

# **An exploratory study of commitment to RME as demonstrated in mission statements and websites in selected US business schools**

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## **Introduction**

Business schools are the primary source of management education and form a link between knowledge generation and knowledge transfer into businesses and society. They occupy a position where they can make a difference in that respect as they educate future experts and leaders who will occupy important and often influential positions in private, public, and voluntary political organizations for the next decades (Kaplan, 2021). Therefore, as an initial place for future decision-makers, leaders (deans) in business schools bear significant responsibility for students, businesses, and society. However, studies (i.e., Chia, 2014; Davies, 2016; Pettigrew & Starkey, 2016; Pfeffer & Fong, 2004; Spender, 2016; Thomas & Cornuel, 2012; Thomas et al., 2014) critique the relevance of business programs, the preparation of ethical business leaders, and an over-emphasis on the career-enhancing, and salary-increasing aspects of business education. Therefore, further pressures have added to the US business schools and their leaders.

In the US and around the globe, business schools are facing intense criticism and a legitimacy crisis (Miotto et al., 2019). They have criticized and are considered responsible for educating the professionals who have caused the global financial crisis (Alajoutsijarvi et al., 2015; Khurana & Penrice, 2011). Therefore, put their efforts into developing strategies to educate responsible managers (Goodpaster et al., 2018; Laasch & Gherardi, 2019). Consequently, business schools have a crucial role to play in realizing sustainability (Dyllick, 2015), emphasizing CSR (Visser et al., 2007), integrations of ethics in management education, and developing responsible leadership management with moral and ethical components (Fougere et al., 2014; Rayment & Smith, 2013; Thompson, 2010).

Worldwide, business schools present various stages and commitments to responsible management education (RME). Some of them as pioneers and inspire others, while others are still at the early stages of their RME journey (Parkes et al., 2017). Recently, Storey et al. (2017) examined the field of RME in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As the world is trying to reboot due to the covid pandemic, the business world needs skilled managers and leaders to make a substantial social impact and contribute to solving socio-economic problems stemming from the grand societal challenges of our times (Moratis & Melissen, 2020). Consequently, business schools' massive educational power and duty (Parkes et al., 2017) and to their leaders' shoulders. To recapture their relevant role in the society, business schools and their leaders have started a new journey through the review of their missions, visions, and values, assessing their management, teaching, research, and communication responsible strategies and policies (Aragon-Correa et al., 2017; Pettigrew & Starkey, 2016).

Drucker (1973) used to say simply that the organization's mission answers the question: "why do we exist as an organization?" The mission statement as "a socially constructed phenomenon with various functions revealed through metaphor that engage different audiences and closely tied to institutional context and purpose" (Zenk & Seashore Louis, 2018, p. 1) represents a critical element of the organizational identity. Mission statements express an organization's plan, hopes, and expectations for the future. Studies (i.e., Haberkamp et al., 2018; Papadimitriou & Schiffecker, 2021; Zenk & Seashore Louis, 2018) have further investigated mission statement's impact on strategic and operational decision making. While other researchers note that mission statements allow organizations to communicate and market unique characteristics, values, and purposes to external stakeholders (Meacham, 2008; Mophew & Hartley, 2006; Wang et al., 2007).

Specialized accreditation associations have required colleges and universities to have mission statements that establish and publicly communicate the institution's commitments. More importantly, associations such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the Association of MBAs (AMBA), and the European Foundation for Management Development's (EFMD) Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) require colleges and universities to demonstrate the achievement of its mission. For example, the AACSB requires that the "accreditation review focuses on a member's clear determination of its mission." Therefore, "each institution must achieve and demonstrate an acceptable level of performance consistent with its mission." Some studies have examined mission statements concerning sustainability commitment and performance (Lee et al., 2013; Lopez & Martin, 2018; Palmper & Short, 2008); however, no studies explore responsible management education commitment in business schools' mission statements.

In these uncharted and rough waters, and to add to the body of literature related to RME for the future – some business school challenges, this chapter aims to offer insights into critical issues facing business schools for RME. It answers the question of "to what extent have US business schools embedded responsible business education in the mission statements?" The remainder of this chapter has as follows. First, the following section presents the literature review; then, it describes the research methodology. Third, it summarizes and discusses the results, and finally, it offers the conclusion together with its contribution, limitations, and future research avenues.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Accreditation and Ranking**

Business school rankings significantly influence student recruitment and create pressure on their deans. Studies (Bachrach et al., 2017; Davidson, 2017) highlight rankings as illogical, debated, and primarily a student-generated source of influence over which the administration, the faculty, and disciplines have little control. McTiernan and Flynn (2011) surveyed 350 business deans at the AACSB-member schools globally. They revealed that improving the business school's reputation was a dean's top priority, followed by enhancing educational programs and keeping accreditation, increasing external funding, and improving faculty teaching. While, Davies (2015) discovered similar results within 326 U.S. business school deans in which they revealed growing pressure by their universities to increase and generate revenues and enhance rankings and

reputations. Additionally, with the mushrooming of management education worldwide, Trapnell (2007) discusses the advantages and value of the AACSB International accreditation brand as a differentiator and competitive advantage. AACSB does not require prior permission to use the seal, nor do they need to review the business schools' marketing materials. However, AACSB encourages accredited institutions to use the accreditation seal, which they can request through the AACSB website. Specifically, the accreditation agency notes: “Earning AACSB Accreditation is a significant accomplishment, and we encourage you to promote your achievement—in print, on your institution's website, and around campus.” AACSB is collecting examples of schools worldwide that are promoting their accreditation. “Share your story with us by sending your photos, stories, and videos to ....

(<https://www.aacsb.edu/educators/accreditation/business-accreditation/faqs/general-accreditation>).

### ***2.1. 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals***

In September 2015, world leaders at the United Nations unanimously adopted a new global development agenda, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, one of the most ambitious and critical global agreements in recent history. Sustainable development is an organizing principle for global development that supports both people and the planet (United Nations, n.d.). The 2030 Agenda, which came into effect on 1 January 2016 with the 17 SDGs at its core, represents a guide to tackling the world's most pressing challenges, including ending poverty and bringing economic prosperity, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and peace to all countries and all people by 2030. The SDGs set out a vision for a better world that relies on cooperation and interdependence (Owens, 2017). Studies also suggest that the SDGs give a new distinction to private businesses as a driver of change (Sachs, 2012). The importance of higher education institutions in achieving sustainable development targets can be traced back to the 1972 Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment (United Nations, 1972). Today, universities and colleges are acknowledged as a critical driver for the development of sustainable societies (Stephens et al., 2008), so much so that some scholars say that education for sustainable development is the most fundamental of the United Nation's 17 SDGs (Hallinger & Chatpinyakoo, 2019).

### ***2.2 Time Higher Education Impact Rankings***

The *Times Higher Education Impact Rankings* is currently the only assessment of university performance against SDGs (Hazelcorn, 2021). It used a range of performance metrics and developed the global performance tables that assess universities against the United Nations' SDGs. The *Impact Rankings* launched its SDGs ranking in 2019. At that time, 500 universities submitted data, while 858 submitted data to the 2020 edition. It uses calibrated indicators to provide comprehensive and balanced comparison across four broad areas: research, stewardship, outreach, and teaching. Universities submit evidence, examples, and data against at least four of the 17 SDGs, while it is mandatory to offer data for SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). There are several critiques about the SDGs and how universities might support them for the public good (Hickel, 2016; Neubauer & Calame, 2017). Additionally there is a criticism about the indicators and the adopted methodology (Calderon, 2019; Hazelcorn, 2019). Despite these criticisms, universities around the globe support, within their capacity, the 17 SDGs. The 2021

*Impact Rankings* edition and the overall ranking included 1,117 universities from 94 countries/regions (last visit January 2022). It is a ranking that is not necessarily stable over time, as more newcomer universities are added during the year. As a result, several universities changed their rankings positions. This might create a challenge for universities that deal with rankings in the eyes of their stakeholders. However, this issue is beyond the scope of this paper. Each SDG ranking defined by the *Impact Rankings*<sup>1</sup>.

## **Responsible Management Education**

Several initiatives, such as the United Nations Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME), the Academy of Business in Society (ABIS), and accreditation agencies such as the AACSB and EQUIS, request business schools to integrate responsibility and sustainability into their curricula and co-curricular activities. Universities and colleges, as institutions with a long-standing history of education and knowledge creation, have become actively involved in aiming to achieve the SDGs through “a larger potential for contributing to societal development” (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021, p. 2). Thus, inserting sustainable development into business education becomes one of the primary necessities for business schools to remain legitimate. The strong relationship between PRME and the United Nations Global Compact proposes SDGs as guiding principles for RME (Wersun et al., 2020).

Researchers (Biggeri et al., 2019) note that SDGs represent a roadmap in general for organizations and institutions for a better future that inspires action and cooperation among diverse multilevel actors and agents of change with the freedom to adjust to different contexts and purposes. Furthermore, Demuijnck and Fasterling (2016) note that SDGs adoption contributes to the social license to operate organizations. While, from the neo-institutional perspective, studies (e.g., Boiral et al., 2017; Macellari et al., 2021) underscore that organizations confront social and environmental issues, such as those included in the SDGs, mainly in the pursuit of legitimacy. Organizations seek support and legitimacy in the eyes of their stakeholders and adopt practices that are perceived to be rational and legitimate. Literature also suggests that higher education institutions face challenges of translating their rhetorical and intentions to sustainability into policies, curricula, and practices (Heleta & Bagus, 2021; Farinha et al. 2018).

## **Organizational Perspective**

Under those particularly challenging circumstances, the business schools' devotion to RME warrants closer attention. From an organizational perspective, to achieve meaningful progress regarding contribution to RME, grand challenges, and sustainability, actions by universities and colleges are required at multiple levels (i.e., macro, meso, micro). For example, at the macro level, we could see influences, initiatives such as the UN's PRME, ABIS, and several international accreditation agencies such as the AACSB and EQUIS.

At the meso level, we could consider the influence of the role of national bodies supporting sustainability in higher education and the business schools. For example, in September 2019, the

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[https://www.timeshighereducation.com/impactrankings#!/page/0/length/25/sort\\_by/rank/sort\\_order/asc/cols/undefined](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/impactrankings#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/undefined)

UN Secretary-General called on all sectors of society to mobilize for a decade of action on three levels:

- global action to secure more incredible leadership, more resources, and more intelligent solutions for the SDGs
- local action embedding the needed transitions in the policies, budgets, institutions, and regulatory frameworks of governments, cities, and local authorities
- people action, including by youth, civil society, the media, the private sector, unions, academia, and other stakeholders, to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformations (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/>)

The Global Forum is a network that connects the knowledge and experience of multiple-stakeholder advisory commissions, councils, and similar bodies for sustainable development (for details, see Pathways for National Sustainable Development Advisory Bodies). These bodies could contribute to the national institutional architectures for implementing the SDGs, and we expect to influence at the meso level.

While, at the micro-level influence, we could consider the commitment of individual universities or business schools. Decision-makers are individuals, and the development and delivery of such initiatives require action at the level of the individual. Deans are individuals in a unique position to significantly influence their colleges and universities. The Dutch colleagues de Boer and Goedegeburre (2009) claimed that the dean's core activities incorporate various management types: strategic, operational, human resource, academic, and external stakeholder relationships. Because of their multi-maneuvering and multi-component role, metaphorically, deans have been labeled as "doves of peace". In this role, they intervene among fighting factions that cause critical turbulence in the schools/colleges. As "dragons" drive away internal or external forces that pressure the college/school. While "diplomats" guide, inspire and encourage people who live and work in the college/school (Tucker & Bryan, 1991, p. ix). While, Wolverton et al. (2001) state that deans have the opportunity to communicate the mission and vision of their schools, act as mentors and role models and demonstrate leadership by knowing when to advocate for the needs of their stakeholders and when to put the needs of the entire university first.

## **Mission Statements**

Mission statements as written documents are subject to organizational leaders' attempts toward impression and legitimacy management (Elsbach, 1994; Staw, McKechnie & Puffer, 1983). Mission statements vary considerably in length and content. Palmer and Short (2008) note that so far have no profile for the "ideal" mission statement. Also, they note "that mission content is not a matter of happenstance but the result of deliberate choices" (p. 457). According to Morpew and Hartley (2006, p. 457) mission statement often reflects "a collection of stock phrases that are either excessively vague or unrealistically aspirational." Woodrow (2006, p. 316) suggests that an effective mission statement "should describe an organization's reason for existence by highlighting its priorities in a capacity that motivates all organizational constituents to embrace it and live it." Bartkus and Glassman (2008, p. 208) underscore that "the mission statement has become an important part of managing the organization- stakeholder relationship – it communicates the firm's identity to stakeholders." They found that specific terminology within the mission statement related to social issues was more likely to be significantly associated with

decision-making and behaviors regarding these issues. That is, do organizations "talk the talk" as well as "walk the walk" (Davis et al., 2007)? Lee et al. (2013) discovered that Australian universities' espoused commitment to sustainability was not reflected in their mission statements. At the same time, other researchers note that the message of commitment to sustainability can be articulated in vision and mission statements (Brinkhurst et al., 2011; Kim and Oki, 2011; Krizek et al., 2012).

RME related to responsible and sustainable research and teaching. Velazquez et al. (2006, p. 813) suggest "mission statements tend to answer three key questions: who, what, and why" and therefore, "the mission statements should lay a foundation for future actions and philosophies that underlie those actions" (p. 813). Regarding the RME we do not expect necessarily to mirror any actual practices in mission statements in business schools; but we may see the mission statements as indicators because as noted earlier they may be understood as published statements to create expectations (directed internally) and/or to brand the institutions (directed externally). Morphew and Hartley (2006) suggest that mission statements can be a way of establishing institutional uniqueness, and for that matter could be used as a tool in institutional decision-making. While, James and Huisman, (2009) highlight that the mission statements originate in the institution's internal environment, considering the needs of internal stakeholders, and also are shaped by environmental pressures and challenges that may affect the institution.

Against this backdrop, this chapter aims to find possible answers to the questions, "Which topics related to the SDGs (if any) appear in the mission statements?" In addition, "How do deans communicate, through mission statements RME and sustainability?" and "What symbols/seals related to SDGs (if any) are appeared on business schools' websites?" in selected 15 US, AACSB-accredited business schools located in universities that voluntarily participated in the 2020 *Impact Rankings*.

### **3. Methodology**

The study was carried out from a qualitative design, considering that written material, documents, and websites contain ideas, information, meanings, and images that can be interpreted and analyzed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that documents are easy to analyze and consider rich information resources. Documents such as newspapers, websites, minutes of meetings, and personal journals are valuable sources of information in qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 2002; Patton, 2015). Following the above, business schools' missions and websites are considered written documents that establish an organization's sense of purposes, practices, and aspirations—the three research questions, as mentioned earlier, guided the study.

#### *3.1 Sample and Data*

The 2020 *Impact Rankings* (April 22, 2020) made available the list with the participant universities and 31 out of 766 located in the United States. 15 out of those 31 universities in the *Impact Rankings* are active holders of the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. All those 15 universities include business schools that all are AACSB- accredited. I consulted each business school on each university website and the AACSB website for each business school. I

systematized the mission statements in a database, then submitted them for analysis. I also collected each school's website images with seals/logos related to accreditations and rankings. The database includes 30 records, including 15 mission statements and 15 photos (accreditation/rankings). Table 1 provides the sample's size, location, public/private, and orientation (land-grant).

Table 1. Sample characteristics

| Univ | Total Enrollment | Location       | Town Size | Institutional Type                    |
|------|------------------|----------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| 1.   | 74,795           | Arizona        | 180,587   | Public Research, Urban                |
| 2.   | 31,538           | North Carolina | 61,960    | Public Research, Suburban             |
| 3.   | 58,836           | Florida        | 26,620    | Public Research, Suburban             |
| 4.   | 39,147           | Georgia        | 127,315   | Public Flagship Land-Grant, Urban     |
| 5.   | 40,709           | Maryland       | 32,123    | Public Research, Land-Grant, Suburban |
| 6.   | 31,642           | Massachusetts  | 39,263    | Public Research, Flagship, Suburban   |
| 7.   | 58,079           | Ohio           | 905,748   | Public Research, Urban                |
| 8.   | 50,613           | Florida        | 384,959   | Public Research, Urban                |
| 9.   | 18,010           | New York       | 13,467    | Public Research, Suburban             |
| 10.  | 4,548            | Louisiana      | 383,997   | Private Research, Jesuit, Urban       |
| 11.  | 24,375           | Virginia       | 238,005   | Public Research, Urban                |
| 12.  | 32,312           | Oregon         | 59,922    | Public Research, Urban                |
| 13.  | 48,07            | Texas          | 394,266   | Public Research, Urban                |
| 14.  | 24,879           | Texas          | 865,657   | Public Research, Urban                |
| 15.  | 19,764           | North Carolina | 299,035   | Public Research, Urban                |

### 3.2 Content analysis

The complexity of the research questions requires a multi-level analysis to capture the parameters/indicators of RME and SDGs. Qualitatively, it is possible to track topics, words, concepts, and themes. While quantitatively, it focuses on the frequencies to identify aspects that occur more or less frequently in the text and the pictures (Creswell, 2002; Papadimitriou, 2011). The study uses thematic analysis, following Boyatzis' (1998) claims that "thematic analysis enables scholars, observers, or practitioners to use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner that increases their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations about people, events, situations, and organizations" (p. 5). The analysis involves the identification of themes through "careful reading and re-reading of the data" (Rice & Ezzy, 1999, p. 258). The unit of analysis constitutes the 15 mission statements and 15 websites of the business schools under study. I developed matrices to organize the data as the data were small ('small' meaning less than 500 pages, according to Creswell, (2002); in all cases, I used manual analysis and not specific software. I used the 17 SDGs to develop possible themes and understanding.

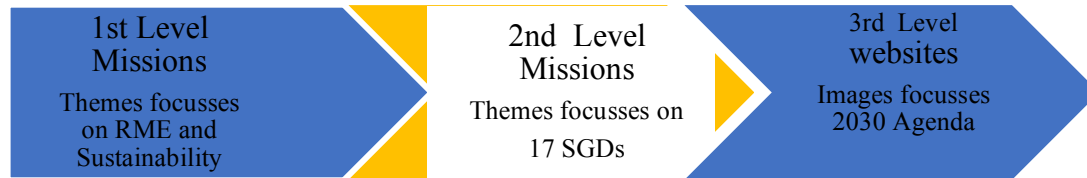
Table 2. The 17 SDGs



|  |                               |  |  |
|--|-------------------------------|--|--|
| 1. No poverty                              | 2. Zero hunger                | 3. Good health                         | 4. Quality education                       |
| 5. Gender equality                         | 6. Clean water and sanitation | 7. Affordable and clean energy         | 8. Decent work and economic growth         |
| 9. Industry innovation, and infrastructure | 10. Reduce inequalities       | 11. Sustainable cities and communities | 12. Responsible consumption and production |
| 13. Climate action                         | 14. Life below water          | 15. Life on land                       | 16. Peace, justice and Strong institutions |
|  |                               |  | 17. Partnerships for goals                 |

RME related to responsible and sustainable research and teaching, thus at the first level, the study identifies, identifies themes appeared in the mission statements that related to RME such as responsible research, responsible managers, ethical leaders, and other relevant themes referring to sustainability. At the second level the study identifies if any of 17 SDGs appeared in the mission statements by looking for themes related to them. Finally, considering that all business schools located in 15 universities that have participated in the *Impact Rankings* at the third level, they study expected to find logos/seals related to SDGs and 2030 Agenda on the business schools' websites. Figure 1 presents the visual model of the multi-level analysis used for this study.

Figure 1 – Visual model



### 3. 3. Intercoder Reliability

The author is the coder of this study. However, to achieve intercoder reliability, she kindly asked an individual (colleague) to check the data and the codes in five out of the 15 mission statements and websites (33.33%). The selection of mission statements and websites were entirely random. We observed a significant degree of agreement among the themes/images as there was an exceptionally high level of agreement in all documents.

## 4. Findings

### 4.2 RME and Sustainability in mission statements

Firstly (Level 1) the study examines the extent of RME and sustainability keywords and themes in mission statements were present. Table 3 shows the themes of the outcomes search at the mission statements. Only 2 out of 15 missions contained responsible leaders/management. While 3 out of 15 mission statements included the term ethical leaders, sustainability appears only in one mission statement. Almost each school use different language and terms for their mission



statements. Data revealed that the words leader and prepare leaders appeared in 5 mission statements. The mission statements focused mostly on research and teaching. Regarding research several mission statement noted research with impact, however, without explaining what type or impact. A closer look at those statements might indicate responsible management by using words such as engaged citizens, problem solvers, act justly in a global business environment, and commit to improving the organizations they work.

Table 3 *RME and Sustainability in mission statements*[illegible]

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| teaching, REASEARCH, and service   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  |   |
| conducts groundbreaking REASEARCH, in order to create POSITIVE CHANGE on a GLOBAL scale  | X |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |
| creating and discovering knowledge to improve the well-being of our state, regional, national and GLOBAL communities;  |   |   |   |   |   | X |   |  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |
| produce scholarship with IMPACT  |   |   |   |   |   |   | X |  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |
| Lead Change  |   | X |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |
| Preparing students for a rapidly changing business ENVIRONMENT   |   |   |   |   | X |   |   |  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |
| for the effective and ETHICAL practice of business   |   |   | X |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |
| ETHICAL and Engaged future leaders who strive to make a difference.  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   | X |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |
| Serving with purpose   |   | X |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |
| Students become effective and Socially RESPONSIBLE business leaders  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | X |   |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |
| act justly in a GLOBAL business environment.   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | X |   |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |
| innovative, engaged, and ETHICAL business leaders in making a lasting IMPACT on the region and beyond.   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |  | X |   |  | 1 |
| principled leaders and exceptional problem solvers who have a GLOBAL perspective, an innovative mindset, a broad understanding of SUSTAINABILITY, and a commitment to improve the organizations in which they work and the communities in which they live. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |  |   | X |  | 1 |
| Supporting organizations within the Commonwealth and other constituencies through outreach activities  |   |   |   | X |   |   |   |  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |
| improve the well-being of our state, regional, national and GLOBAL communities   |   |   |   |   |   | X |   |  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  | 1 |

#### 4.2. SDGs in mission statements

The Level 2 of the research provides some thoughts related to SDGs. All colleges included at least one keyword/phrase in their mission statement related to Quality Education (SDG4):

Education/learning knowledge/ Knowledge environment/ dissemination of knowledge/ curriculum/ transformative education. Mission statements also included words/ and phrases related to research. For example, impactful research (impact research/scholarship with impact, deliver innovative solutions) might consider a tool to support Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8) and Industry Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG9). Additionally, quality education and development of leaders and managers might contribute to Sustainable cities and communities (SDG11). Also, most of the mission statements noted that their mission is to develop leaders to produce social impact and economic growth. For example: “prepare students to succeed as responsible business professionals, leaders, and global citizens in a dynamic, technology-driven business climate – creating a growing legacy for our alumni,” “ethical leaders and managers.” Words such as ethical, responsible leaders might reflect an effort to Reduce Inequalities (SDG10). Findings from level 1 indicates that we could consider only SDG 4 (Quality Education). It appears clearly in all mission statements, while we could think or imagine other themes related to SDGs 8, 9, 10, and 11.

#### *4.3 Pictures focuses on the 2030 Agenda*

The analysis indicated that all 15 websites included only images/logos of the AACSB accreditation, as well as an overall ranking of the respective university. None of the 15 business schools located in universities participated in the *Impact Rankings* mentioned about this particular ranking nor the 2030 Agenda logo.

### **5. Conclusion and Further Research**

This chapter aims to offer insights into critical issues facing business schools for RME, focusing on mission statements and websites in 15 US business schools accredited by AACSB and located in universities that have participated in the *Impact Rankings*. The study uses several levels of analysis to capture the parameters of RME and SDGs in mission statements. In line with other studies (Lee et al., 2013), the mission statements did not mirror SDGs and sustainability themes. Colleges and universities do not mirror actual practices related to RME and sustainability, but in this study we may see the mission statements as indicators may be understood as published statements to create expectations (directed internally) (James & Huisman, 2009) and/or to brand the institutions (directed externally) (Morphew & Hartley, 2006). Findings suggest that the business schools mainly contribute to achieving the RME and SDGs via education and research, and this is common for mission statements. The results correspond to some of the criticisms raised in the literature, suggesting that higher education institutions face challenges translating their rhetorical intentions to sustainability into policies and documents like mission statements (Heleta & Bagus, 2020; Farinha et al. 2018).

The absence of this information in the mission statements may be associated with the literature that written documents are subject to organizational leaders' attempts toward impression and legitimacy management (Elsbach, 1994; Staw, McKechnie & Puffer, 1983). In this case, mission statements and websites in business schools attempt to impress their stakeholders via education and research and accreditation ranking logos. Palmer and Short (2088) note "that mission content is not a matter of happenstance but the result of deliberate choices" (p. 457). Mission statements reflect stakeholder relationships (Bartkus & Glassman (2008, p. 208). If we consider deans

responsible for crafting the mission statements that "communicate the firm's identity to stakeholders," we need to consider that at the same time, they are dealing with their multi-maneuvering and multi-component roles: a) "doves of peace" (intervene among fighting factions that cause critical turbulence in the schools/colleges); b) "dragons" (drive away internal or external forces that pressure the college/school) and c) "diplomats" (guide, inspire and encourage people who live and work in the college/school) (Tucker & Bryan, 1991).

Mission statements and logos reflect stakeholders' behavior. RME is a relatively new endeavor that requires colleges and deans to take action. If deans respond to stakeholder behavior, there is a need to educate the stakeholders about the benefits of the RME and might change behavior. We will see changes in the mission statements as the AACSB requires responsible management education for accreditation purposes. This change might contribute to the revision of the mission statements.

Other organizational pressures might contribute to changes/revisions in the missions' statements related to macro-level actions. The fact that in the future the AACSB demands documentation of RME suggests that accreditation processes also may be an indicator of RME. For example, only recently PRME and AACSB are partnering to present a series of webinars and forums (3-4 June 2022) supporting business schools as they explore their roles in creating positive societal impact (<https://www.unprme.org>). This collaboration might change stakeholders' minds and pressure the business schools and their deans to frame responsible outcomes in their mission statements and even logos such as SDGs on their websites. Therefore, in the future researchers will like to examine RME as a results of the AACSB accreditation requirements and specifically areas related to teaching, research and social impact practices. In the future, it will be interesting to look at accreditors' follow-up reports that require business schools to address issues regarding their assessments of RME and provide data about societal impact practices. For such studies will be ideal to examine accreditation reports, however, will be a challenge for such research due to inability to find many reports produced by institutions accredited by AACSB. Papadimitriou (2018, p. 15) notes that "AACSB does not require accredited institutions to publish on-line their reports and the follow-up note".

This study demonstrates how business schools contribute to RME and what topic to include in their mission statements. These findings could be expanded upon to make specific cases visible to other business schools and colleges and might encourage initiating RME and sustainability. Interestingly, the study has perhaps raised more questions than it answered because most business schools did not have well-developed mission statements; thus, embedding RME in business schools is a long road to travel. However, if well created and implemented, mission statements can have several impacts: i.e., on faculty, students, and administrators' behavior; college ethics and values; organizational/college performance; and the relationship with stakeholders when used as a communication tool. Therefore, the mission statements need the deans' attention as they have a clear impact on the functioning of a college/organization.

This study adds to the research about the mission statements, and it shows that it is still a challenge. Literature on mission statements related to RME has ample room for further development. There is a need for the RME to develop particular outcomes. Those outcomes will help deans craft/revise mission statements and make them reflect RME. Thus, future research

will consider examining mission statements related to RME outcomes in different business schools worldwide. If RME does not integrate into all actions and functions and levels within colleges, the mere advocating of its benefits will lead to it showing up as echoing rhetoric.

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