

The Copenhagen Conference Declaration: A Call to Action for Management Education¹

Presented at the PRME/CBS International Conference on “Responsible Management Education: Sustainable Leadership in the Era of Climate Change”,
23-24 November 2009, Copenhagen Business School

Business schools around the world call upon political leaders to agree to an ambitious global climate treaty at COP15 in Copenhagen setting a tone of integration and effective cooperation with beneficial effects for the future of our interdependent world. As business schools we understand our vital role in shaping and disseminating the values and best practices that future business leaders need to transform a global climate framework into action. At the *PRME/CBS Conference* it was agreed that to effectively support an ambitious climate framework, business schools should:

1. Integrate Climate-related Topics into Management Education

To meet the climate challenges, citizens of the world will have to alter their behavior and the economic, social and political governance systems that support human civilization. Not only are changes needed in external systems, but also within corporations in their relations with suppliers, customers, competitors, media, civil society and governments. To deal effectively with the changes needed, management education needs to adapt existing knowledge to include issues of climate change and sustainability within core disciplines as part of the new business imperative. These issues need to be integrated not only into businesses and more technical analyses related to the natural environment, but into the very core of business strategy, and that integration needs to be reflected in business school curricula. The climate challenge is multi-disciplinary and our response must be based on multi-stakeholder dialogue on climate change among educators, students, and other stakeholders such as, but not limited to, governments, business practitioners, local and global communities and NGOs.

2. Research the Role of Business in a Low Carbon Economy

Companies must base their future decisions on solid research and analyses: a future low carbon and sustainable economy needs to be based on well-researched management practices. Researchers and scholars need to rethink the (often implicit) premises that traditional management models are based upon and create new models of management, economics, and business that are inherently sustainable, have low carbon footprints, encourage disclosure and transparency, and meet true social needs. Business schools should encourage and reward research and other forms of scholarship on issues of management and climate change, and support professional development, through professional associations, linkages to business initiatives, publication outlets, and on-going faculty development in these domains, along with encouraging students to incorporate climate change issues into their research.

3. Lead by Example

In order to inspire the way forward for future generations we will strive to fully incorporate issues of climate change and sustainability into our operations through green campus strategies. We will spread within the PRME community of academic institutions and beyond among local similarly-spirited communities the following good practices:

- Estimating and disclosing the carbon impact of our research and education activities
- Taking measures to reduce our carbon footprint, namely developing energy efficiency saving attitudes, promoting renewable energies and sustainable mobility. The aim should be to reduce our GHGs emissions at least by 40% by 2020, and to reach carbon neutrality by 2030
- Using carbon offsetting practices only where it has been found very difficult to reduce emissions

Climate action and low carbon innovation is part of the bigger sustainability agenda as advanced by the UN Global Compact, whose values inspired our Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). We understand that the preservation of the basis for human growth requires a simultaneous attention to the pivotal problem of climate change along with three related global risks: food crises, water sustainability and energy uncertainties. Business schools should commit to develop a new generation of leaders capable of understanding the interrelation between those global challenges and acting effectively with new approaches and the necessary skills and efficacy conducive to change. In order to stay in tune with the global development on these issues we consider this a living document that will be updated according to the evolution of the climate change issues and the PRME community.

¹ The views expressed in this Declaration have been informed by deliberations among all participants at the abovementioned conference. They do not necessarily reflect the views of all conference participants or the entire global PRME community.