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Citation:

Robinson, S and Arrigoni, A (2023) Finding a voice : SDGs, ethical identity and the curriculum. In: Leading Ethical Leaders: Higher Education Institutions, Business Schools and the Sustainable Development Goals. Globethics Education Ethics Series (11). Globethics, Geneva, pp. 205-243. ISBN 978-2-88931-521-5 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58863/20.500.12424/4278464>

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Document Version:

Book Section (Published Version)

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FINDING A VOICE: SDGs, ETHICAL IDENTITY AND THE CURRICULUM

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Keywords

Education research; ethics teaching; SDGs; Ethical identity.

Abstract

The first part of this chapter briefly examines SDGs education research suggesting that – even though a wide range of initiatives in the field of responsible management education have been put in place – the level of integration of responsibility and sustainability into professional and managerial education/HE is still insufficient. This is reinforced by research into professional ethics which suggests that recent graduates do not effectively identify with the ethical values of organisational or professional ethics, and thus have little commitment to such values in practice. This leads to a focus on the key modes of responsibility, and the three practices which undergird the development of responsibility: deliberation, narrative development, and dialogue.

The second part sets out the principles behind an integrated approach to ethics teaching in HE, which focuses on the practice of responsibility, accountability and creative responsibility, as key to learning in general and to ethical development in particular. This is embodied in pedagogy

for critical moral consciousness focused in: critical reflection; holistic decision making; dialogue (engaging complexity and difference); mutual accountability; and the exercise of the moral imagination. These stresses *both the* development of ethical autonomy *and* positive engagement with plural community (be those professions, institutions, such as universities, or intermediate organisations such as religions) but also the nature of learning. This also from the basis for leadership at all levels of the organisation and beyond.

The third and largest part of the chapter will set how ethical identity can be developed in the curriculum, involving a fourfold strategy and related examples of teaching:

- Establishing with the parent university key curriculum outcomes focused on responsibility and key ethical virtues. This will detail how virtues such as courage relate to intellectual and psychological virtues, and thus to employability.
- Developing ethical teaching based in identity, with modules or parts of modules over three years focused in student identity, professional identity, global identity, and how these relate to personal identity.
- Developing pedagogy which focuses on the practice of mutual dialogue and decision making. The pedagogic examples will include student dialogue with university administrators, different professions, and community stakeholders.
- Developing integration with the other modules in the curriculum, e.g. through focus across modules on the same professional decision making frameworks, and skills of reflective practice.

The examples given will focus on a holistic view of professional practice and ethics through reflection on identity and practice, offering

an account of how ethical behaviour can be motivated in the learning environment, and link directly to the SDGs*.

Sustainable Development Goals

The broad argument of this chapter is that the focus on developing SDGs in the curriculum is necessary but not sufficient. SDGs were prompted by the UN conference on SD in 2012. In September 2015, 17 goals and 169 targets were adopted across complex and holistic interlinked social and environmental challenges. The aspiration is to transform the world order. This would require a social and economic paradigm shift, away from development aid and to multi stakeholder partnerships, social investment and ethical trade. The interconnected framework is summed up in the five words, Planet, People, Prosperity, Partnership and Peace (UN Foundation 2019). In effect, this profoundly ambitious enterprise is suggesting the development of global shared responsibility for health, education, economic development, peace and so on. There are problems with such a vision.

First, the agenda for change has been set, with a deadline of 2030. This feels like project management, but the breadth of SDGs has been criticized for being inconsistent, difficult to quantify, implement and monitor (cf. Swain 2017); the very opposite of a successful project focus. Already the World Economic Forum is stressing a major financial

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To quote this chapter: Robinson, Simon and Arrigoni, Adalberto “Finding a Voice: SDGs, Ethical Identity and the Curriculum” in: Amélie Adamavi-Aho Ekué, Divya Singh, and Jane Usher (Eds.), *Leading Ethical Leaders: Higher Education, Business Schools and the Sustainable Development Goals*, Geneva:

Globethics Publications, 2023, pp.205-243, DOI: 10.58863/20.500.12424/4278464 © Globethics Publications. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Visit: <https://www.globethics.net/publications/prorobinson7@gmail.com>

shortfall, not least because of the need to develop infrastructure that would enable the vision to take shape (Cooper 2021)

Second, the goals are non-binding. Each country is expected to create their own national or regional plans, without an effective framework to manage this, or clarity about the financial resources and investments required. Third, underlying tensions between the different goals soon emerges, not least between the socio-economic development and the environmental sustainability goals. The tensions themselves reflect a social and economic environment which is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. This suggests that the idea of a simple paradigm change, whilst admirable, is utopian, a kingdom of heaven, or even ‘cloud cuckoo land’ (Aristophanes, 2003).

The important underlying discussions are about responsibility, at local, national and global levels, and about how leadership, at all levels, can enable those discussions and develop creative and shared responsibility in complex and difficult environments. The paradigm cannot come alive without an exploration of responsibility and how far we own the connected values and can work together to embody them. The challenge for Higher Education then is not to simply champion the SDGs, but rather to explore and enable the responsibility and leadership which underlies them.

From this point of view, it has been correctly pointed out (Moratis and Melissen, 2021) that most initiatives in the field of responsible management education tend to be based on an “issue-based” content perspective, that envisage SDGs as an umbrella framework underlining the importance of *discussing* sustainability as a new “opportunity” for achieving localized, opportunistic and only partial incremental progresses in teaching and research - if not more cynical, bluewashed gains or profit for businesses and corporations.

On the contrary, if SGDs are to represent a challenge that requires *transformational change* with crucial consequences for the role and ultimate function of HE in society (*idem*, pp. 3-8), then:

a) the trade-off and tensions between seemingly contradictory goals and domains that the “sustainability paradox” involves and highlights should be seen not just as adjustable and secondary aspects within a “business-as-usual” instrumental view (which sees ecological quality and social justice conditional on economic success), but rather as a possibility to integrate new narratives expanding the orthodoxy of the “green growth” discourse (e.g. post-consumerism, etc.);

b) the crisis of a certain kind of responsible management education - which fails the “heart and soul” of graduates and does not successfully generate ethical habitus - can be overcome as educators and academics see themselves as *phronetic* leaders promoting a systemic activism which (far from being non-neutral and ideological) can: identify windows of opportunity to shift logics and mindsets; create meaningful connections between different networks; support new deliberations on old problems; nurture and illuminate innovative and ground-breaking visions;

c) HE has the responsibility to encourage students to engage in self-care: while the ambition to “change the world” can trigger strong emotions such as anger, ecological grief and anxiety, the passion of facing inconvenient truths about human suffering and natural degradation can pedagogically drive an embodied and integrated teaching and learning approach where the boundaries between the self, the others and the physical world can be critically revisited. Accepting that responsibility- and sustainability- related education comes with an emotional involvement can help HEIs understand how students feel about the state of the world and the SGDs challenges, and this – in turn – define their role better.

Responsibility and HE

There is some evidence that responsibility in the curriculum is not very effective. On the one hand, it can be argued (Kaul and Smith 2012) that exploring the meaning of responsibility is a challenge, and implies dealing with a concept extremely difficult to put in perspective and categorise. As a consequence, the (pre-)comprehension of what “constitutes” responsibility is unclear and variable across the students and educators, with the former and the latter facing dissimilar challenges (working? Studying? Pursuing the Common Good?); since “responsibility” is a multi-layered notion, it is often difficult to distinguish between internal and external factors and narrower and wider levels (local/personal vs universal responsibility); there can be “communication barriers” about mutual expectations and joint objectives.

In other words, it seems challenging to defeat those rationalising narratives that see “sustainability”, “sustainable development” or “corporate responsibility” as instrumental tools where addressing ethical challenges may lead to some sort of business or economic value, in a vision where self-interest and domination rule in global, institutional and organisational contexts.

On the other hand, it seems equally demoralising to embrace an unassuming and unpretentious posture, where HE gives up this educational responsibility, which can lead to a de-professionalisation where incompetence or carelessness can be worse than greed. Academic practice cannot go without its intrinsic epistemic and methodological commitments that provide the fundamental structure of a disciplined intellectual and professional practise.

This is further reinforced by Gill’s (2011) research about junior, recently graduated, accountants and their awareness of responsibility and related values. It suggests that the dominant discourse in accounting ‘does not take ethics particularly seriously’ (Gill 2011, 123). This is

shown up in several different practices which appeared to be an unquestioned part of the work culture, such as phantom ticking (of unchecked data), and ignoring Chinese walls set up when two or more firms are bidding to buy another company. They recognized that it was wrong but did because ‘everyone else does it’.

There is a juvenile tone to the responses which treats these actions as, in the participants’ words, ‘minor felonies’ (Gill, 2011,121). In other words, the actions are trivialized. Central to this is the implication that the persons who do this are not fully responsible for their actions, or perhaps that others are responsible for them. The research participants also perceived ethics as dogmatic and judgmental, and as a result did not take the idea seriously, indeed assumed that nobody did. Hence, their response to questions was characterized by confusion, equivocation, obfuscation, and the use of technical rather than value language (cf. Bauman 1989). The research also showed lack of responsibility for articulating values. One participant (Gill,124) is able to speak of his ‘own’ ethics, but also being able to ‘flex’ his ethics. As Gill writes this seem to render ethics as ‘something external to himself, which he can work upon’ (Ibid.). Other participants spoke of the declaration of values making them vulnerable, ‘which is not necessarily the best thing in an aggressive corporate atmosphere’ (Ibid, 125).

In both cases there was a reluctance to identify the self with values, or to give an account of that identity, despite having gone through ethics training in the firms. One participant showed the development of connecting values to her own self, comparing the experience of the research questions to psychotherapy (Ibid. 127). The lack of identification became even more pronounced with respect to the term corruption. First, participants recognized that there was a grey area between corruption and their practice. However, they felt it was important not to reflect critically on this opacity. Second, some participants tried to characterize corruption as extreme, such as

briefcases full of cash offered. The point here was to distance themselves from such acts (126). Third, nonetheless, they could envision themselves as crossing the line if pressure was brought to bear from a superior (127). Fourth, some participants (126) suggested that thinking of ways to get around the Finance Act every year could be viewed as ‘border-line corrupt’, but that such acts were a key part of their professional life, reinforced by messages from ‘the top’. At no point did the participants identify a sense of leadership in their own behaviours.

Responsibility and the SDGs

The focus on identity and responsibility then suggests the development critical thinking, not least about the value we own, and a sense of relationality and shared responsibility. Orr (1992) draws some of this out in his idea of ecological literacy. This rests on six foundations: all education is environmental education; environmental issues cannot be understood through a single discipline; environmental education requires dialogue with place; process is as important as content; experience in the natural world is essential to understanding it; and education for sustainability requires the understanding of natural systems. Awareness of place, especially, is focused in relational identity, and a sense of belonging.

Tilbury and Wortman (2004) argue that there are five essential skills necessary sustainable development education: envisioning, critical thinking and reflection, systemic thinking, building partnerships and participation in decision making. Developing such skills still assumes some sense of ownership on the part not only of the student but also in the community of learning which provides professional or educational identity. Jonas (1984) argues that the development of responsibility lies at the heart of such ownership, and responsibility can be viewed as three interconnected modes: agency; accountability; and positive or creative responsibility (Robinson 2016).

Agency involves taking responsibility for critical engagement with perspective, purpose (and related sense of worth), core principles, and practice and its effect on the social, cultural and physical environment. This is core to the development of autonomous agency (Taylor 1989), in effect self-determination. The question of attributability is at the heart of this and how far any of our thoughts and actions are determined by other forces or by ourselves. For the most part the debate about this recognises that there is no total freedom or determinism, and that autonomy involves continued reflection in relation to social and cultural context that we both shape and are shaped by (Fischer and Ravizza 2000, Robinson 2011). As Haidt (2013) notes, one of the most powerful forces in undermining autonomy is cultures with narrow worldviews, where critical reflection on personal and organizational assumptions is discouraged. One's thinking and practice is literally determined by what others think, leading unquestioning reinforcement of assumptions, rigid orthodoxy and isomorphism (Thompson and Bevan 2013).

Accountability involves taking responsibility for giving an account of purpose, principles and practice to the self, to the organization and to others. Focused in ongoing critical dialogue this enables a continual testing of organizational narrative (cf. Brown 2005, Fawkes 2104), and the development of plural and mutual accountability. For example, a member of any organization may be accountable to: the organization which pays them; its customers; suppliers; her professional body; regional bodies such as the chamber of commerce; various other stakeholders; and so on. Narrow organisational culture focuses on limited accountability, tuning out the wider stakeholder narratives. In the most extreme cases (cf. Francis 2013) questioning from such stakeholders is viewed as threat to the organization. Such a dynamic also ignores mutual accountability. Partly because of power imbalance accountability tends to be one way, upwards to the leaders, with little accountability downwards. This means that leadership tends not to be

open to questions from below, and therefore not genuinely accountable (Thompson and Bevan 2013). Critical to any sense of mutual accountability is a sense of shared responsibility across the organisation for purpose, principles, projects and place (the material environment of the community and beyond).

Positive responsibility is focused in shared responsibility for ongoing critical reflection on purpose, principles and developing creative response in practice, including the negotiation of responsibility, individual, plural, shared and mutual (Ricoeur 2000). The focus is on creativity and the exercise of the moral imagination, looking to the development of possibilities (Biss 2014, Lederach 2005), enabled by engaging different perspectives and sharing responsibility (cf. Jonas 1984). Leadership enables critical engagement with the different narratives through the ongoing practice of dialogue, developing individual, and organizational responsibility.

At the heart of these modes of responsibility is awareness of the effects of one's actions, in relation to targets and the social and physical environment. None of this prescribes a particular response. What the effect of any action is or might be will vary from case to case. However, responsibility still demands an awareness of how those actions have affected or might affect the other. Of course, any awareness of actions, consequences and the social and physical environment is not value free. On the contrary, core values will tend to determine how we see the world (Robinson, 2008), and very specifically what we exclude, i.e. what we deem not to be of value (Bauman, 1989). Bauman argues for the importance of plurality, precisely because this enables different perspectives to challenge any dominating or totalizing narrative. Hence, it is critical that core values as well as practice be subject to critical reflection.

Jonas (1984) argues for a sense shared responsibility for a common environment. For Bauman (1993) and others this involves taking on an

attitude of universal responsibility, demanding constant reflection and learning. As Bauman (1993) suggests, it also means that the moral self cannot rest content, something shared with the Islamic concept of *hizmet* or service (Robinson 2017).

The different modes of responsibility then are interconnected. Without meaning you cannot know what you are doing. Without practice you cannot know what you are talking about. Without value you cannot appreciate what you are talking about or doing. Each element is necessary if responsibility is to be taken and sense made. This relational view of responsibility also provides strong grounds for the compatibilist view of freedom and determinism (cf. Fischer and Ravizza 2000)). Freedom is partly a function of knowing what one thinks but also knowing how one is connected to, and might relate to, the social and physical environment. It is also a function of different perspectives that help the person to reflect and take increased responsibility for meaning and action.

The three modes of responsibility are focused in three practices: deliberation, narrative development, and dialogue.

Deliberation. Taylor (1989) argues that decision-making constitutes self-identity. This is a social function, involving awareness of other comparable approaches, enabling comparison and awareness of wider possibilities. Deliberation involves a conscious effort to critically examine assumptions about [purpose and associated understandings of the worth the individual and organisation, core ethical values, and the effect of practice on different stakeholders.

Narrative. As Ricoeur (2000) argues, conscious narrative development enables a sense of authorship, taking responsibility for meaning and practice (cf. Calhoun, 1995). Narrative enables ‘distanciation’, an epistemic distance from the self (Freeman 2015) ‘a separation of the self from the self, such that the text of one’s experience becomes the object of interpretation’ (cf. Ricoeur 1992), leading to the

possibility of dialogue *with* the self *about* the self, enabling the development of meta-cognition and mindfulness (Flavell 1987). Seeing the self 'as another' (Ricoeur 1992) enables critical questioning not simply of ideas but also how we perceive and appreciate ourselves and the wider social and physical environment and thus of our underlying view of value and worth. Such internal dialogue with the different relational narratives involved in the complex and plural self (Hermans 2012), reinforces commitment to the developing self over time, and engagement with and resolution of contradictions and inconsistencies in the self. Re-presenting the self then is an ongoing, cyclical process of critical reflection and self-development, providing a residual sense of identity (Ricoeur 1992).

Dialogue. Dialogue with others amplifies the internal dialogue (Bakhtin, 1984). This also involves distancing, enabled by the capacity of the other to listen, the practice of equal respect, and by the others' re-presentation of difference (Bakhtin 1984). The presentation of different perspectives challenges the person to re-examine their own and the others' perspectives, sense of value, related ethical values and practices, both in terms of different ideas, attitudes and possibilities. This reinforces and develops the broader value of the developing narrative, individual and shared, locating such value beyond the narrow group, and focused on shared value (sense of worth) and ethical values.

These three practices are not simply the means to responsible thinking, they embody it. Dialogue for instance, especially unrehearsed (Oakshott 1989), has immediate and personal transparency. As Bakhtin (1984) suggests, dialogue is ontological, focused on openness to personal encounter, not simply to conversation *about* rational ideas. Sacks (2007) uses the term *Zwischenmenschliche* (genuinely interpersonal), suggesting that such dialogue does not attempt to change the other, but leads to mutual learning and development. This enables: the development of trust; the taking of responsibility for critical

reflection by all those involved; mutual communication; and creative response to the wider social environment (Zappen 2004).

Responsibility and the curriculum

Focusing on this wider sense of responsibility in the curriculum can enable the development of identity and a sense of active and creative belonging for the student. Embedding the three modes can enable holistic integration of: the moral and practical; cognate concepts and disciplines; occupational utility and values; virtues and skills; values and learning; and reflective practice. All of these enable deeper appreciation of the SDGs and motivation to lead their development.

Integrating the moral and practical

To begin with it links core intellectual capacities to moral and practical capacities. Many higher education writers argue for these as quite distinct. Graham (2007), for instance, argues that the core purpose of HE is to develop the critical intellect not ethical virtues. In one sense, the idea of responsibility affirms the importance of the intellect, knowing what one thinks and being able to rationally account for and justify this. However, even the critical intellect is not value free. It stands out against uncritical thinking, and is based in the development of autonomy, in effect agency. Moreover, as Aristotle suggests the key virtue of *phronesis* (practical wisdom and effecting judgement) is central to ethical reflection (the capacity to reflect on purpose and its embodiment) and is itself an intellectual virtue. Solomon (2007) notes that rationality is not made up of simply cognitive elements. Reflection on purpose includes a sense of worth and identity and thus has strong affective elements (Cowan 2005).

Integrating cognate concepts

The focus on responsibility is an effective way of integrating the many different cognate areas including: social enterprise, citizenship, sustainability, social responsibility, volunteering, and so on. All, conceptually and practically, are focused on responsible thinking and practice. It also provides a strong link between the different professions and disciplines that make up business and connection to the wider social and physical environment.

Integrating occupational utility and values

This also begins to provide a bridge between occupational utility and the curriculum. The stress in much employability work (Yorke, 2004) has been on practice-centred skills, rather than values or the intellect. Employers suggest that a number of task-centred skills go to make up employability, including: effective-learning skills, self-awareness, the capacity for networking, negotiation skills, transferable skills, self-confidence, interpersonal skills, team-working skills, the capacity to make decisions, and the capacity to cope with uncertainty (Yorke and Knight, 2004). Yorke and Knight (2004, p. 5) argue that employability is a more complex construct, involving four interrelated components:

Understanding. This is intentionally differentiated from knowledge, signifying a deeper awareness of data and its contextual meaning.

Skills. This refers to skills in context and practice and therefore implies the capacity to use skills appropriately.

Efficacy beliefs, based in identity self-theories, and personal qualities. The connection of these to a sense of underlying purpose and value enables the student to feel that it is possible to make a difference in work and influence how the person will perform in work.

Metacognition. This involves self-awareness, the capacity to learn through reflective practice, the capacity to reflect on learning itself, and so learn how to learn, and the capacity to regulate the self. Such employability is evidenced in the “application of a mixture of personal

qualities and beliefs, understandings, skilful practices, and the ability to reflect productively on experience.” (Yorke, 2004, p. 11). These involve:

- reflectivity, including the capacity to reflect holistically and to learn;
- responsibility, involving the capacity to identify and articulate self-beliefs, and be responsible for these beliefs and their development, and related actions;
- connectivity, involving the ability to make connections between: experiences over time; the self and its core communities, including work; and the social and physical environment outside such communities;
- innovativity, the capacity to both handle new challenges and create new opportunities. This recognises risk and initiative as an inevitable part of the work experience, summed up partly in the idea of entrepreneurship.

This is further amplified by Mustakova-Possardt (2004, p. 245), who also connects responsibility to both world views and awareness of the social and physical environment in the idea of “critical moral consciousness”, summed up as:

- a moral sense of identity;
- a sense of responsibility and agency;
- a deep sense of relatedness on all levels of living;
- a sense of “life meaning or purpose”, linking to underlying beliefs.

These connect to core intellectual values, not least the development of rational agency, moral values, spiritual values¹⁸⁸, and competency

¹⁸⁸ Spirituality here is used a generic term pointing to underlying beliefs about the world, sometimes expressed in terms of worldviews.

values, not least professional and technical skills and values, from communication, to teamwork, to concern for excellence. If the connections between the different modes of responsibility hold good, then it is reasonable to conclude that all these value levels are interconnected. Intellectual values provide the critical perspective from which to test and develop the other values, whilst moral and spiritual values directly test intellectual values. Finally, both sets of values directly inform and positively affect competency values. It follows that responsibility as outlined above is central to effective decision making and monitoring of practice, and thus to any view of employability.

Linking virtues and skills

Responsibility is also linked directly to virtues. Ladd (1991) and Calhoun (1995) argue that responsibility is itself a virtue. Equally, virtues might be seen as necessary for the development of responsibility. Focusing on the Aristotelian virtues of justice, courage, temperance, patience, and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) it could be argued that these enable responsibility to be taken. MacIntyre (1990) argues that the virtues of learning are justice, courage and honesty. This challenges Higher Education pedagogy to focus on the practice of judgement and practical wisdom (Barnett and Maxwell 2009), dialogue and co-creation, rather than simply intellectual content, and thus the practice of all of these virtues. MacIntyre (1981) also suggests that the virtues are internal to the good, the underlying purpose and worth of the organisation. It is important then to articulate the virtues and how they connect to skills in the practice of responsibility. Articulation means including virtues in the desired outcomes of modules, not least practical wisdom (Barnett and Maxwell 2009). This is seen by Aristotle as an intellectual virtue, involving reflection on, and appreciation of, purpose, and the relation of this to practice. The practice of responsibility leads the integration of moral, psychological, intellectual, and practical virtues, including: *moral*, such as justice, respect, patience, and temperance; *psychological*,

including empathy, humility, trust and hope (Miller 2003); *intellectual*, including practical wisdom (*phronesis*); and creative/practical, including imagination (Lederach 2005, Nussbaum 1990). Each of these connects to skills and deepens personal and professional development. A good example of this is empathy, connected directly to listening skills and broader communication skills. Empathy is focused in attentiveness to and the capacity to identify with the other. Without this it is hard to really hear and value the narrative of the other. Far from enabling closeness it enables epistemic distance, thus a clearer view of the situation, and the other, as well as the self, unclouded by preconceptions. As such it is important to the development of professional disinterestedness, focused on honesty, realism and the key professional purpose. Keats's (cf. Ou 2009) capacity of negative capability is close to this, a virtue that enables person to stand art from competing claims and help this involves focus on underlying truth.

Dialogue and the practice of learning

The development of three modes of responsibility, and practices, enables the development of critical and holistic thinking, echoing Barnett's (1990) dynamic of 'higher learning' which frees students and staff from the narrow focus of the disciplines (Bender 2005), transcending and connecting them. This develops a sense of identity which relates to complexity, and ambiguity as well as uncertainty. This desire for such complex identity is supported by the evidence of students themselves, for instance, in the UK National Union of Students Survey on sustainability skills (Drayson et al 2014). Over several years this found that a large majority of students believed that sustainable development, and the learning of related skills, should be actively promoted and incorporated by universities into the curriculum. The survey showed that a majority of students identified themselves as active participants in society, sharing responsibility for the social and physical

environment, and not buying into narrow instrumentalist or positivistic approaches to Higher Education or to work. This reinforced the connection of cognate concepts noted above. Katulushi (2005) extends this to student identity as global citizens, not least through interaction with the different cultures in the university community.

Key to such developments is handling difference and learning is also focused on dialogue and the appreciation of different narratives and narrators (Bahktin 1984). Oakeshott (1989, p. 101) argues that the distinctive mark of a university is a place where the undergraduate “has the opportunity of education in conversation with his teachers, his fellows and himself, and where he is not encouraged to confuse education with training for a profession”. It is in the critical conversation that students hear different voices and begin to learn how to mutually test and challenge the different accounts. For Oakeshott (1989, p. 13) this conversation is an “unrehearsed intellectual adventure” that enables responsibility in four areas: (1) reflection on the wider meaning of any project; (2) development of the capacity to challenge whilst remaining committed to people and projects; (3) awareness and appreciation of the many different values perspectives in any conversation; and (4) a sense of interdependence in learning. The practice of mutual dialogue then enables the development of critical self-reflection, the capacity for mutual challenge and support, and the development of identity which is complex and creative. Ford (2003, 23) focusing on the importance of collegiality as ‘intensive, disciplined face to face conversation and debate between contemporaries and across generations.’ The mutual nature of such critical conversation is strengthened by much of it not being rehearsed (Oakeshott 1989). Unrehearsed dialogue makes accountability for thoughts and feelings immediate.

Dialogue centred pedagogy effectively enables greater accountability and openness to the challenges of different voices in and beyond disciplines. Nussbaum (1990) notes the importance of literature in

enabling critical reflection and dialogue about identity, and the practice of the moral imagination (cf. Biss 2014). Such dialogue also enables critical reflection on plural identity of the self and others. As Ford (2003) suggests, this can involve the institution, different professions, different disciplines and so on. This extends Oakshott's thinking to include professional identity. Professions also focus in the handling of complexity, and professional development is a key part of Higher Education. This elevates what is often seen as the narrow area of professional reflective practice

Reflective Practice and dialogue

Schoen (1983) suggests that this involved “reflective conversation with the situation”, and outlined a process including:

- The analysis of the situation in order to work out what the problem might be and what issues are involved.
- Noting “appreciative” or value systems that help to find significant meaning in the situation.
- Noting overarching theories that might provide further meaning. . An understanding of the professional's own role in the situation, both its limits and opportunities.
- The ability to learn from “talkback”. This involves reflective conversation about the situation.
- Treating clients as reflective practitioners. Such a framework can be and is applied to most professions.
- Gibbs (1988) provides another simple framework which takes account of the emotions as well as ideas in reflection:
 - Description: What happened?
 - Feelings: How did you feel about the situation?
 - Evaluation and analysis: What was good or bad about the situation?
 - Conclusion: What else could you have done?

- Action plan: If this arose again what would you do? None of this is value free, involving: the person taking responsibility for his/her own ideas and values, and how they relate to practice; responsiveness to the situation, enabling dialogue with the client and stakeholders; awareness of the professional's role, resources and limitations; respecting the autonomy of the client; and the importance of continued learning.

Reflective practice also discovers value in context and identity. The professional engineer, e.g. finds value in her role and purpose, and how she relates to client and stakeholder. Reflective practice is not individualistic but rather focuses on the community of practice and its meaning. It involves critique not simply of practice, but also of the meaning and purpose of that practice, embodied in different traditions/communities/institutions.

Such reflective practice is one way of insuring against polarised thinking and inability to appreciate empirical truth in any situation. Entine (2002), for example, notes how narrow defensive identity can lead to the inability to appreciate data. He notes how Greenpeace in dispute with the oil industry focused on subverting North Sea activities even though empirical evidence suggested that this project was the most sustainable way of dealing with the issue. Greenpeace later accepted that the data offered by the Oil Industry was correct but still said that they would have done the same.

Responsibility and motivation

Focus on responsibility is intrinsically motivating. Research suggests that focusing motivation on financial rewards is effective only up to a point. World Bank research (Pink 2011) found that key motivators included rather: opportunities to practise mastery, the practice of autonomous judgement, tying into meaningful purpose, and the development of socially significant pathways. Each of these relates

directly to the development of agency, accountability, and positive responsibility. This suggests that students will be more motivated and more aware through pedagogy which is focused in dialogue, narratives and the exercise of the imagination. It also suggests that motivation is focused in the development of identity and relationality. Identity is partly worked out through giving an account to the self and others. It is also developed through the negotiating of responsibility. Indeed, Finch and Mason (1993), from work with families, concluded that much moral identity is developed through the negotiation of responsibility, rather than reference to principles or codes. This negotiation of responsibility is central also to a wider sense of shared liability.

Responsibility in the Curriculum

All of this suggests that the most effective learning approach to the SDGs is in developing modules:

- Some of which are not focused on disciplines but rather involve ongoing reflection on learning and development. Such modules can serve *both* to develop skills *and* integrate such practice across the other disciplines.
- Are focused on deliberation, dialogue and narrative, so that responsibility is developed in and through actual learning. Here the learning is not cognitive preparation for practice, it is the actual practice of responsibility.
- Can enable students to develop their own learning frameworks, connecting to the development of personal planning.

The example we set out was developed in the International Faculty of Leeds Metropolitan University (now Leeds Beckett University), involving professional and personal development modules in undergraduate courses, delivered over three years. The programme introduces students to the concept and practice responsibility, starting in

the first year with their responsibility in higher education, progressing in the second year to professional and civil responsibility, and culminating in the third year with global responsibility. The progressive reflection on and practice of responsibility provides the spine from which all cognate areas are connected. The usefulness of this example is in its illustration of how deliberation, narrative and dialogue can be practised within the curriculum. This includes developing dialogue with stakeholders inside and outside the university, enabling mutual challenge and shared responsibility. There are clearly many different ways in which such dialogue can be developed and thus in turn can act as a reflection on research, and the ethics of how this is conducted.

Year One: Student Responsibility, my University

This module introduces the students, through a number of reflective cycles, to the role of the student, the purpose of university and what it means to be identified with a responsible community and institution. This involves dialogue and critical reflection on the nature and purpose of learning, and the nature and role of the university, and its relationship to and responsibility for the community.

Narrative of learning

Students reflect on and develop an appreciation of the nature and purpose of learning from their school experience to this point. Was it simply the acquisition of knowledge to achieve a personal end such as a job acquisition? Statistically do university degrees actually lead to good jobs, or are good jobs about character and experience? Does learning develop any key skills, if so what were they? How has the practice of learning developed for them? Each of these is then examined critically in plenary, looking at what the point of formal learning is, what self-development means in the context of Higher Education, and what the identity and responsibility of the student is, as member of the university.

Is the student customer, stakeholder or something more? This involves an analysis of the student's relationships, who they owe an account to, and how that account might be given. This begins to establish the role and identity of the student as intentional. From these discussions, and subsequent plenary, emerge a description of the value and practice of learning, reinforced by Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, and a framework of the skills of learning (including reflective skills, communication and presentation skills, psychological/relational, leadership skills), with clear indication of how these skills will be practised in the context of learning. This framework acts then as a basis for reflection on all modules.

The framework is then compared with the work of Schoen (1983), Gibbs (1988) and others on reflective practice, leading to further student dialogue about the underlying values and related virtues implicit in this work. From this discussion emerges:

- Core values of learning, including personal and practical development.
- Core values of a community which enables such learning: including freedom to learn, academic freedom, safe community for the practice of conversation, freedom as agency, equality, equal respect for members of the academic community, justice (including avoiding the injustice of plagiarism, and integrity).
- The underlying virtues needed, including practical wisdom and other intellectual virtues (for judgement), courage (for presentation).

This enables further dialogue about the relation of academic learning to learning for practice, and how it can develop 'employability' as noted above in Yorke and Knights (2004) analysis. Finally, in this section students discuss the core responsibilities in the practice of learning, including: responsibility for developing critical agency; the mutual accountability of students to teachers/organisation; the shared

responsibility for learning and the community of learning. Critical dialogue is then developed with a number of academics and administrators, aiming to arrive at a shared understanding of plural and mutual accountability, and shared responsibility.

Narrative of the University

A second overlapping but distinct critical reflective cycle in groups is around the theme of the purpose of higher education. Responses have included occupational utility, personal development, learning for its own sake, economic utility for society and contribution towards “inclusive and civilised” society (cf. Dearing 1997). Each of these is critically analysed by the groups in conversation, leading to a plenary analysis of higher education as a community of practice, an institution, and a network of stakeholders (cf. CIHE 2005).

The dialogue in the section is widened to include different members of the university. First, the Vice-Chancellor is invited to begin a reflection on the history and identity of the university including the key purpose, relationships to the region and country, criteria for success, and plans for the future. The ensuing dialogue with the students focuses on critical reflection, the nature of the learning community, the identity of the university in region and nationally (including the relationship with other universities). What makes your university special, how do you represent it with people from other universities? What is the core purpose of Higher Education? The nature and purpose is critically discussed with external stakeholders, focusing on how others perceive the purpose and practice of the university in their area and globally, from contributions of research, how it links to different elements of the SDGs, to the relationships of students with the local area.

From these dialogues a class framework is developed, informed by the report *Ethics Matters in Higher* (CIHE 2005) which examines the purpose and ethical principles of Higher Education, and of the students’ own university in relation to learning, research, community and business

relations, and wider environment. This framework is then tested through dialogue with members of the board of the university, lay and academic, heads of CSR and sustainability, and the head of the Students Union, about the SDGs and how the university responds to these, including reporting mechanisms and partnership with the local and global community.

The students then develop an analyse of the university's value statements, codes, policies, marketing, ongoing monitoring and reflection, and responsibilities, based on the dialogues and a critical reflection on the university's web information, involving:

- exploring for value statements, and assessing the nature of these- are they principles, codes, visions etc.? How is purpose handled?
- Critically evaluating the values and how they are set out.
- Exploring how values are embodied in policy and practice, noting the plural nature of the university.
- Exploring how the practice is monitored and reported on.
- Exploring key tensions and how they are handled, not least between the continued development of a learning and research community and the financial sustainability of the organisation.

All this fed back to the board members and staff who have been in dialogue, through a presentation (the first of two assessed pieces of work) before an audience which includes members of different faculties in the university and different organisations from the community, including the HE SDG network (<https://www.acu.ac.uk/get-involved/higher-education-and-the-sdgs-network>). Part of this involves a stakeholder analysis of the university and the complex and different value narratives of professional bodies who use the university for training, the management of the university, relations to community, and the social, environmental, and global responsibility of the university.

The final written assessed work is an analysis of the case study of Nottingham University's acceptance of sponsorship from British American Tobacco (Smith and Campbell 2001, Robinson 2011), noting the views of the different stakeholders about the key purpose, ethical principles and responsibilities of the university. This invites students to reflect on the nature and importance of leadership in sustainable development at all levels of the university, and to explore ways of balancing financial sustainability and shared responsibility for a community of learning.

Metacognitive reflection

The final reflection of this module involves the students reflecting on their learning journey through the year and their developing skills and virtues.

This includes reflection on the development of their leadership, the leadership in the university and the leadership of the university in the community. In particular the identification of leadership and taking responsibility is explored. In effect the dynamics of leadership at whatever level involve taking responsibility for one's own thinking and actions.

Year Two: Community Engagement. Civil and Professional Responsibility

From the identity of the student and university in the first module the second-year module focuses on civic and professional identity, and the practice of leadership, building on the relationship of the university to the community examined in the first year.

Integrating SDGs

This dialogue begins with a case study of the Amsterdam Child Diabetes Project (AAGG, Hawkes et al 2017), introduced online by the

coordinators. The project, focused on the high level of diabetes in children, especially in the poor areas of Amsterdam. From the dialogue about the project a class framework is developed, detailing:

- The SDGs involved locally in the case, including health, poverty, education, nutrition, justice and equality, innovative industry. This forms the basis for exploring the interconnection of the SDGs.
- The shared responsibility for these areas, across business, education, local authority, health care, and family; noting how responsibility was developed in each of these sectors, leading to a 13% decrease in childhood obesity (Robinson and Doody 2021), and became the basis for ongoing dialogue, learning and innovation.
- The dynamics of leadership, focused in the three modes of responsibility, and developing narrative, dialogue and shared decision- making. Dialogue and a clear learning platform enabled the sense of shared responsibility across the different groups and also the negotiation of particular responsibilities. A key example of this was the health authorities identifying core elements of fitness included exercise and sleep. Schools focused on integrating exercise into daily school life, and the family began to develop responsibility for adequate sleep. Up to that point many parents were unable to exercise this responsibility because they had not developed the skills to ensure that their children got a good night's sleep. Hence, health experts worked with the parents to develop bedtime strategies, based in enabling children to make the choice to go to bed.

Reflection

The class discussed the dynamics of the case, noting how the different modes of responsibility were developed across the different

stakeholders. This also provided the basis for motivating SDGs response. As noted above (Pink (2011) motivation is focused less in financial rewards and more in appreciation of purpose, agency, and the development of creative pathways. The experience of AAGG suggests an additional motivator was the support of the different stakeholders, a sense of mutual value, a sense of common purpose, and a sense that their practice made a significant difference.

Civic identity and sustainable development

A second dialogue, led by a leader from the local authority reflects on the local community and the different stakeholders, in terms of SDGs, including:

- the role of citizen and what responsibilities this sets up.
- the nature of civil society, the role of intermediate organisations in relation to community, and the nature of civil and cross-cultural dialogue.
- underlying worldviews and how they affect perceptions of society.
- Conflict and tensions within community.
- Example of how groups in the local region work together, connecting the different elements of the SDGs.

This dialogue then extends to cross cultural groups, volunteer organisations and businesses and professions, focused in Covid 19 and how the local region responded.

Professions

The students are then invited to reflect on the companies, firms or professions that they aim to target for jobs and analyse them in terms of responsibility, and work through what would be needed to develop global awareness and responsibility in firms. Each profession/firm is analysed in terms of the framework developed in the first year, including

purpose, values, professional and corporate responsibility. Hearing the different purpose and values from different groups provides the basis for developing creative imagination in terms of how different groups can work together around developing the SDGs.

The focus for this is then related to any professional experience in the second year, from voluntary work-placements to internships or more sustained professional development in one of the professions.

Leadership

In the light of the dialogue on community and the professions, the class then is given space to reflect where leadership has emerged and what this tells us about on the nature of leadership, and what the core skills and virtues of leadership might be. Three major local leaders of business and professions begin the dialogue to develop and analysis of leadership which is focused in individual, organisational and regional leadership. This includes each leader's perception of how they lead and how their profession or organisation leads sustainable development in the region. The reflection on the nature of leadership then briefly includes major theories of leadership such as transactional, transformative, servant and eco- leadership (Western 2008).

The class then have a presentation from Mervyn King (King III) about leadership and governance in South Africa. King's report notes three core values in governance: sustainability, citizenship, and leadership. The second and third stress that these core practices are values in themselves, not simply means to an end.

Employability

As in the first year, the students are invited to reflect on their reflecting, this time beginning to assess how well they had done it as a class. The students are then invited to develop reflections on their view of employability, how they develop enterprise and professional skills, and how they will communicate their employability through CVs,

interview and so on, seeing these as means of giving an account of themselves in different contexts and to different parties. These form the basis of the final written assignment.

This is then compared to a full list of employability skills. The students are then invited to reflect on their own practice and how far it reflects these skills, and to note how their practice in the first year has developed them, and what needs development. They then make a plan for how they will be developed, and how this will relate to other modules in the degree.

Pedagogical note

The reflective process increasingly involves attention to plurality and the ‘other’, and with that the possibility of strong dissonance emerging that will test key elements of group dialogue. The role of teachers then extends to enabling dialogue which can help participants reflect on the differences and dissonance, and to experience the difficulty of mutual challenge and mutual affirmation. In turn this involved closer attention to listening and the capacity to challenge ideas and not the person.

Year Three: Global Responsibility.

The global engagement module changes the focus to the realities of the global context and seeks to help students gain an understanding of what is going on in the global arena that will have a bearing on their futures, as individuals, in their future employing organisations and as citizens of changing nation states, with and identity as global citizens. This takes further the themes of difference and common humanity that were developed in the second year and focuses on how in professional life one deals with a plurality of demands and meaning.

Integrity of the university

The first dialogue returns to HE with students questioning leadership of their university about its global identity. Where does it operate and what effect does it have on the local environment and society? Does the university have an identity a global citizen, and if so does it enable dialogue in the university between the different stakeholders, from students to members of professions about their role in this? How does the university respond to the complexity of global culture on campus? How does the university give an account of its global footprint, including use of air travel for conferences? Does the university contribute to issues such as justice, peace and health in the countries in which it operates, and if not how might it? Does the university see the global context as important to learning, or does it see it as an opportunity to recruit foreign students? Has the university critically examined the possible risks of operating globally?

This dialogue critically tests the global integrity of the university and of the HE sector as a whole, leading to a presentation from a member of Transparency International on global Higher Education and corruption, focusing on the massive increase in students globally, and in money targeted for HE (<https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/global-corruption-report-education>), and how this has led to increases in corrupt behaviour.

Regional organisations

The global identity of the region and its business is then examined. Student teams identify regional businesses and organisations which have an established global SDG profile each choosing one (e.g. Marks and Spencer, Yorkshire Tea). The teams develop a case study of how the SDGs are integrated into practice, from dialogue with the business corporate responsibility directors, showing how responsibility is

developed within the organisation and through relations with global stakeholders.

Core findings are shared in a plenary, focusing on how different approaches might involve learning points for all organisations involved (and shared with the organisations). This acts as the main assessment for the module.

Reflection and transition

Students in plenary then get the chance to discuss the three modules and what they have learned in terms of developing the modes of responsibility and the integration of the SDGs. They then focus on the connections to other modules and how they are affected by the perspectives of responsibility.

In the light of the imminent transition to the workforce, the students review their employability work of the first modules and the second modules work on businesses and professions, and revise their CV material in the light of the third module learning.

Final presentations and dialogue

Members of the UN Global Compact (<https://www.unglobalcompact.org/>), the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (<https://grli.org/>) and different professions (e.g. the Royal Society of Medicine, <https://www.rsm.ac.uk/environmental-sustainability/>) are invited by the students to a public meeting to develop a dialogue around global and professional responsibility and the SDGs, with students acting as interlocutors, and enabling a dialogue with the wider public, with the aim of developing shared responsibility across the region- a tangible example of students taking responsibility for leadership in this area.

Conclusions

The view of responsibility and its teaching outlined above does not involve trying to “make people more responsible”. Nor does it involve an attempt to assert a particular ideology or altruistic perspective, or the argument for a particular “paradigm”. Paradigmatic thinking tends to encourage polarised perspectives, with the underlying attempt to persuade others to buy into the “new paradigm”. We would argue that responsibility as outlined above focuses on a plurality of “paradigms”, with a primary responsibility for continually testing these in relation to shared practice. The strongest approaches to the teaching of responsibility have always been focused on the identity and practice of the group. Hence, professional ethics and responsibility emerge from reflection on practice and purpose. These do not have to import an ideology or make a discrete justification for including responsibility. It is part of who the professional is. As we have noted, none of this is value free and thus rational agency and critical challenge are directly connected to wider more proactive and moral views of responsibility. Hence, we have attempted to make responsibility mainstream, indeed the starting point, of what it means to be student, an organisation, a professional, a citizen (locally and globally), and, in of these things, a leader. From the practice of that responsibility, the person in each of these roles and beyond is then invited to see what the implications are for wider practice. This enables a stress on individual, collective, shared and multiple responsibility, for data gathering, for mutual articulation, reflection, and critique of values, for negotiating and effecting response (through individual and group presentations). Hence, responsibility as such cannot be predetermined or ring fenced, but demands continual practice in critical reflection on ideas, feelings and values, in giving an account to many different groups, and in sharing a wider responsibility. It is that conscious practice that enables the student to integrate the

wider professional and business practice, the different disciplines and cognate areas, the very different world views and perspectives on purpose and value, and thus the meaning and practice of the SDGs.

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