDG agenda to reflect on the challenges that still lie ahead.

Keywords: Poverty, poverty reductions, PRME, Anti-Poverty Working Group, management education, business programmes, Sustainable Development Goals

## Introduction

On 25th September 2015, the United Nations came together to agree on an intergovernmental set of aspirational 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets. The SDGs, officially known as: "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," are contained in paragraph 54 of United Nations Resolution A/RES/70/1. In keeping with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that they replaced, the first goal is to 'end poverty in all forms everywhere'. However, unlike the MDGs, the Post-2015 Development Agenda process (that aimed to define the future global development

framework) was again led by the UN but involved a number of key stakeholders that included business organisations and investors (through members of the Global Compact -GC and the Principles of Responsible Investment - PRI), Higher Education Institutions (with signatories of the Principles for Responsible Management Education - PRME), civil society and public sector organisations. As Ban Ki Moon has noted, solutions for the SDGs will require all agents of society and that includes chief executive officers, activists, and citizens (Ban Ki Moon, 2015).

In this context, fighting poverty is a major challenge to both businesses and to business schools worldwide. In recognition of this, the challenge was first formally taken up within PRME with the establishment in December 2008, of the PRME Working Group on Poverty, a Challenge to Management Education (hereafter, the Anti-Poverty WG). The Working Group took primary responsibility for championing the integration of poverty into management and business programmes worldwide. The Anti-Poverty WG's vision, states in part, that it advocates for

> [T]he integration of poverty-related discussions into all levels of management education worldwide.
>
> Our vision is grounded in our beliefs that:
> - Poverty is a legitimate topic for discussion and research in schools of business and management
> - Business should be a catalyst for innovative, profitable and responsible approaches to poverty reduction
> - Multiple stakeholder engagement is needed for innovative curriculum development
>
> In our role as advocates, we will:
> - Create opportunities for multi-stakeholder discussions
> - Foster discussions that lead to concrete results
> - Disseminate reports
> - Serve as a global repository for innovative curricular approaches, learning methods and educational materials that embed poverty in management education
> - Support the development of a community of management educators, researchers and professionals committed to integrating poverty into the business curriculum

In an ambitious but important statement in this early stage of the working group, the vision statements ends with; 'Our working group will disband only when the issue of poverty is deeply embedded in all levels of management education worldwide'. Thus the 10th Anniversary of PRME provides an opportune

moment to summarise the Anti-Poverty WG's achievements and to reflect on the challenges that still lie ahead of it in light of the SDGs.

This paper discusses the role and actions of the Anti-Poverty WG and sets out the strategy and plans for the future of the group. However, preceding that discussion, this article describes how an evolution in thinking about business's role in poverty reduction converged with a deeper, richer, more nuanced understanding of corporate social responsibility (CSR) that provides the backdrop against which the Anti-Poverty WG's creation can be best understood.

**The Context for the Establishment of the Anti-Poverty WG**

Poverty has been a longstanding aspect of the human condition (Maddison, 2001). Sachs (2006) notes that for most of human history, "Just about everybody was poor, with the exception of a very small minority of rulers and large landowners" (p. 27). Picketty (2014) confirms the endemic and structurally embedded nature of income inequality through his detailed historical analysis of how the rate of return to wealth exceeds a country's rate of growth. Development economics has traditionally focused on income growth as its most important objective. Understanding and stimulating income growth is fundamental to economic development because "without it, the other objectives – poverty reduction, reduced disparities, lesser vulnerability to shocks, satisfaction of basic needs, and achieving a satisfactory quality of life – are difficult if not impossible to achieve" (Janvry & Sadoulet, 2016, p. 4).

It is important to note the similarity between the multiple goals of economic development (poverty reduction, reduced disparities, increased quality of life, etc.) and those definitions of poverty that reframe poverty as a human development issue rather than as solely an economic issue - one's relative per capita income (Fiorotto, 2016; Sen, 1999). When reframed in terms of human development, poverty is a constraint that denies individuals human agency in multiple parts of their lives (housing, health care, education, employment, mobility, access to material goods, etc.). Poverty also denies individuals full participation in civil society. Poverty reduction is liberating because it

provides freedom for individuals "to lead the kind of lives [they] have reason to value' (Sen, 1999, p. 235). What placed the issue of poverty squarely in the domain of management and business education was the convergence of four forces: (1) an evolution in thinking about the role of base of the pyramid (BoP) consumers in business strategy (Hart, 2007; London, 2016a), (2) the evolving role of business to act responsibly (Christensen et al. 2007; Matten & Moon, 2004; Parkes et al., 2010), (3) the emergence of inclusive markets as a way of understanding how businesses contribute to both organisational and broad-based social prosperity (Boechat et al., 2014; UNDP, 2008), and (4) the acknowledgement that sustainable development must be a core business strategy (Lubin & Esty, 2010; McPhee, 2015; Laszlo & Zhexembayeva, 2011) – all of which are discussed below.

**Business's Role in Poverty Reduction**

Articles by Prahalad and Hart (2002), Prahalad and Hammond (2002), Hart and London (2004), and Prahalad (2005) were all early efforts to make the business case for corporations to tap a large, previously unrecognised market at the base of the world's economic pyramid. Prahalad and Hart (2002) and Prahalad (2005) both challenged CEOs to rethink fundamental aspects of corporate strategy by arguing that extremely low income markets, in countries like India, China, Brazil, and in most of sub-Saharan Africa, could be profitable consumer markets. By placing corporate profitability and strategic innovation at the center of their argument, Prahalad and Hart (2002) shifted the locus of corporate thinking "about the poor" from a corporate philanthropy approach to a market-driven model in which low income markets were analysed using the same business analytics as every other market of interest to the firm. The logic was compelling: Corporations need markets to do business in. The poor were now being understood as a vital, viable, untapped market. As Robert Zoellick noted, "The problem of the poor is not the dominance of markets, but its absence" (quoted in Waibel, 2012, p. 27). The message communicated was clear: That "fortune" (i.e., profits) could be found by selling products to individuals living at the base of the world's economic pyramid.

Galvanised by this idea, a number of academic conferences were held (Jain & Vachani, 2006; Rangan et al., 2007), as this concept took hold in the academy, and a steady stream of BoP-focused research began (Kolk, Rivera-Santos, & Rufín, 2013). These initial efforts focused primarily on introducing the BoP "as a viable market opportunity that required thoughtful execution" (London, 2016a, p.17). As Donaldson and Walsh (2015) state, these early efforts articulated "a new framework for business behavior, one that asks us to look to the poorest among us for both new product and service ideas and markets" (p. 183). These first-generation articles are often considered as BoP 1.0 (Arora & Romijn, 2011; Chevrollier et al., 2014; Hart & London, 2011). The optimism and ease with which multinationals thought they could tap the buying power of very low income and rural markets was short lived.

BoP 2.0 began with a series of critiques about the limitations and unsupported assumptions behind the initial conceptualisation of BoP markets (Schrader, Freimann, & Seuring, 2012). There was debate about the top-down approach multinational corporations took to working with the BoP (Arora & Romijn, 2011), which often accounted for the paucity of scalable, profitable BoP ventures (Kayser & Bundich, 2015). So, too, in the rush to find "the fortune" at the base of the pyramid, multinational firms did so without understanding "the real needs of those living there" (Waibel, 2012, p. 60). This led Simanis, Hart and Duke(2008) to develop the BoP Protocol, which was specifically designed to stress co-creating shared value (Porter & Kramer, 2011) *with* the poor. The concept of "Creating Shared Value" (CVS) was developed by Porter and Kramer (2011) as a way of "reinventing capitalism" (p.63). Proponents of CVS report that it provides a much higher profile to some fundamental societal issues, such as poverty, nutrition, and water (Rasche, Waddock, & McIntosh, 2013). However, critics of CVS argue that whilst the concept does make some significant progress towards directing attention to the social dimensions of business, shared value provides a more reactionary rather than a transformational response to the need for reform of CSR and capitalism (Crane, Palazzo, Spence, & Matten, 2014).

Simanis (2011) noted, "There is no fortune to be gained by *entering* BoP consumer markets. Conversely, *creating* new BoP consumer markets – just like creating new, blue-ocean industries in developed countries – carries enormous upside potential" (p. 123).

Further, the assertion that selling to the BoP was a poverty alleviation strategy (Kandachar & Halme, 2005) came under scrutiny (Jaiswal, 2007; Karnani, 2007; Walsh et al., 2005). Karnani (2007) argued that considering the poor as both consumers *and* producers was a more ethical, more productive approach to poverty reduction than simply selling products to them. Corporate business models were reimagined to include the poor throughout the firm's value chain. Innovation became the lynch pin for successful, scalable BoP strategies (Anderson & Markides, 2007; London, 2016a) – and it still is. This central focus on innovation (Hart, 2007; Hart & Christensen, 2002), confirmed Prahalad's (2006) earlier statement that "the methodologies for innovation at the BOP are different from, and more demanding, than the traditional approaches" (p. 100). The difference between BoP 1.0 and BoP 2.0 can be summarised as the former's perspective was to find a fortune *at* the base of the pyramid, while the latter's was to co-create value *with* the base of the pyramid (Hart, 2016; London & Hart, 2010). Hart (2016) recently has proposed a BoP 3.0, which he characterises as focused on co-creating value through open innovation, as creating innovation ecosystems, as developing new distribution systems for the last mile when poor consumers live in dispersed rural areas or in violent urban slums, as nurturing new cross-sector partnerships, and as firmly aligning poverty alleviation with sustainable development (Hart, 2015).

Businesses of all kinds flourish when country-level institutions work efficiently, effectively -- without distortion or manipulation (North, 1990; Peng, 2002). The poor, however, often live in hostile environments: They may live in countries beset by civil war (Mali, Somalia, Congo). They may live in places where the rule of law is fragile (South Sudan). They may be marginalised and discriminated against (e.g., the Rohingya of Myanmar). They may live in low density, rural areas not adequately served

by government services (education, health care, sanitation) or by formal market mechanisms, such as banking. They may live in urban slums, which can be violent and crime ridden (Davis, 2006). Each of these situations represents an example of the poor being victimised by institutional voids. Institutional voids represent situations ''where institutional arrangements that support markets are absent, weak, or fail to accomplish the role expected of them'' (Marti & Mair, 2009, p. 422). Institutional voids thus inhibit economic and social development. However, institutional voids also create opportunity. Inclusive businesses, microfinance Institutions (MFIs), social enterprises, and private-public partnerships are all examples of new, emergent organisational entities that have developed precisely to fill the spaces created by institutional voids. All have active, meaningful roles to play in poverty reduction.

In this context, the role of the inclusive business approach and models is essential. Pioneered by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2008), the term "inclusive business" represents a more holistic conceptualisation of poverty reduction that involves the close collaboration of businesses, governments, and other institutions. Inclusive growth and creative capitalism (Kinsley & Clarke, 2009) are synonyms for the inclusive market perspective. In addition to providing the poor with market access and the requirement that every business must be financially viable if it is to be sustainable, inclusive business models emphasise economic empowerment (Golja, & Po, 2012; Mendoza & Thelen, 2008). As Nwagwu (in press) notes, inclusive business models:

> present an important avenue for creating shared value, redirecting businesses to look beyond the typical bottom line of financial profit to the social as well as economic and environmental benefits they bring to the society. In doing so, inclusive businesses contribute to the integration of the UN Global Compact Principles into business practice and the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Microfinance institutions (MFIs) provide basic financial services, such as loans and savings, to low income individuals, who would otherwise not have access to these services (Consulting Group to Assist the Poor, 2011). Like banks and other savings institutions, MFIs, in due time, collect interest on their loans. While MFIs have been controversial (Gutiérrez-Nieto, Serrano-Cinca, & Molinero, 2009), the

focus here is to link MFIs with microcredit, an idea made popular by Yunus (2007) as a means for giving poor individuals small amounts of capital to build and strengthen businesses. "MFIs have expanded the frontiers of institutional finance and have brought the poor, especially poor women, into the formal financial system by enabling them to access credit in order to fight poverty" (Bogan, 2012, p.1046). Specifically, in her review of the academic research on micro-credit between 2010-2015, Odell (2015) concluded that:

> Overall, the evidence suggests that credit helps poor people in various ways, leading to increased freedom and choice even when changes in income and consumption are not observed during the periods under study (generally 18 months to three years) (p. 42).

This finding supports the reality that in countries like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Haiti and Kenya, micro-credit is replacing traditional development work by shifting the emphasis from the giving of aid to the lending of money (Neal, 2010).

Social enterprises are another response to institutional voids. Social enterprises are ventures that (1) respond to market opportunities created by market and governmental failures and (2) combine profitability with social/environmental objectives (Dacin, Dacin, & Tracey, 2011). Miller et al. (2012) note that social enterprises almost always express the compassion of the entrepreneur, whose motivation is fundamentally to find sustainable solutions to social problems. Because poverty permeates so many aspects of life, many social enterprises either directly or indirectly reduce poverty (Bornstein, 2007; Seelos & Mair, 2005; Yunus, 2007). A good example of a social enterprise is Vindhya E-Infomedia Private Limited, a Bangalore-based, business created to provide back-end, business support, call center services for global firms. It primarily employs disabled individuals. The enterprise's husband and wife founders chose to employ disabled individuals because "differently abled individuals were one of the most marginalised section of Indian society…in spite of holding professional capabilities" (Shukla & Laghate, 2014, p. 160).

Finally, private-public partnerships have developed as innovative collaborations for filling institutional voids created by limited, absent, or ineffective public services. Private-public partnerships use the expertise of private sector organisations to provide services that have traditionally been provided by governments (World Bank, 2015). However, as Franceys and Weitz (2003) observed, in order to understand the different needs of those they are serving "private entities, both national and international, may need to be supported in learning how to develop participatory approaches to deliver quality service to all and particularly to the poor" (p.1096). They further note that "civil society, through a whole range of interested stakeholders, also can assist public–private partnerships by questioning, challenging and enabling services to all" (p.1096).

**Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development**

Concurrent with the evolution in thinking about and working with BoP/poverty markets have been parallel developments in understanding the relationship of business firms to the communities within which they operate. As Mason (2016) notes, "Business is the farthest-reaching institution in human society and controls most of the Earth's resources, including natural resources, financial resource and human capital" (p.79). Thus, businesses have obligations to act in socially responsible ways. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) requires every business to consider how decision making around finance, marketing, sourcing, hiring, strategy, wages and overall organisational leadership must all be considered to determine "right action"—in both the short and long run -- everywhere a company operates. CSR is intimately entwined with the poor because poverty equates with vulnerability (Celidoni, 2015; Chaudhuri, 2003; Janvry & Sadoulet, 2016; Morduch, 1994). From this perspective, CSR has strong links to ethical decision making (Hahn, 2009; Rivera-Santos, Rufin, & Kolk, 2012). A firm acts socially responsible when it makes ethical business decisions, internally, in all functional units as well as externally with customers, community, and competitors.

This relationship between CSR and ethics is grounded in the broader 'business ethics' movement that has its traditions in philosophy and theology. Ethics in a business context are often described in terms of morals, rules and standards: "[…] the study of the general nature of morals and of specific moral choices: moral philosophy; and the rules or standards governing the conduct of members of a profession" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2015). In this context, of what is sometimes referred to as "ethical CSR" (Crane & Matten, 2010), corporations are said to have special moral obligations to their various stakeholders outside of the organisation. Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) - a US organisation that encourages corporate social responsibility – positions and defines CSR in this way: "Business decision-making linked to ethical values, compliance with legal requirements, and respect for people, communities, and the environment" (Business for Social Responsibility, 2012).

This relationship between ethics and CSR is further supported by Lantos (2001), who suggests that there are three kinds of CSR, ethical, altruistic and strategic, and argues that the confusion and controversy over CSR rests in a failure to distinguish between them. Rahman's (2011) review of the CSR literature argues that there is a chronology to CSR that reflects the change in emphasis over past decades. In the 1950s, CSR was seen as primarily about obligation to the society. In the 1960s and early 70s, the focus shifted to the relationship between corporations and society, identifying economic, legal, ethical and discretionary responsibilities this are in line with the commonly quoted Carroll's Pyramid Model of CSR, with the organisation's economic obligations forming the base of a pyramid on which the legal, ethical and philanthropic CSR obligations rest (Carroll, 1999). Whilst this model has perhaps been one of the most enduring, it has been criticised for being too simplistic and taking a Friedmanite approach (Visser, 2006) because it prioritises the economic drivers.

It is clear that CSR is used as an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of definitions and interpretations about how it is implemented (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). However, it is the competing

perspectives of the role and responsibilities of businesses in society and the debates surrounding them that create the real tensions in how CSR is viewed.

Visser (2011) has been instrumental in both charting the development of CSR and in defining CSR in a broad, contemporary context:

> First let me say what I understand about CSR. I take CSR to stand for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility, rather than Corporate Social Responsibility…My definition is as follows: CSR is the way in which business consistently creates shared value in society through economic development, good governance, stakeholder responsiveness and environmental improvement. Put another way, CSR is an integrated, systematic approach by business that builds, rather than destroys, economic, social, human and natural capital (Visser, 2011, p. 7).

As noted in the last sentence above, Visser firmly links CSR with sustainable development. So, too, does Sen (Grasso & de Giulio, nd) as noted above.

Sustainable development is a complex, complicated term, which continues to allude academic agreement (Barkemeyer et al., 2014; Johnston et al., 2007; Little, 2014). The definition most often cited is that of the Brundtland Commission, which states that sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987).

Elkington (1994) reduced sustainable developed to “the triple bottom line,” which has found resonance with business. Sustainable and, therefore, responsible businesses evaluate their actions in terms of people, planet and profit. Elkington’s statement is “a simple heuristic that both managers and business students can use as a prompt to remember the interrelated social, environmental, and economic dimensions fundamental to sustainability” (Collins & Kearins, 2010, p. 500).

Poverty alleviation fits squarely within the domain of sustainable development. For example, the effects of climate change are being felt all over the planet, but not equally. As Kofi Annan (2015) states in the 2015 *Africa Progress Report – Power, People and Planet,* "No region has done less to contribute to the climate crisis, but no region will pay a higher price for failure to tackle it” (p. 11).

Neal (in press), through his example of the Dong Nai region in Vietnam, and Santiago and Roxas (2016), through their examples of three live cases in the Philippines, further illustrate the environmental and ecological consequences of poverty in those countries. Sustainable development is virtually impossible without a reduction in poverty (Janvry & Sadoulet, 2016).

**Management Education**

There has always been an ongoing critique about the effectiveness of business schools and programmes (Ghoshal 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Muff et al., 2013; Porter & McKibbin, 1988; Thomas, 2014). Historically, these criticisms centered on the job market for graduates: Were business school graduates being adequately prepared to deal with the complex business issues employers (mainly corporations) faced? Yet the 2008 global crisis (Currie, Knights, & Starkey, 2010; Giacalone & Wargo, 2009), the ongoing deterioration of the earth's ecosystems, and a number of high profile, corporate ethical scandals (Klimek & Wenell, 2011) have reinvigorated the ongoing critique of business schools' purposes and methods (Pfeffer & Fong, 2004). Ghoshal (2005) most pointedly noted that

> business school faculty need to own up to our own role in creating Enrons. It is our theories and ideas that have done much to strengthen the management practices that we are all now so loudly condemning (p. 75).

However, a global survey of business school administrators and faculty members, conducted immediately after the global crisis, found great reluctance in the respondents to accept that responsibility (CEEMAN, 2009). On the one hand, fifty-eight percent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Professors rely too much on simplifying assumptions to drive their research and teaching" [as a contributing cause of the crisis], while 51% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "Business courses are too biased towards the impact on the bottom line" (CEEMAN, 2009). On the other (and more important) hand, when asked the degree to which "business schools share a large part of the blame for the current crisis," slightly less than two-thirds of the sample disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement (CEEMAN, 2009). The complexity of the 2008 crisis

was borne out in one other question. When asked to pinpoint the crisis's core, overwhelmingly respondents said it was economic, financial, and a failure of both corporate accountability and corporate leadership. Respondents also stated that the global crisis was a failure of ethics (42% strongly agreeing the statement) (CEEMAN, 2009). It is against this backdrop that both the Principles of Responsible Management Education and The Anti-Poverty WG emerged.

**Principles for Responsible Management Education**

Established in 2007, the Principles for Responsible Management Education has as its mission the development of "a new generation of business leaders capable of managing the complex challenges faced by business and society in the 21st century" (UN PRME - Principles of Responsible Management Education, 2016). Fundamental to achieving that mission is PRME's emphasis on the creation of sustainable value through responsible business leadership. "The academic sector can train professionals to act as generators of sustainable values for business and society, willing to endeavor for an inclusive and sustainable global economy" (quoted in Hayes, Parkes, & Murray, p. 15).

In the ten years since its founding, PRME has continued to flourish. The number of business schools that voluntarily commit to PRME's Six Principles is increasing. There are a number of regional PRME chapters to encourage local implementation of PRME's Six Principles. There are designated PRME Champion schools that serve as models for innovative, transformative expressions of PRME Principles, and there are a number of working groups that focus on the intersection between management education and social issues, such as poverty, gender equality, corruption, human rights, climate change, and peacebuilding. Yet PRME is not without its challenges.

As PRME has continued to increase its number of signatories, the issue of organisational learning becomes more salient. Currently, it is not clear that PRME's organisational structure fosters easy collaboration between groups. For example, working groups and the PRME champions group do not share natural overlaps or synergies. Both groups work independently, and it is only by chance that

the two groups may have a common member, who becomes, in turn, the de facto conduit for identifying the common areas of collaboration and support between the groups. As a learning network, this siloed structure may not be the best organisational design for PRME to foster collaboration and innovation.

Recently, the issue of institutional decoupling has also received attention (Moratis, 2016; Rasche & Gilbert, 2015; Snelson-Powell, Grosvold, & Millington, 2016). Rasche and Gilbert (2015) note that there can be differences between a business school's espoused policies and commitments to PRME that may be different from the school's internal policies and actions -hence the term "decoupling" (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Rasche and Gilbert (2015) also note that "the rather vague PRME reporting requirements contain no quality assurance mechanism, making it unclear how many schools are in reality committed to substantive implementation and how many hide behind general statements" (p. 240). Perry and Win (2013) suggest that signatory motivation to join PRME may be for marketing and reputational benefits rather than the more deeply embedded, substantive, and transformative changes to pedagogies, curricular designs, and stakeholder engagements to which PRME aspires. Louw (2015) also found that claims of PRME adoption resulting in a "paradigm change" on the part of business schools were exaggerated. His critical discourse analysis of UK PRME signatories' Sharing Information on Progress reports (SIPs) concluded that PRME discourse encourages a "marketing led" as opposed to "learning led" model of PRME adoption and practice, which thus positions business schools as ''servants of the corporate sector" (p. 201). Similar to Rasche and Gilbert (2015), Louw (2015) wants PRME to be more critical of signatories and of itself.

Since it is the origins and accomplishments of the Anti-Poverty WG that is this article's focus, it is to this topic that the article now turns.

**Origins of the Working Group on Poverty, a Challenge to Management Education**

A global survey on poverty and management education, sponsored by the Central and East European Management (CEEMAN) Association, was the academic precursor to the Anti-Poverty WG's formal

development. Launched in 2008 this global survey entitled, *Management Education: Corporate Social Responsibility and Poverty*, sought to explore faculty member and administrator perceptions about the seriousness of poverty as a human development issue both globally and locally as well as faculty member and administrator attitudes toward both impoverished individuals (for example, "I believe poor people have a different set of values than do other people") and toward poverty as a business topic. The survey also asked questions about the perceived depth of poverty discussions within the school's current curriculum (Rosenbloom & Gudić, 2008). One hundred fifty-four faculty members and administrators from business schools in 33 countries responded to the survey.

Faculty members and administrators strongly concurred that poverty was a serious human development issue. Exactly two thirds (66%) of the survey respondents said global poverty was "a very serious problem" (mean = 6.40, as measured on a 7-point scale, with 1 = not a serious problem at all and 7 = a very serious problem). However, when asked about their perceptions of the seriousness of poverty in the country where they taught, more divergent perceptions emerged. Approximately four percent of the sample (n=5) said poverty was not a problem locally; a third of the sample said poverty was moderately serious locally (n= 46); while 36% said poverty was a serious to very serious country problem (n=51).

The survey also asked a series of questions related to the legitimacy of poverty as a business topic as well as where and how often poverty-focused discussions occurred in the current curriculum. Overwhelmingly 73% of respondents (n= 102) said that poverty was a legitimate topic, while 20% (n=26) said they were "unsure." Eight percent (n=11) said that poverty was not a legitimate business topic (Rosenbloom & Gudić, 2008).

In December 2008, the 1st PRME Global Forum was held in New York City. Findings from this survey were presented in a plenary session of the Global Forum. Widespread interest among the delegates, coupled with both the personal interest of the then PRME Secretary Manuel Escudero, and

his acknowledgement that poverty alleviation was the MDGs' first goal, prompted the formation of the PRME Working Group: Poverty, a Challenge to Management Education (Gudić, Rosenbloom, & Parkes, 2014).

**Anti-Poverty WG Accomplishments**

Since its founding, the Anti-Poverty WG efforts to "create opportunities for multi-stakeholder discussions [on poverty], to foster discussions that lead to concrete results, to disseminate reports, to serve as a global repository for innovative curricular approaches, learning methods and educational materials that embed poverty in management education, and to support the development of a community of management educators, researchers and professionals committed to integrating poverty into the business curriculum" (Poverty Working Group Vision Statement, 2012) have found expression in four major activities: (1) research that seeks to understand the current state of poverty discussions in business schools and programmes worldwide; (2) publications in the form of authorship of reports and edited book collections exploring the nexus of management (broadly defined) and poverty; (3) support for conferences that engage faculty, administrators and students with poverty in relation to responsible management and sustainable development; and (4) broadening the depth and breadth of the WG's membership.

**1. Research**

In 2010, the first PRME Anti-Poverty WG survey was launched. The survey, *CEEMAN/PRME Survey on Poverty as a Challenge for Management Education* was conducted between May-September 2010 with the goal of "grasping the nature and scope of innovations taking place to include the issue of poverty in current and future curricula and pedagogical approaches" (Gudić, 2015). Three-hundred-and-seventy-seven individuals responded to the survey. As in the 2008 survey, respondents affirmed that poverty was a significant human development challenge, that poverty in the country in which they taught was a problem and that poverty was a legitimate business topic (2010 Survey on Global Poverty as a Challenge for Management Education, 2010). Ninety percent of respondents either agreed,

strongly agreed, or very strongly agreed with the statement “Poverty is a legitimate topic for management education.”

Respondents noted that poverty was often a topic discussed in their courses, yet not at sufficient scope and depth. When asked to speculate about course changes during the next two years, respondents anticipated greater coverage of poverty related issues and topics in their courses. Respondents were clear that different pedagogies would be needed to address poverty topics. Respondents revealed strong preferences for experiential activities, such as action learning, study trips with a poverty focus, and consulting projects for organisations with poverty alleviation projects, and much less support for more traditional pedagogical approaches (e.g., cases, articles, reports). Of note was the consistency in these recommendations, since respondents said they applied to all levels of business/management education: undergraduate through doctoral level study.

In early 2011, the Working Group conducted a three-round Delphi Survey (Linstone & Turoff, 1975) with its members to find projects and work products of common interest. Member interests coalesced around student learning activities (developing applied student projects with a strong poverty alleviation focus), faculty research (case writing, action research and cross-disciplinary research), and explorations of the relationship between poverty and sustainable development. Work products included scholarly articles, research surveys, publications, and platforms for sharing information. The Delphi Survey results were presented at an Anti-Poverty Planning Retreat in Bled, Slovenia, in July 2011. Member discussion resulted in (1) the design and implementation of a new global survey of business faculty and administrators to better understand the challenges they faced and the solutions they created as they grappled with including poverty in courses, programmes and curricula; and (2) the need for teaching materials that would explore the multiple dimensions of poverty within various business disciplines.

The new survey, which would be called, *Fighting Poverty through Management Education: Challenges, Opportunities, Solutions,* had four sections. Section One asked respondents to rate how extensively 14 responsible management topics were covered in their school's undergraduate and postgraduate curricula. Section Two, the longest and most detailed part of the survey, asked respondents to describe their first and second greatest challenge for including poverty in the school's curriculum, courses or modules. These were all open-ended questions. Section Three asked respondents to describe successes they had with integrating poverty into their teaching, and Section Four, which concluded the survey, asked a series of classification/demographic questions (e.g., number of enrolled students, whether programs over offered were at bachelor's, master's and/or doctoral levels, whether the school was public or private, the proportion of domestic and international students, whether the school was accredited and if so by which accrediting body, and whether the school was a PRME signatory). This survey received funding from EQUAL (The European Quality Link), the International Association of Quality Assessment and accreditation agencies in the field of European management education. Survey results were presented and published at the Rio+20 Conference in Rio de Janeiro, which also coincided with 3rd PRME Global Forum on *Management Education for the Future We Want*. Four hundred thirty-five faculty members or administrators, from 70 different countries, completed the survey.

The survey confirmed that around the world, faculty members with interests in the topic were pursuing creative strategies for incorporating poverty discussions within their respective courses. Disciplines represented in the success stories included management, marketing, operations, entrepreneurship, finance, strategy, human resources, and accounting. Importantly, the study also confirmed earlier findings with regard to the perceived acceptability of poverty in business and management schools generally (i.e., as distinct from the respondents' own views regarding the importance of this topic). A strong and recurrent theme in the 2012 study was the perceived lack of

topic legitimacy within this context. In particular, commonly held views were that poverty did not have a place within the business school, belonging rather to other disciplines, such as sociology or policy studies. In this context, a focus on poverty issues was also conceived of as inconsistent with the subject area of business, or, at best, as 'secondary' or 'soft' topics (Gudić, Parkes, & Rosenbloom, 2012, p. 24). As one respondent noted, "How do we justify having this course in a business school? It is the job of business to address poverty? I may think it is, but I need to have a good argument for that and I'm not sure I do at this exact moment." Thus, the issue of perceived lack of topic legitimacy is closely linked to prevailing business and management school attitudes. As another respondent noted, one of the biggest challenges faced in integrating poverty into management curricula was "conventional mindsets around what management/business as a discipline does/should consist of" (Gudić, Parkes, & Rosenbloom, 2012, p. 24)

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Insert Table 1 About Here

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Perhaps unsurprisingly, in light of the above, the survey found a significant gap between individual faculty member's willingness to including poverty in their respective courses and the school's overall commitment to a fuller integration of the topic into the curriculum or programme. Table 1 highlights this gap. When respondents were asked to evaluate the perceived opportunities for undergraduates and post-graduate students to study 14 responsible management topics, the opportunity to study poverty and inequality was ranked next to last in both undergraduate and post-graduate programs. As a survey respondent from Russia said, "The first step is personal - whether I believe this subject is worth being taught. The second is intellectual - how does it fit to a broader philosophy of business education. The third is properly institutional - what measure should we take on the level of programs, courses' syllabi and cases" (Gudić, Parkes, & Rosenbloom, 2012, p. 6).

Survey respondents were equally clear about the institutional barriers that account for this gap. They identified the following: (1) A "silo mentality" amongst faculty that stymies interdisciplinary teaching opportunities which is needed to do justice to the multiple factors that businesses must consider as they consider pro-poor business strategies. (2) Faculty perceptions that quantitative disciplines (economics, finance and account) hold privileged positions in the curriculum and that business degree programmes should stress knowledge development in these disciplines. (3) An acknowledgement that existing curricula and courses are already straining to include "required"/"essential" knowledge and that "new topics," such as poverty, would further reduce the foundational knowledge graduates need to compete successfully in the job market. As one respondent noted, "I think the biggest challenge is simply a matter of 'space' in the curriculum. Many faculty [sic] already feel we are trying to do too much (and not as well as we might like to). This is certainly an important topic, but I think it needs to be part of a more broadly based 'design of curricula' discussion - i.e., which topics will be focused upon where" (Gudić, Parkes, & Rosenbloom, 2012, p.17). (4) The failure of accrediting bodies to include poverty as one of their expectations for accreditation. Parallel to the saying, "What gets measured gets done" (Peters & Waterman, 1982), what is outlined in the accreditation standards gets taught. However, moving forward, Cooper et al. (2014) have argued that the values embodied by PRME, as it develops, are likely to become more embedded in the standards endorsed by the major accreditation agencies, not least of all because of these bodies' established links to PRME. Both AACSB and EFMD (EQUIS) were co-conveners in the establishment of PRME in 2007, while CEEMAN and AMBA became supporters of PRME in 2009 (Gudić, Parkes, & Rosenbloom, 2012.)

There is also an issue about the language used in relation to poverty and common understandings of how poverty is defined and how efforts to alleviate poverty are described. While there is general world-wide agreement on poverty reduction as an overriding goal (as articulated in both the MDGs and the SDGs), there are varying approaches to defining poverty. These include approaches

using monetary terms, by capability, as a mechanism of social exclusion and/or participation (Laderchi et al., 2003). In addition, there are distinctions between absolute poverty (defined in terms of minimal living standards) and relative (income distribution based) poverty related to "comparison others" (O'Boyle, 1999). Similarly, the language around efforts to alleviate poverty has changed and 'pro poor' inclusive strategies, defined as those "that enables the poor to actively participate in and significantly benefit from economic activity" is a significant shift from earlier 'trickle down' policies that failed to benefit the poor (Kakwani & Pernia, 2000).

Whilst BoP approaches (discussed earlier in this paper) ignited an interest in developing business approaches to poverty, the criticisms of the exploitative nature of the concept have seen a shift towards frameworks that favour more inclusive business models focusing more directly on poverty reduction. However, the question remains as to whether always looking to prove the 'business case' allows for real change. In a recent paper, Dyllick and Muff (2016) argue that truly sustainable and inclusive business needs to shifts its perspective from seeking to minimise its negative impacts to understanding how it can create a significant positive impact in critical and relevant areas for society and the planet. In a review of established business approaches, they note that using the business case and always starting with the business perspective results in a 'disconnect' between the actions and impact with many operating a 'business as usual' or 'refined shareholder value' approach, rather than activities that really deliver impact.

**2. Publications**

The Anti-Poverty WG's motivation to author reports and edited volumes of academic research on business/management education and poverty is threefold. First, publications concretely realize the Anti-Poverty WG's aspiration "to serve as a global repository for innovative curricular approaches, learning methods and educational materials that embed poverty in management education." Second, WG research, both external to the group (the *Global Poverty as a Challenge for Management Education*

Survey) and internal to the group (the 2011 Delphi Survey), found that faculty members worldwide strongly desired teaching materials on poverty's relationship to business/management topics. Third, scholarship that undergoes the scrutiny of a rigorous, blind, peer, or editorial review process as part of the publication process has the highest standing in academia. This is how knowledge is certified to become part of the public repository of ideas in any field of study (Kingsley, 2007). The Anti-Poverty WG thus developed two books, which would explain *why* poverty was an important business topic (Gudić, Rosenbloom, & Parkes, 2014) and show *how* the topic of poverty could be taught in and outside the classroom (Gudić, Rosenbloom, & Parkes, 2016).

Book 1 (*Socially Responsive Organisations and the Challenge of Poverty, 2014*) responded to earlier survey findings that the topic of poverty still requires a compelling business case for management faculty and senior management/administrators. To this end, the book set about providing rationales for why addressing the issue of poverty is imperative in management education and management. Further, it also provided a collection of action research and case studies to illustrate ways in which businesses (including many SMEs) and civil society organisations in local and global communities were finding practical solutions to alleviating poverty. More specifically, the book included the application of fuzzy set mathematics to World Bank poverty data (Lechman, 2014), the link between corruption and constrained human development in Africa (Malgwi, 2014), the effects of poverty on sectoral growth (Borgonovi, Boscolo, & Calo, 2014; O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 2014), poverty and human rights as analysed through a "protect, respect and remedy" framework (Lynch-Wood, 2014), and redefinitions of inclusive markets (Chevrollier et al., 2014; Boechat et al., 2014).

As poverty is a regional phenomenon and thus has different contours and dimensions in different countries, the book's poverty alleviation case examples cover a range of country-specific contexts and thus shed light on these differing experiences: Argentina (Koch, 2014), Poland (Wasowska, 2014), Palestine (Al-Arda, 2014), Laos (Prejer, Levall, & Mark-Herbet, 2014), the United Kingdom

(Lowman, 2014), and Australia (Ayson, 2014). Innovations, such as using strategic design to improve community well-being in a Rio de Janeiro slum (del Gaudio, Jefferson de Olieira, & Franzato, 2014 ) and crowdsourcing as a means of co-creating value with the poor (Berardi, Tonelli & Serio, 2012), were also included. Blasco (2015) reviewed the book noting that the book's title, with its focus on 'organisations,' was underdeveloped in the book's introduction and that not all chapters addressed the teaching implications of the research and ideas presented.

Book 2 (*Responsible Management Education and the Challenge of Poverty: A Teaching Perspective*) directly took up Blasco's (2015) charge to have more consistent, sustained 'reflections on how management educators can include the issues raised in their teaching' (p. 303). *Responsible Management Education and the Challenge of Poverty: A Teaching Perspective* (Gudić, Rosenbloom, & Parkes, 2016), for example, presented ideas about how to integrate poverty into an organisational behavior course (Rivera, 2016), into marketing courses (Motta & Brashear, 2016; Subramahniyan & Gomez, 2016), and into an economics course that also had students reading fiction (Mason, 2016). London (2016b) presented a detailed description of his MBA course on the BoP, while Nitkin and Shapiro (2016) described the design of an intensive, two-week, interdisciplinary, immersion programme that required students to develop sustainable solutions to empowering women who live "on the edge of poverty." The book included four examples of community-based and experiential learning (Fiorroto, 2016; Portales & de la Torre, 2016; Schlange, 2016; Vikhanski, Kiseleva, & Churkina, 2016), while also demonstrating how students can gain different insights into poverty when the learning lenses of pragmatism, critical praxis, and embodiment (Simola, 2016), or explication (Lowman, 2016), or systems thinking (Santiago & Roxas, 2016) are applied. Horne (2016) discussed financial exclusion and the digital divide, and Chymis, Di Bitetto, D'Anselmi, and Skouloudis (2016) described responsible public management in dealing with the issue of poverty.

In an effort to work more collaboratively with other working groups, the Anti-Poverty WG is involved in two joint book projects with the PRME Anti-corruption and the PRME Gender Equality working groups. The two publications under this joint sponsorship explore the integration of the United Nations Global Compact principles, values, and spirit into business practices and management education. *Beyond the Bottom Line: Integrating the UN Global Compact into Business and Management Practice* (Gudić, M., Tan, T.K., & Flynn, P., in press) offers best practices and innovative solutions that can assist organisations in successfully implementing the UN Global Compact's Ten Principles and PRME's Six Principles. The book's theme is that organisational viability and success is achievable but not at the expense of the larger community and future generations. *Redefining Success: Integrating UN Global Compact into Management Education* (Flynn, P., Tan, T.K., & Gudić, M., in press) assists academics in bringing global sustainability issues into their classrooms and scholarship. Both books reference the post-2015 development agenda and the related 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including the SDG #1 on poverty.

Lastly, the Anti-Poverty WG's, *Collection of Best Practices and Inspirational Solutions* (http://www.ceeman.org/docs/default-source/hc-presentations/poverty-wg-collection-of-best-practices-june2012.pdf?sfvrsn=0), is an online document that provides short teaching examples of how to integrate poverty issues into business/management courses. The document is structured around 13 types of innovative experiences: cases, journal articles, books, pictures, videos, guest lecture series, etc. Through all of the above-mentioned publications, the WG thus seeks to advance an appreciation of the critical need to integrate poverty in management education curricula well as to make a practical contribution as to how this may be achieved via specific learning methodologies and approaches.

**3. Conferences and Outreach**

As a further step in developing a learning community of faculty, administrators, and students with shared interests in understanding poverty from a business perspective, the Anti-Poverty Working

Group has convened and co-sponsored several thematic conferences. Not only were these conferences another tangible expression of the Anti-Poverty WG's aspiration to support platforms for knowledge exchange and learning, but they also were desired activities identified in the three global poverty surveys noted above and the 2011 WG Delphi Survey results. Whether it was in a series of workshops that ran alongside the 2013 PRME Summit on "New Ways for Developing Leaders for the Future We Want" held in Bled, Slovenia, or in its co-organising capacity of the international experiential learning conference on *Leveraging Innovative and Cross-country Learning for Poverty Reduction: Climbing the Economic Ladder – Examples from and for Nicaragua* (PRME Anti-Poverty Working Group, 2014), or its participation in the first, second, third and fourth Responsible Management Education Research conferences, the Anti-Poverty WG has consistently developed sessions on the innovations, new ideas and perspectives on teaching about poverty; has sponsored poverty-focused research tracks; and has provided forums for multi-dimensional dialogues on the issues of poverty and management education. Anti-Poverty WG members also contributed video stories describing their professional and institutional experiences in the format of the 2013 PRME Summit's framework of "4 I's of PRME: Inspiration, Innovation, Implementation and Impact."

The Nicaragua conference, with its theme of innovation and cross-country learning, brought together the WG's commitment to (1) develop a learning community around poverty, (2) provide delegates with a conference experience that went beyond academic presentations, and (3) model how poverty intersects with the work of other PRME working groups. Held at the INCAE Business School, Managua, Nicaragua, the conference emphasized interactive, experiential learning activities for all delegates. Delegates visited a milk processing company, Centrolac, and Coopa milk cooperative in a low income, rural area of Nicaragua and participated in knowledge integrations sessions throughout the conference. The intent was to create a rich, experiential learning environment for faculty members similar to student experiential learning experiences. Additionally, the conference had a session in which

the Anti-Corruption Toolkit (http://actoolkit.unprme.org/modules/introduction/), produced by the PRME Anti-Corruption Working Group, was discussed in the context of the mutually interrelated corruption and poverty-related issues.

While not explicitly mentioned in the WG vision and aspirations, the WG is also deeply committed to fostering critical engagement with poverty on the part of young people, believing that such engagement is crucial to the future success of any discussions, activities, knowledge creation and dissemination in the context of poverty reduction. As part of this commitment, the WG co-sponsored the Challenge:Future initiative (www.challengefuture.org), with the aim of establishing new transnational partnerships for providing real skills and leadership opportunities to global youth, while strengthening their employability prospects. In Bled, the 2013Challenge:Future competition finalists, who worked on the challenge of fighting poverty by reducing youth unemployment, and Anti-Poverty WG members participated in a joint workshop where the two groups exchanged ideas.

The Anti-Poverty WG's outreach activities and events are designed to meet two of its key aspirational targets, namely to create opportunities for multi-stakeholder discussions on poverty and to support the development of a community of management educators, researchers and professionals committed to integrating poverty into the business/management curricula (Poverty Working Group Vision Statement, 2012). To that end, the Anti-Poverty WG has been involved in a number of events, both within and outside of the PRME community. It has, for example, contributed to a special anti-poverty collaboratory, which was part of the Rio+20 Corporate Sustainability Forum's session on Foundations for Sustainable Leadership: Responsible Management and Leadership Education (2012); it participated in the Academy of Management's annual meeting (Boston, 2012) with an All Academy Themed session, "The Informal Economy, Poverty and Responsible Management Education;" and it developed two tracks at the EURAM 2015 annual conference (Warsaw, Poland) on "Uncertainty as an Opportunity." One track was on poverty, while the other covered leadership challenges and

opportunities in the context of uncertainty. Weybrecht (2012) published a two-part interview with one of the Anti-Poverty WG's co-founders.

The WG's outreach to young adults, as emerging business, community and global leaders, is evidenced by its three-year, co-sponsorship of the Student Essay Writing Competition project at the D.A. Tsenov Academy of Economics (Svishtov, Bulgaria), launched and organised by WG member Anastasiya Marcheva. University students from around the world were asked to write essays on the relationship between social inclusion and poverty, the meaning of responsible leadership, and inclusive businesses as a tool for poverty reduction. Over those three years, the essay contest has involved over 250 students, from 24 business schools and universities in 14 countries.

**Assessment to date**

What later became known as the "4 Hidden I's of PRME": Inspiration, Innovation, Implementation and Impact provide a simple framework through which to evaluate the Anti-Poverty WG's activities to date. As the preceding sections indicate, the Anti-Poverty WG has been effective in creating inspiration and promoting innovation related to poverty as an overlooked yet important issue in business/management education. The Anti-Poverty WG has conducted the first-of-its-kind research to measure the extent of poverty inclusion in business/management education worldwide. The WG has published case examples from scholars, who are at the leading edge of poverty education in business/management schools and programmes, to showcase teaching and extracurricular innovations. The WG has brought the issue of poverty into the domain of general management through its participation in the Academy of Management annual conference, and it has tapped the creativity of youth, who will be the next generation of business and community leaders dealing with the challenge of poverty reduction. The Anti-Poverty WG has also modeled cross-collaboration with other PRME working groups and chapters. These achievements are all in line with the Anti-Poverty WG's vision and aspirational objectives to be advocates for poverty as a legitimate topic for discussion and research in

schools of business and management; to be catalysts for innovative, profitable and responsible approaches to poverty reduction; and to engage multiple stakeholders who can drive innovative curriculum development (Poverty Working Group Vision Statement, 2012). The continuous internal dialogue among WG members and their individual contributions and commitments have been instrumental to these achievements. At the time of this publication, the Anti-Poverty WG had 172 members from 137 institutions in 53 countries around the globe.

Yet challenges as well as opportunities still remain for the WG, particularly in the areas of implementation and impact. Although the Anti-Poverty WG has worked collaboratively with some PRME working groups, more needs to be done. Poverty impinges on the PRME working groups related to peace, sustainability, innovation, climate change and environment, as well as human rights. The Anti-Poverty WG has yet to establish a strong working relationship with these PRME working groups. Similarly, because poverty exists in every country, forging stronger, more formal relationships with PRME Regional Chapters becomes imperative.

PRME Principle 3 related to methods. Surprisingly, the WG's *Collection of Best Practices and Inspirational Solution,* has failed to become a dynamic resource. Designed to be an open, collaborative, organic document in which faculty members would both read about and contribute their own innovations in teaching about poverty, the Collection has remained almost static since its publication in 2012. Few new ideas have been added since publication. The Collection is a noble yet unfulfilled effort. PRME Principle 4 relates to research. While the Anti-Poverty WG has undertaken important first-of-its-kind research, here, too, more needs to be done. Topics worthy of more research include: poverty and the persistently growing inequalities as economic, social and human phenomena; approaches and efforts to integrate this global challenge into management education, and the SDG perspective that posits the interconnectedness of the complex, multidimensional issue of poverty with the other 16 SDGs. What lies ahead for the Anti-Poverty WG will be discussed in the paper's last section. However,

before proceeding to that discussion, the paper turns next to the dual challenges of making the transitions from the MDGs to the SDGs and from focusing on "poverty" to the broader issue of "income inequality."

**The Next Transitions: From Poverty to Inequality, from MDGs to SDGs**

In the post-2015 era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasis has begun to shift from an emphasis on *extreme* poverty, as previously encapsulated by MDG1 ("to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger", to a wider lens understanding of poverty in its broader manifestations (SDG1: "End poverty *in all its forms everywhere*"). This has been an important advancement because, further to recognising that poverty is a phenomenon not limited to the global South, it presents an acknowledgement that poverty wears many different mantles, over and above its extreme forms, and is experienced in many different ways in different places. As Gudić, Rosenbloom and Parkes (2015) observe, "Poverty is relative to the place and time one lives in" (p.2). Thus a key development in the poverty agenda recently (and moving forward with the SDGs) has been the growing appreciation of the critical role played by inequality.

As discussed earlier in this paper, the appreciation of the relative dimension of poverty has also found expression in the concept of 'relative poverty', in terms of which poverty is defined *in relation to* the economic status of other members of society (UNESCO, 2016). Indeed, as noted by UNESCO (2016), the concept of relative poverty was developed to address perceived shortcomings associated with the construct of absolute poverty; in particular, the criticisms that the latter does not account for broader issues concerning the quality of life (such as social or cultural needs) and is not concerned with the overall level of inequality in society. In this context, van Tulder (2007) has observed that the concept of relative poverty is more controversial than that of absolute poverty, as it is associated with inequality in society.

Yet, greater recognition of the corrosive effect of inequality is of crucial importance in any debates on poverty. Inequality is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today, as it has been shown to be linked to a wide range of human problems, such as ill health, criminality, war, lack of education and safety (van Tulder, 2007), violence, higher teenage birth rates, lower levels of trust, weaker community lives and more people in prison (Wilkinson, 2010). Indeed, Jim Yong Kim, the President of the World Bank, has recently identified inequality as a ''powerful threat" to progress around the world, which is "constraining national economies and destabilising global collaboration in ways that put humanity's most critical achievements and aspirations at risk. This includes the goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030" (World Bank Group, 2016, p. ix).

Compelling research evidence for the link between income inequality and a variety of societal ills has been provided by Wilkinson and Pickett (2010), who investigated the effects of inequality on a wide range of health and social problems. The authors found that, the higher the levels of inequality in a given country, the worse these countries fared for a range of different problems, such as mental health, physical health, drug abuse, violence, imprisonment, educational performance, social mobility, trust and community life, teenage pregnancies, obesity and child well-being. What made the authors' findings so remarkable, was that it was not poverty *per se* that increased the incidence of the above problems, but *disparities in income* within societies, with the more unequal countries experiencing a significantly higher level of the above conditions.

These research findings underscore the necessity of incorporating the topic of inequality in any poverty-based discussions. Furthermore, while both poverty and inequality are important for the well-being of populations, it should be borne in mind that absolute poverty becomes less relevant in rich, developed countries, where it no longer impacts on more than just a small percentage of the population (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). By contrast, relative poverty and relative social status affect the vast majority of people. Thus, "the problems in rich countries are not caused by the society not being rich

enough (or even by being too rich) but by the scale of material differences between people within each society being too big. What matters is "where we stand in relation to others in our own society" (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010 p. 25).

In order to help facilitate companies' efforts in this regard, the Global Compact has developed a 'Guide for Business Action on the SDGs', also known as the SDG Compass, which shows companies how they can align their strategies in line with the SDGs, while also helping them to measure and manage their contribution to the goals (UN Global Compact SDG Compass, 2015).

Equally, business schools, as educators of current and future managers and business leaders, have a crucially important role to play in the success of achieving these objectives. The UN PRME Secretariat (2015) holds that higher education institutions (HEIs) are of "critical" importance in the advancement of the SDGs, as they have the ability to equip students, tomorrow's business leaders, with responsible and sustainable business skills. Business schools can contribute to an advancement of the SDGs in a number of ways: by aligning their curricula and research to the SDG agenda; engaging in more *applied* research that can enhance businesses' abilities to be more sustainable; inspiring students to commit to, and act in accordance with, the SDGs; acting as advisors, suppliers of knowledge and mediators among businesses, civil society and government in support of the SDGs (ibid.)

Lawrence (2016), Professor at Hult International Business School, advances a convincing argument why the SDGs should be integrated into business curricula:

> As we move through the 21st century, the growing gap between rich and poor has been identified as one of the greatest threats to world security and prosperity. If companies are going to continue to thrive, they are going to need skilled employees and educated consumers. The pursuit of the SDGs is not just morally right but economically essential. The SDGs are about bringing the majority of the world—the 'other' 6 billion people – into the economy. Addressing the SDGs and business growth and economic stability are integrated.

These viewpoints are shared by Weybrecht (2015), who stresses that the SDGs should not be regarded as separate from business. The author notes that all seventeen SDGs impact on, and are impacted by, all aspects of business - business as taught and researched by business schools all over the globe. Thus, it is

imperative that students understand the SDGs, appreciate their relevance to business and the risks and opportunities they represent.

Embedding the SDGs into the core curricula of business schools will be one of the ways in which this can take place. Likewise, research can play an important role in advancing the goals (UN PRME 2015), while, conversely, the goals themselves have the power to redirect research in a way that will make it more relevant to business and society and business school research capabilities are an "underutilised resource" by both the business and the global community in moving the agenda forward (Weybrecht, 2015).

Furthermore, as Kingo (2016), the Executive Director of the UN Global Compact, observed, "Change will not come as a result of meetings held at UN Headquarters alone, but as a result of deliberate and tangible action on the ground." Yet, businesses, as one of the group of actors on the ground, will not be able to contribute much to change if they are not informed about the SDGs and this is where business schools have a key role. This is where business schools come in. "Business and management schools already play a key role in shaping the skills of future business leaders, but much more can be done to ensure these leaders have the skills needed to balance economic and sustainability goals" (Haertle, 2016).

**What lies ahead for the Anti-Poverty WG**

Guidance for the Anti-Poverty WG's future activities comes from three sources: (1) A newly completed Delphi Survey (2016), (2) a commitment to 'zero' poverty by understanding poverty's root causes (parallel to SDG #1) (Global Forum Anti-Poverty WG Roundtable, 2015); and (3) an ongoing commitment to action/impact-oriented communication and collaboration (Global Forum Anti-Poverty WG Roundtable, 2015). Table 2 presents the results of a new Delphi Survey of working group members completed in early 2016.

Insert Table 2 about Here

Table 2 identifies 16 projects that have the most common interest amongst Anti-Poverty WG members. As noted, members gave the highest priority to developing an online toolkit. As evidenced by the rise of Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and the global shift to hybrid/blended learning around the world, an online toolkit has the potential not only to accelerate the implementation of ideas surrounding poverty and income inequality into business and management courses, but also to enable the evaluation of their impact. Table 2 also identifies faculty development as the second most important initiative for the WG. There is a natural, mutually reinforcing relationship between the online toolkit and faculty development: As an online platform, the toolkit becomes the backbone for all other listed projects in Table 2, while also serving as the entry point into an accessible, easy-to-update learning resource on poverty and income inequality. Further, it can be noted that most of the member-identified activities after the toolkit and faculty development topics are specifically aimed at implementation and impact in their respective areas (entrepreneurship development, executive education, special summer schools and modules for youth, targeted programs for poor regions and emerging economies, collaboration among business schools from different parts of the world, joint focused research, publication, etc.).

In line with the Anti-Poverty WG's already established commitment to research, WG members also supported updating the global survey on *Fighting Poverty through Management Education: Challenges, Solutions, Opportunities* (Gudić, Parkes, & Rosenbloom, 2012). It will be of interest to see whether there has been a shift in the opportunity to study the topic of poverty, relative to other responsible management topics, since the first survey was conducted (see Table 1) and whether poverty/inequality is now any more embedded in business and management degree courses throughout the world. This new study will provide a measure of both impact and implementation of

poverty/inequality issues in business/management education. The survey will be conducted in Spring 2017, with preliminary results presented, it is hoped, at the 2017 PRME Global Forum (New York).

Lastly, the Working Groups will need to establish and/or further expand closer communication and collaboration with other stakeholders and possible partners in the next couple of years. Whilst the work of the Anti-Poverty WG focuses on SDG1, it is essential to see the SDGs as interconnected entities, with clear links between its 17 different goals. For example, it is impossible to think about advances in gender equality without thinking about its causal relationship with poverty. Similarly, progress on climate change will be limited if poverty forces individuals to act in ways that continue to degrade the environment. The Anti-Poverty WG will need to work with partners that tackle these issues too.

One of the most important partners is the UN Global Compact. Many Global Compact businesses are not only actively involved in building inclusive business models but are also involved in responsibly marketing products and services designed for low income individuals and communities. Yet the Anti-Poverty WG has yet to establish a working relation with Global Compact companies. Whilst there are proposals for the integration of the 10 UN Global Compact Principles with the six PRME principles, the Anti-Poverty WG can take the lead in developing this relationship. This closer relationship between PRME and the UN Global Compact would then realize the synergistic potential between the UN Global Compact as a "platform of platforms" and PRME as a "networks of networks".

As this article is being written, the world is increasingly beset by challenges to the fundamental dignity and respect for the diversity of humankind. The core values of tolerance, integrity and fair-mindedness are also being challenged. The SDGs represent the pursuit of universal values and principles of the United Nations, namely non-discrimination, equality, freedom, and diversity. As a PRME working group, these values and principles are at the heart of the Anti-Poverty WG's work. Whilst it is recognized that these global goals are complex and challenging, it is particularly important during times of uncertainty and change to uphold and promote these fundamental principles and values in

every society as well as in the educational and research work and activities of working groups and of PRME.

As in the past, the Anti-Poverty WG will express these values as it seeks to influence various elements of the educational management system that include educational programmes, processes, actors involved, and institutional and organisational arrangements. With its emphasis on implementation and impact, the WG's future actions focus will also be multidimensional to encompass: individuals, individual schools, groups of schools, as well as international organisations, and in particular the PRME community as a whole. The Anti-Poverty WG is committed to upholding these values, to working with constituencies that can reduce global inequality, and to participating in the creation of a world without poverty.

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**Table 1. Perceived Opportunities to Study Responsible Management Topics in Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Business Programs**

| Undergraduate | | | Post-Graduate | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Topic | Mean | Standard Deviation | Topic | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Ethics | 3.77* | .993 | Corporate Governance | 3.80* | 1.034 |
| Corporate Social Responsibility | 3.65 | .992 | Corporate Social Responsibility | 3.77 | .990 |
| International Development | 3.64 | 1.097 | International Development | 3.71 | 1.061 |
| Corporate Governance | 3.62 | 1.094 | Ethics | 3.68 | .998 |
| Sustainable Development | 3.32 | 1.158 | Sustainable Development | 3.42 | 1.115 |
| Social Entrepreneurship | 3.07 | 1.148 | Social Entrepreneurship | 3.13 | 1.090 |
| Environmental Sustainability | 3.02 | 1.095 | Environmental Sustainability | 3.07 | 1.110 |
| Public Policy/Governmental Studies | 3.01 | 1.227 | Public Policy/Governmental Studies | 3.05 | 1.189 |
| Political Stability | 2.74 | 1.165 | Third Sector/Civil Society/NGO Relationships | 2.80 | 1.183 |
| Third Sector/Civil Society/NGO Relationships | 2.71 | 1.137 | Political Stability | 2.74 | 1.140 |
| Human Rights | 2.67 | 1.093 | Corruption | 2.73 | 1.132 |
| Corruption | 2.65 | 1.108 | Human Rights | 2.66 | 1.128 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Poverty & Inequality | 2.51 | 1.089 | | Poverty & Inequality | 2.60 | 1.082 |
| Climate Change | 2.41 | 1.101 | | Climate Change | 2.46 | 1.140 |
| * Scale: 1= no opportunity to study, 2= little opportunity to study, 3=some opportunity to study, 4=significant opportunity to study, 5=extensive opportunity to study | | | | | | |

| **Table 2. Dephi Survey Topics Having the Greatest Consensus for the Anti-Poverty WG's Future Work*** |
|---|
| 1. Develop an online toolkit (comprised of readings and cases) for integrating poverty in specific management disciplines<br>2. Design faculty development tools/modules for PRME schools to use to train faculty to integrate poverty/global compact into curriculum<br>3. Entrepreneurship Education and poverty reduction<br>4. Frame fighting poverty as a business opportunity<br>5. Hold a poverty-focused conference that includes a poverty immersion experience for delegates<br>6. Establish international teams for delivering summer schools and various elective courses on poverty alleviation around the globe<br>7. Joint research project about the main causes of poverty<br>8. Facilitate collaborative paper writing on poverty topics<br>9. Design an executive education program in module (for example 3-4modules every two months) to be delivered in different universities or other institutions involved in anti-poverty program.<br>10. Cooperate with educational institution in poverty countries<br>11. Cooperate/increase cooperation with social responsible enterprises, which could give internship opportunities<br>12. Identify innovative inclusive business models as case examples for the UNGC<br>13. Initiate collaboration and partnership with UN Global Compact and its signatories<br>14. Encourage the transfer of know-how to management education institutions located in poor regions<br>15. Design and delivery of a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) course on poverty issue<br>16. Analyse all SDGs for cross reference to poverty reduction |
| * The full list of 71 topics is available by contacting any of the authors. |