

**Responsible Management Education in Egyptian Public Business Schools: Are Academics Ready?**

**Abstract**

**Purpose** – This paper focuses on three out of the 24 public business schools in Egypt in order to investigate how responsible management education is perceived and exercised by academics there.

**Design/ methodology/ approach** – A total of 168 academics were contacted and interviewed in 42 focus groups. The length of each focus group was about 45 minutes, and interviews were conducted in Arabic as most respondents have no mastery of the English language. The authors used thematic analysis to extract the main ideas in the transcripts.

**Findings** – Based on data analysis of the perceptions of academics concerning business education, research and management process at the target business schools, the authors of this paper found that responsible management education is not considered a priority in the work agendas of the three Egyptian public business schools. Besides a lack of general acceptance and awareness of the need for responsible management education, there are functional, procedural and edu-academic barriers that these schools need to overcome first before proceeding with implementation and expecting positive outcomes.

**Research limitations/ implications** – This research maybe subject to criticism because the authors address only the perspectives of academics in the chosen business schools while neglecting other academic partners, particularly those in managerial positions, such as rectors and heads of departments. Future researchers may use the same research questions to investigate a managerial level perspective to depict a more holistic picture of the situation. Moreover, including Egyptian private business schools may also enrich the findings. In fact, the authors suggest that scholars from different academic disciplines such as sustainability management, business ethics, higher education, sustainability and cultural diversity work together to produce more interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research on the global responsibility themes business schools have to manage.

**Practical implications** – If the administration of the addressed business schools seek to implement responsible management education, they should overcome the following barriers. Firstly, the functional barrier (the limited financial budget and need for official approval to address both socio-cultural and environmental aspects). Secondly, procedural barriers (lack of channels for formal and/or informal collaborations with governmental bodies, private enterprises, NGOs and social activist groups). Thirdly, Edu-academic barriers (lack of CSR inclusion in business school strategy, faculty promotion and incentives not tied to their proactive embedding of sustainable development and other socio-cultural issues into their curricula, research and academic practices, and no incentive or support for interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary collaboration with researchers and faculty from other departments and faculties).

**Originality/ value** – This paper contributes by filling a gap in sustainability, HR management, business ethics, and higher education literature in which empirical studies on responsible management education and the responsible practices of academics have been limited so far.

**Keywords** – responsible management education; sustainability; sustainable development; academics; business schools; Egypt

**Paper type** – research paper

## Introduction

Over the past two decades, business schools have been criticized for their lack of responsibility towards global social and economic challenges (Khurana, 2007). This has urged the United Nations and other international business education-related bodies such as AACSB and EFMD to make initiatives (e.g. the UN Principles of Responsible Management Education, the 50+20 initiative, and the inclusion of sustainability as a main assessment standard in the accreditation system) focusing on the social dimensions of management education (Rasche & Kell, 2010; Muff, 2012; EFMD, 2014). Authors, such as Alvesson (2013) and Cornuel & Hommel, (2015), argue that responsible management education should be reflected in business school strategy, objectives, mission, in addition to, the in-and-out of school communication. Conversely, Pfeffer & Fong (2004) consider that the business school today is too market driven and cannot be perceived as an effective contributor and/or a provider of solutions for any of the threats the world may witness. This led Podolny (2009) and Dyllick (2015) to doubt not only the legitimacy of business schools, but also their ability to include public-related aspects in their teaching and research plans and to actively participate in managing socio-economic transformations.

According to Bohdanowicz et al. (2011) and Brookes et al. (2014), the main challenge for business schools today is to guide businesses towards undertaking practices that are rational, sustainable and contributing to the common good of their surroundings. This may justify the emergence of popular concepts such as corporate sustainability, corporate responsibility and corporate citizenship in different business school curricula. In explanation, Doherty et al. (2015) identify four pressures on business schools when incorporating responsible management education. The first is society pressure and the urgent need of stakeholders to manage current economic uncertainties. The second is the tendency of businesses to re-orient their business activities, vision and culture to meet their surrounding dynamics. The third is action taken by some global academic business bodies such as EQUIS which considers the integration between a business school and its society as a substantial basis for evaluation. The fourth is the schools' utilization of responsible management education as a marketization tool particularly after the growing desire of both undergraduate and postgraduate students to secure modern green jobs.

From their side, business media and journals such as The Economist, Financial Times and the Wall Street emphasize that management education has to reproduce a set of curricula, operations and practices that align economic progress with sustainable development, market opportunities with human rights, and shareholder profit with stakeholder expectations (Doppelt, 2009; Tilbury & Rayan, 2011). These rational practices may encourage business schools to seek what the World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD) calls community-oriented development (IIED, 2011). Moreover, aspects such as human rights, global poverty, climate change, environmental changes and cultural diversity management should find a considerable space and possible solutions within business school research and ideation centers (Tilbury & Rayan, 2011).

Admittedly, many authors (Ghoshal, 2005; Podolny, 2009; Petriglieri, 2012) indicated that the management education offered by many business schools contributed to the unfortunate 2008 global economic crisis as these schools intentionally or unintentionally ignored problems of their surrounding communities and did not pay much attention to developing and maintaining long-lasting relations with their stakeholders. Accordingly, business schools are urgently prompted to incorporate the fundamental values of responsible management education in their activities, teaching, and research. As a response to initiatives undertaken by different international bodies, such as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD 2005-2014), some Western business schools have started to tackle the issues of ethics and sustainability within the modules of both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. A number of academic journals have devoted a space to cover global responsibility themes. Moreover, some "stand-

alone” courses on sustainable development and stakeholder engagement have been included within business graduate programs. Universities, like the University of Exeter in the UK, have launched specialized graduate degrees such as Exeter’s “One Planet MBA” to relate issues pertinent to both business and sustainability in the same program (UNESCO, 2005; Tilbury et al., 2004; WWF international, 2011). This may justify why lately business researchers and students have increasingly touched on aspects such as unemployment, climate change, global debt and carbon footprint in their research. Furthermore, business scholars and educators have started to entwine systematic thinking, multi-disciplinary research, and professional teaching methods (Gentile, 2009 and Tilbury, 2011). This has enabled students and trainees to pay more attention to responsible actions both when making business decisions and transforming business practices (Doppelt, 2009; Springett, 2010).

Apparently, and as indicated by Brookes et al. (2014), there is a dearth of empirical studies on the responsible management education implemented by different business schools and how academics perceive it. Accordingly, the authors of this paper feel encouraged to fill in a gap in the management, ethics, sustainability, and higher education literature by asking academics in Egyptian public business schools about the extent to which they are ready to implement responsible management education in their education, work, and research context. It is noteworthy to mention that Egyptian public business schools represent an unknown organizational context and unfortunately have been ranked as the globally lowest in quality of management education according to the 2017 global competitiveness report (<https://www.weforum.org/>). The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: The next part includes the literature review. The methodology follows with a description of the characteristics of the organizational setting in which this study is conducted and the procedures taken to conduct interviews together with the analytical mechanism employed. The authors devote the final part of their paper to highlighting the main findings, discussion and conclusion.

**1. Literature review**

1.1 Sustainability and sustainable development

The concept sustainability stems from a Latin word “sustinere” which means resist, and the definition of sustainability differs from one science to another. In natural science, sustainability describes the long-lasting ability of biological systems to maintain their production. In environmental science, the concept reflects the human rational use of natural resources, whereas in economics, it reflects the systematic effort of present generations to secure a relevant level of prosperity to future ones (Durlauf & Blume, 2008). In social science, sustainability is used to reflect a set of positive social aspects such as human rights, security, labor rights, anti-poverty measures and so on.

The concept ‘sustainable development’ (SD) is largely based on the aforementioned definitions of sustainability and has been defined by Brundtland (1987) as “a set of systematic environmental, economic and social actions undertaken by present generations to guarantee that both present and future generations meet their own needs”. Accordingly, the 1992 World Summit for Environment and Development has considered that SD includes three axes: environmental, social and economic. In 2001, UNESCO added cultural diversity as a fourth axis for the SD process.

In the business world, the concept ‘sustainable development’ refers to an approach that businesses undertake to maximize shareholder profits and interests by paying attention to economic, environmental, social and cultural diversity-related aspects (Collins & Kearins, 2010). Anninos (2007) elaborate that SD should be embedded in the corporate mission, operations, and actions to realize both in-and-out of

organizational expectations. This prompted Dahlgaard-Park (2009) to assert that the concept ‘sustainable development’ may be used interchangeably with the term excellence in organizational excellence.

Despite the fact that little research has been done to explain how business schools can implement responsible business practices, Brookes et al. (2014) stress the need to follow the four factors to effectively adopt any intended responsible and sustainable practices: (a) the cultural barriers and the different scopes of CSR countries expect businesses to fulfill; (b) the level of collaboration among different stakeholders groups; (c) the scope to which responsible practices are embedded in organization’s internal culture; and finally, (d) the level of sustainability literacy managers and their stakeholders (e.g. employees, consumers, social actors, shareholders and etc.) have.

## 1.2 previous/current trends in responsible management education

### *1.2.1 UN principles of responsible management education*

In a partnership with some business education-related bodies, such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), the Aspen Institute’s Business and Society Program, the European Academy of Business in Society, and many others, the United Nations launched a global voluntary initiative known as the UN-Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME 2004-2013) to embed ethics, sustainability and similar socio-environmental aspects such as safeguarding human rights, managing climate change, fighting against inequality into management education (Gentile, 2009; Wood & Clair, 2008; Alcaraz et al., 2011). This was considered a chance for business educators to update their business curricula, on the one hand, and to redefine employability objectives, on the other (Sterling, 2012). However, Godemann et al. (2013) mention that only 10% of the business schools worldwide consider sustainability as an underlying mindset and/or specialization in their research domain. Following is the table of the principles of responsible management education developed by the UN.

Principle	Content
Principle 1: Purpose	We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.
Principle 2: Value	We will incorporate into our academic activities and curricula the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the UNGC.
Principle 3: Method	We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.
Principle 4: Research	We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.
Principle 5: Partnership	We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.
Principle 6: Dialogue	We will facilitate and support dialog and debate among educators, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organizations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.

Table 1: UN Principles of Responsible Management Education. (source: PRIME, 2019)

1.2.2 Vision 2050

In its vision 2050, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development highlighted the need to secure new economic rules for reducing the carbon footprint rate and improving the planet’s bio-capacity (WBCSD, 2010, p. 36). This indeed inspires business schools to deeply contribute to their surrounding societal, economic and cultural transformations (Muff, 2013). Accordingly, 100 individuals, representing several universities, NGOs, consultation centers, and student organizations, have worked together for more than a year to develop the sustainability vision of 2050 that mainly focuses on what the world wants business to do and in turn how businesses should contribute to the world.

The vision blends the perspectives of economics, public administration, sociology, cultural diversity, pedagogy and psychology ([www.50plus20.org](http://www.50plus20.org)), and highlights that management education currently has the following three main roles: to develop globally responsible leaders, enable businesses to serve the common good, and urge management educators to engage into the socio-economic transformations occurring in their surroundings.

1.3 Challenges of business schools to adopt RME

According to Ball and Milne (2005) the ecological illiteracy of business managers and their employees is perceived to be a main driver for corporate social irresponsible practices which directly and/or indirectly cause a depletion of natural resources and a negligence of the issues of poverty, human rights, and economic growth in strategic and daily business agendas (Gallhofer & Haslam, 2006). Consequently, and in acknowledgement of its profound role, many European universities have declared education for sustainability development (ESD).

From their side and as a result of the blame received for neglecting socio-cultural aspects, business schools, over the past decade, have started to devote a considerable space in their interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research to the topics of sustainability (Thomas, 2005). Mochizuki & Fadeeva (2010) emphasize the need for the ESD community to indorse competences for SD as a cornerstone for a more operative curriculum design and pedagogy and relate them directly to the assessment of processes and outcomes. In like manner, Jones et al. (2010) further highlight the aggregate interest in ethics, responsibility and climate-related topics in business school teaching and research. Moreover, Cooper et al. (2014) show that linking business school accreditation with the scope they assign to sustainability in both curricula and practices can maximize the schools’ socio-cultural and socio-economic development. Casile and Davis-Blake (2002) elaborate that considering sustainability themes as one of the AACSB’s evaluation standards has stimulated American business schools to maximize responsible practices and responsibility-related practices in order gain public trust and maintain a kind of legitimacy.

Authors like Starkey et al. (2004) and Podolny (2009) indicate that for business schools to regain public trust, they should understand that their mission is neither measured by revenues, costs or surplus, nor are they realized by student satisfaction and/or positive evaluation. Business schools have to develop relevant curricula that secure responsible leaders for societies. Moreover, they should engage in managing or contributing to solving major financial and societal problems or at least raise students’ and managers’ social awareness and encourage them to tackle such problems (Dyllick, 2015).

Authors like Greenberg (2007) and Starkey and Tiratsoo (2007) assert that the main challenges hindering business schools from actively adopting responsible management education are their low financial capabilities. This is obviously manifested in the case of private business schools in which every



marketization and/or organizational development initiative needs to be justified to shareholders (Corley & Gioia, 2000; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Furthermore, in case of public schools in developing countries, the budget is mostly insufficient to initiate and/or undertake any change in curricula and/or policies as highlighted by Mousa (2018) and Mousa and Ayoubi (2019).

From his side, Jackson (2009) demonstrates that rethinking the role of ethics and sustainability in management education may urge business schools to revive the traditional debate concerning the trade-off between shareholders' ongoing desire to maximize their financial profits and their expectations to find solutions to socio-cultural threats such as inequality, workplace discrimination, and global poverty - the matter that cannot be simply tackled by only including some stand-alone courses on sustainability (Jackson, 2009). Instead business schools should tailor a specific set of responsible actions that match the needs of the community it serves, and this can only happen if they build on a partnership with the businesses, governments and other social actors.

#### 1.4 Sustainability in business education

Despite the fact that business education has emphasized soft skills training, real business cases and international dimensions in its curricula, Neubaum et al. (2009) confirm that business schools haven't undertaken full responsibility towards ensuring a socio-environmental integration with their surrounding communities. This has led some authors (Tsurumi, 2005 and Ferraro et al., 2005) to stress the need to re-design business school curricula. Moreover, Anninos and Chytiris (2011) indicate that the present situation of business schools is ideal for revisiting traditional business education curricula and including considerable parts of logic, ethics and philosophy.

According to Giacalone (2004) and Ackoff (2004), the narrow traditional view of management education, which stresses individual performance and financial knowledge, is no longer sufficient for our present time. This encouraged Sionneau et al. (2014) to re-discover the importance of "systems thinking" that basically maintains consciousness towards a more social and sustainable exercise of management education. Systems thinking is a main contributor to the Globally Responsible Humanism (GRH) considered by Rabasso and Rabasso (2011) as a new model for teaching and learning, an impetus to greater involvement of industry professionals in management education, and an attractive opportunity for business students to carefully understand the socio-cultural dimensions of business decisions. Sionneau et al. (2014) also highlights that GRH reflects a chance for including sustainability in management education.

Kurland et al. (2010) identify the need to incorporate current socio-environmental challenges into different MBA programs. Audenbrand (2010) and Benn and Martin (2010) suggest teaching sustainability as a distinct course and diffusing it into different business courses to both students and trainees in business programs. This would stimulate more interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and teaching and enable students, managers and researchers to conceptualize a holistic picture of today's national and international socio-cultural, environmental and eco-political challenges to be able to manage them.

What may specifically hinder the spread of RME in Egyptian public business schools is the fact that these schools are not accredited by international bodies such as AACSB & EQUIS. Waddock et al. (2010) highlight that being accredited by AACSB ensures that faculty invest more time and effort to regularly update business curricula (Principles 1 and 2), re-discover adopted teaching pedagogy (Principle 3), maintain long-lasting partnerships with surrounded businesses (Principle 5), tackle community socio-cultural threats across disciplines (Principle 4), and finally maintain trusting relationships with external stakeholders to ensure a community-oriented development. This ensures an increase in the number of

inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary studies on global responsibility-related topics. Moreover, accreditation ensures the emergence of concepts like climate change, anti-corruption, poverty, human rights and many other business-related research issues and schools of thought (Alcaraz et al., 2011).

**2. Methodology**

As elaborated earlier, the authors have touched upon the lack of empirical studies conducted on responsible management education, and, to the best of their knowledge, the Egyptian public academic setting has not witnessed any previous empirical studies on responsible management education and its related domains. The research process started in February 2018 by determining the research unit (academics), time (2018), place (three different Egyptian public business schools), and behavior and/or activity (how responsible management education is perceived and/or implemented/exercised). Furthermore, the authors used stratified random sampling to target their respondents and conducted semi-structured face-to-face focus groups in Arabic, the mother tongue of respondents. The duration of each focus group was 45 minutes.

Prior to the data collected via the focus groups, the authors classified the respondents into three categories based on academic degree (Bachelor, Master's and PhD). By dividing the population into homogenous subgroups and then taking a simple random sample from each subgroup, the authors adopt stratified random sampling in order to reduce any possible bias and, at the same time, ensure that the chosen simple random sample represents the general population. The use of stratified random sampling guarantees that each subgroup is represented in the chosen sample.

This study involves the participation of selected teaching assistants (academic tutors who have not yet completed their Master's degrees), assistant lecturers (Master's degree holders), and lecturers and/or professors (PhD holders) all of whom work in the three targeted public business schools found in three different Egyptian public universities. It is worthy to highlight that the authors sought to contact a fourth public business school also located in Upper Egypt, but unfortunately this school did not agree to participate despite the attempts made by the authors.

The authors selected the interviewees based on their academic degrees, as first, this criteria is the most popular and the clearest classification mode comparing with the other criteria, second it reflects the academic reading and understanding of the studied phenomenon and third, this criteria as by academic cultural default at Egyptian public universities include the other criteria such as experience or age; or by research productivity? In Egyptian public universities, a professor rank means a professor who is at least 45 years old, and who has a considerable number of publications, as publications is the only criteria used for academic promotion. Thus, lower ranked academics means those who are younger and who have less publications.

In the Egyptian academic context, students and officials refer to business schools as faculties of commerce or sometimes colleges of management. The total number of public universities in Egypt is 24. Each Egyptian province includes a university except Cairo, which has two, and both of Sinai provinces (about 25% of Egypt's total area), which have no public universities at all. Three out of the four public universities in Upper Egypt agreed to participate in this study. The Upper Egyptian provinces are known to have received the least media coverage and the poorest infrastructure development plans in the past successive Egyptian budgets. The authors choose these three public schools as they represent an area in Egypt, as mentioned earlier, the poorest infrastructure plans which was reflected in the education system and culture. This however will not delay the generalizability of the study results as the higher education system in Egypt is centralized and the curricula development is a process that is approved at central levels, thus all schools have more or less similar organizational structure and bureaucracy which are

heavily reflected in the educational culture at universities. Additionally, public schools were chosen for this study as historically they are much older and highly supported by the government policies than private business schools.

The first selected business school includes four academic majors (accounting, management, economics and math) and as mentioned earlier, the authors chose to focus on the academic staff (teaching assistants, assistant lecturers, and lecturers/professors). The total number of the academic staff is 82. Moreover, the number of respondents was 40, and at this school, the authors conducted 10 focus groups. Each focus group included four respondents. The second school has the same four academic majors. The total number of academic staff in the second school is 148, 12 of whom are on leave for different reasons. The number of respondents was 84, and the authors conducted 21 focus groups there. The third business school includes the same four academic departments (accounting, management, economics and math), and the total number of academic staff is 122. The authors conducted 11 focus groups as the number of respondents was exactly 44. In total, out of 340 academics in the schools' population, 168 participated in the focus groups, which is almost %50 of the total population. This number of the participants is representing the population as it includes all academic ranks from diversified age group, research background and experience. It was also difficult to get all participants participating in the focus groups. Given the importance of the topic of this study, the deans of the schools helped the authors in facilitating the focus groups and in collecting the relevant responses.

As highlighted, the majority of the interviews conducted were in Arabic because the majority of the respondents do not have a mastery of English, and one of the authors of this paper had the responsibility of transcribing relevant parts of the Arabic interviews before data analysis. It is worth highlighting that the authors of this paper can speak and understand Arabic, which is their native language.

Moreover, the authors of this paper comprehensively depended on the questions suggested by Dyllick (2015) in evaluating the responsible management education offered by different business schools. Dyllick's set of questions is categorized into three groups. The first includes questions about education; namely, what, and what not, do students learn? What is learning about? And what kind of students are targeting Egyptian public business schools? The second group includes questions about research; namely, who is business school research addressing? What is business school research about? And what does the process of business school research look like. Finally, the third group includes questions about the process of managing academics in the addressed business schools, the following are examples of the questions: How are academics trained? How is faculty selected and promoted? And to what extent do faculty members trust their schools' procedures of selecting, training and promoting them?

The authors used Dyllick (2015) questions as his questions are based on comprehensive critical analysis of the fundamental challenges facing the role of business schools and their contributions in the areas of education, research, managing faculty, and role of the business school. His questions present suggestions what responsible management education for a sustainable world could and should look like. Without ignoring other resources, the authors found this resource as one of the main recent resources in evaluating responsible management education specific to higher education institutions.

Upon conducting the interviews, the authors used thematic analysis, which mostly determines the main patterns/ideas from the transcripts. Through this kind of analysis, the authors were able to compare each transcript with the other transcripts collected in order to narrow down the data sets and come up with the main patterns (Namey et al., 2008). Subsequently, the patterns were coded into constituent themes, and the main themes were extracted to reflect the respondents' main answers/experiences/viewpoints.



The three authors participated in the coding and analysis after agreeing in general principals. This was done first for five focus groups individually to see the similarity level amongst the three authors, then after reaching to a reasonable level of similar thinking and coding, the three author divided coding and the analysis amongst them for the remaining focus groups.

3. Findings

3.1 *PhD holders (lecturers and professors)*

When asked about the teaching process, one of the respondents, a professor of accounting, said: “*We only teach the principles of accounting, management, marketing, economics, statistics and supply chain management. We also elaborate on the mechanisms of evaluating the financial and/or organizational performance of different projects*”. The same was asserted by another professor of management who added: “*We cannot expand our educational content and go beyond business scope because we are not required to do the role of others*”. A respondent also highlighted: “*The type of students we have in business schools only focus on passing their exams and completing their bachelor degrees. Our students do not seek to understand their surroundings and/or global environmental and socio-cultural hot topics*”. Moreover, a respondent said: “*Only those professors who seek to find a space in media channels try to address social aspects and environmental issues and mostly they are not qualified in their business academic major. I think that looking beyond business courses and management academic domain is a matter for gaining publicity and personal marketing*”.

With regards to research, a respondent aggressively dismissed the notion of inclusion of sustainability issues and told the interviewee: “*Why should I address aspects such as climate change, carbon footprints, poverty and unemployment in my research-work agenda?*” The same was denied by another respondent who unfortunately asked: “*How should I possibly address socio-cultural challenges, such as human rights safeguarding, while teaching over 3500 students in the same lecture hall and at the same time!? It is more essential to address students’ rights on our campus than people’s rights outside university campuses*”. Four respondents asserted the absence of any collaboration between their business schools and other relevant governmental bodies and private organizations. Moreover, a respondent noted: “*I need many official approvals from governmental authorities to find environmental and/or social data and do a research paper, yet some of these approvals are subject to security and national intelligence unit scrutiny despite the simplicity of the research approach if undertaken from a business or managerial perspective. That makes it difficult to address any social or culturally sensitive issues such as Muslim-Christians relationships in the workplace, corruption, nepotism, or other cultural diversity-related topics such as workplace discrimination, organizational justice, national equality, and women empowerment*”. Furthermore, five respondents demonstrated that the only mechanism they employ to collect data for their research and working papers is via personal relationships. Otherwise, they will not be able to obtain data or address critical issues as obtaining formal consent to conduct research with at public institutions would require a laborious and bureaucratic set of procedures that usually hinder if not halt the process.

Concerning the hiring and promotion processes, a respondent said: “*In order for an academic staff member to be promoted from teaching assistant to assistant lecturer or from assistant lecturer to a PhD holder, the head of his academic department must sign a document stating that this academic member is socially responsible. However, we just do it as a gift or support for our younger colleagues*”. Two other respondents elaborated that every business school has a vice rector for socio-environmental development, but his position subsumes nothing but a title because of the marginal financial budget and the unwelcomed and unfruitful collaborative efforts with both governmental bodies and private enterprises. Two respondents mentioned that they tried to organize a scientific conference about ecological problems

and their effect on businesses and business research, but unfortunately, they did not find available funding. The same was confirmed by their colleague who added that the dean of their school asked them to raise donations in order to organize such conference. Another respondent said: *"I was lucky to attend a conference about environment and business performance in a school of business located in Cairo (the capital of Egypt), and I had to leave it at the end of the first day because I did not find any hostel and/or hotel to stay at during the 4 days of the conference as hotels in Cairo are very expensive to pay for myself"*.

### 3.2 Master holders (Assistant lecturers)

Regarding education, the schools of business in Egypt are not considered among of the top faculties in Egypt. Accordingly, only students with average capabilities are joining them, and they never care following news about hot social and/or cultural issues, as voiced by four respondents. A respondent said: *"I only teach what my supervisor asks me to teach. And, we are in a business school, so we only teach business-related aspects. And, if we were to engage in teaching sociology and cultural diversity management, what should academics in school of humanities do?"*

When asked about the possibility of conducted inter-disciplinary and/or trans-disciplinary research with academics from other faculties/academic majors/scientific disciplines, two respondents said: *"We here in the school of business do not collaborate with colleagues in the same faculty to do research. Those who are in accounting department do not collaborate with colleagues in management and economics department"*. The same was asserted by another respondent who said: *"Our research publications are usually aimed at getting a promotion, and if they were written by more than one faculty member, they should be affiliated to the same academic major, accounting or management for instance"*.

Concerning hiring and/or promotion, a respondent said: *"The head of my academic department must sign a document noting that I am socially responsible as a main condition for promotion from assistant lecturer to a lecturer. However, our professors sign a template knowing that we have limited capability to fulfill any socio-cultural objectives with the very limited budget we receive from the Egyptian ministry of higher education"*. The same was confirmed by the majority of respondents.

### 3.3 Bachelor holders (teaching assistants)

Concerning education, the majority of respondents highlighted that they teach only business courses to their undergraduate students. A respondent said *"they do not have the capability nor awareness to address environmental and/or socio-cultural- related aspects such as poverty, climate change, global debt and so one"*. Furthermore, most respondent claimed that teaching assistants limit themselves to the curricula prepared by other professors and/or supervisors, and their role includes nothing more than transmitting the knowledge they obtain from PhD holders to their undergraduate students.

The majority of respondents emphasized that they do not have any ability to write research papers out of their Master's theses at the current phase. Furthermore, they are only allowed to address business-related research problems in their Master's theses. To be promoted from teaching assistants to assistant lecturers, respondents noted that they are only required to complete and defend their Master's theses without fulfilling any socially responsible obligations.

## 4. Discussion and limitations

Unlike western business schools which have specific educational programs tailored to tackle global responsibility themes (Tilbury et al., 2004; Doppelt, 2009; Springtt, 2010), academics in the addressed business schools do not have any specialized courses and/or programs to cover social responsibility issues

such as climate change, poverty, carbon footprints and global debt. This may raise questions not only about the legitimacy of Egyptian public business schools, but also about their ability to lead any socio-cultural and/or socio-economic transformation in the Egyptian context (Dyllick, 2015).

The interviewed academics highlighted that they focus only on business-related research problems in their research work groups, institutes and research centers. This comes in disagreement with authors like (Ackoff, 2004; Giacalone, 2004) who emphasize that considering individual performance and financial knowledge as the only approaches business schools have to export/teach/disseminate is no longer sufficient to guarantee business school continuity and business graduates' professionalism. However, the authors of this paper believe that the fact that public Egyptian business schools are not fully accredited by business international-related bodies such as AACSB & EQUIS contributes to and maybe supports this narrow traditional view of management education (Waddock et al., 2010; Rabasso & Rabasso, 2011). Accordingly, the addressed business schools, and maybe other public Egyptian ones, do not exert considerable time and effort to update/evaluate their curricula, teaching pedagogy and partnerships with surrounding stakeholders in terms of community-oriented sustainable development which is a main standard for accreditation imposed by AACSB and other international bodies (Kurland et al., 2010; Benn & Martin, 2010).

Pervasive uncertainty of academics about the roles and responsibilities their business schools is conveyed in the interviews. Brookes et al. (2014) emphasize that the roles of business schools include and are not limited to guiding businesses towards undertaking sound, ethical, sustainable and rational practices besides contributing to the common good of their surroundings. Many interviewed academics indicated that it is the responsibility of the schools of humanities to tackle cultural diversity-related challenges, whereas sociology departments should manage any socio-cultural transformations societies expect. This comes in line with Thomas (2005) who blamed business schools for neglecting interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research on societal aspects over the past two decades and considered them a driver for the cultural and ecological illiteracy and consequentially poor decision making of business managers. In addition, Podolny (2009) asserts that the majority of business schools exert their effort and full potential to secure a high rate of student satisfaction and long-term revenues. Consequently, the socio-environmental integration, which involves managing economic uncertainties, re-orienting business strategies to meet surrounding dynamics, and securing modern green jobs (Doherty et al., 2015) is greatly absent in the addressed business schools.

What comes as another disturbing but expected reality is the very limited financial resources directed towards sustainability and limited capacity academics have and manage. According to Corley and Gioia (2000) and Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) the marginal financial capabilities hinder any tendency and/or plan to activate responsible management education. Moreover, in case of limited financial funding, academics, particularly rectors and heads of academic departments, have to justify every step/action/protocol they undertake towards sustainability. In the context of Egyptian public business schools, limited funding not only hinders but all together prevents action and/or plans towards sustainable development and/or community-oriented development because academics have to not only justify their steps but also receive official approvals from the ministry of higher education and scientific research.

This research maybe subject to criticism because the authors address only the perspectives of academics in the chosen business schools while not including other academic partners - particularly those occupying managerial academic positions such as rectors and heads of departments of the addressed business schools. This may come between depicting a more holistic picture of the situation despite the fact that the authors addressed public business schools in a single area, which represents 25% of the total Egyptian land and population, and addressed business schools that represent a significant percentage of the total

number of 24 business schools in Egypt. However, time constraints and the inability to convince other business schools and/or academic partners to participate may have limited the authors' ability to expand the scope further.

### 1. Conclusion and implications

This research aimed to discover the extent to which academics in Egyptian public business schools are ready to incorporate responsible management education. Furthermore, and intentionally, the authors of this paper are seeking to enhance the quality of academics and the whole educational process in the chosen research community, which is unfortunately ranked as the lowest globally as mentioned in the global competitiveness report (<https://www.weforum.org/>). Reportedly and upon analyzing the conducted interviews and examining the business education, research, and the process of managing academics in the chosen business schools, the authors of this paper discovered that responsible management education is not listed as a priority in the work agendas of Egyptian public business schools.

Furthermore, the authors believe that even if responsible management education were seriously to be undertaken by the addressed business schools, there would be some barriers that the administrations of these schools would have to manage foremost in order to secure a sound implementation and expect positive outcomes for this kind of education. The following are the main barriers curbing the implementation of responsible management education in the Egyptian context. Firstly, functional barriers (the limited budget and the large number of official approvals academics must receive to address both socio-cultural and environmental aspects). Secondly, procedural barriers (the limited formal and/or informal collaborations with governmental bodies, private enterprises, NGOs and social activists' groups). Thirdly, Edu-academic barriers (lack of CSR inclusion in business schools' work strategy, lack of faculty promotions or incentives for their practical inclusion of sustainable development and other socio-cultural hot topics in their business courses, research and practices; or for undertaking both interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research among departments and faculties). The following figure, composed by the authors and based on this paper's findings, demonstrates the main barriers of implementation of responsible management education in the context of Egyptian public business schools.

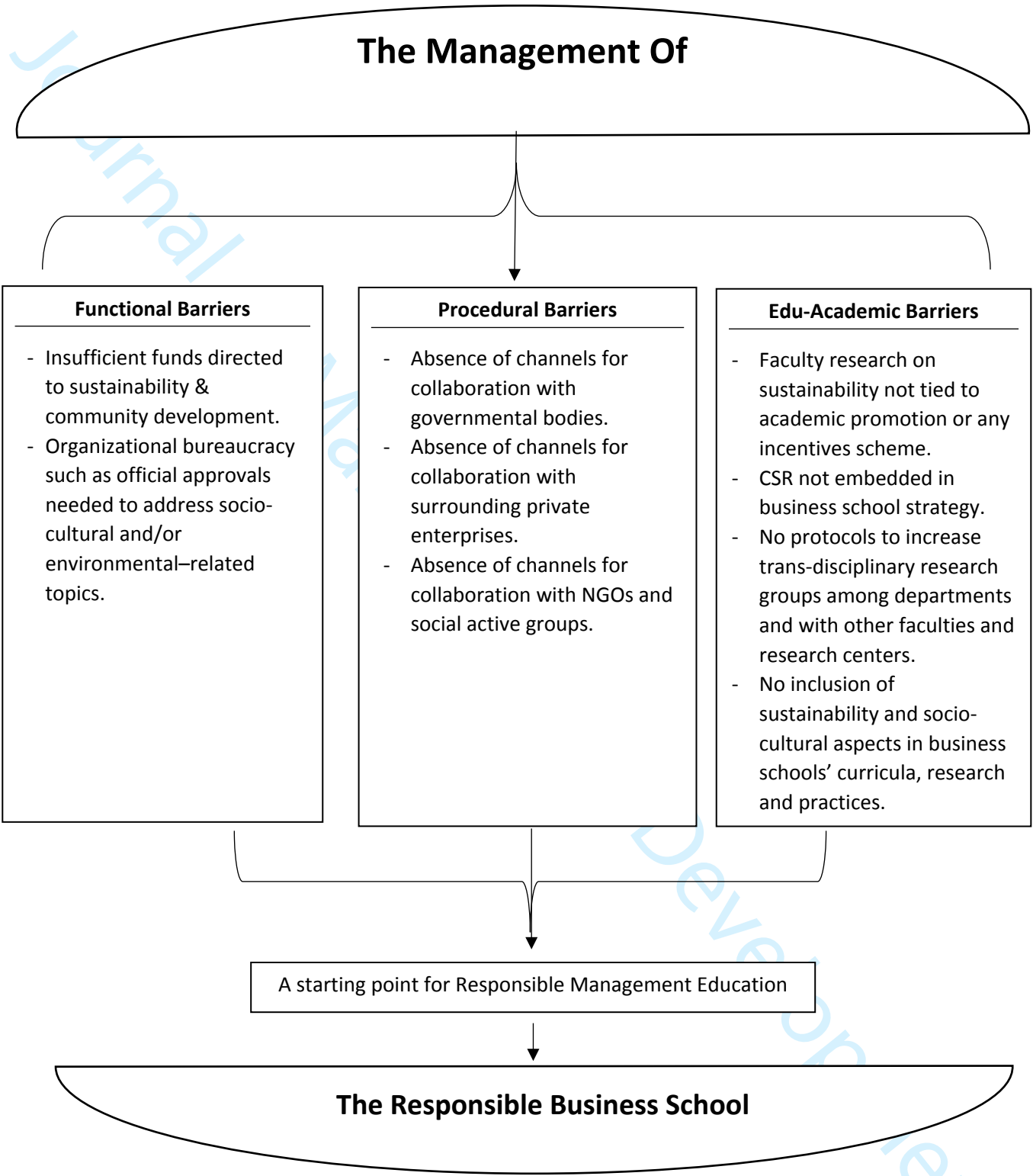


Figure 1 (prepared by the authors): Barriers to the implementation of responsible management education in Egypt



Finally, it is advisable for other researchers in the same field to ask the same research questions to other academic partners in the same public business schools or other Egyptian private business schools to further enrich the findings of this study. Moreover, the authors think that it is the time for scholars from different academic majors such as management, business ethics, higher education, sustainability and cultural diversity to work together to produce both interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research on the global responsibility themes business schools and corporate entities have to manage.

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