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SPREADING LEADER KNOWLEDGE

A proposal for practitioner-academic partnership in disseminating leader knowledge

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ABSTRACT

Growth theory states that knowledge is crucial for the sustained growth of high-income economies, and that knowledge diffusion can help to explain clusters of regions with persistently different levels of growth. Specifically, contemporary literature has investigated the potential for regional institutions support in national competitiveness, wherein competitiveness is increasingly based on a country's capacity to develop and apply knowledge. From an Irish perspective, recent government-sponsored studies have seen an intense search into the likely engines to enable Ireland's future economic growth in a global economy. There are a significant number of policies designed to promote entrepreneurial activity on a regional basis and there has been relative success facilitating would–be entrepreneurs interaction with networks of experienced entrepreneurs and managers, venture capitalists, technical experts, and other specialists. Unfortunately, the same facilitation has not been afforded to the third level student population, as network activity tends to be restricted to the entrepreneurial activity itself, thus the dissemination of entrepreneurial knowledge among these stakeholders is less evident in this country.

It is the authors' contention that Ireland's pursuit of a *knowledge economy* requires a honing of its business leadership skills in order to compete successfully on the global stage going forward and the 2004 Enterprise Strategy Report identifies management capability as one of the "essential conditions" of sustainable progress. The authors discuss the need for a practitioner-academic partnership wherein mutual gains could be met from a community perspective, and find that in order to cultivate entrepreneurial knowledge, business and academic communities should collaborate to provide a practice-based perspective in leadership education and training. By observing an active case study wherein a prominent business leader and an academic

institution work together to offer a more-rounded practice-led leader perspective, the authors go on to propose a *leader knowledge dissemination model*, wherein indigenous entrepreneurs can stimulate the academic environment, and leader development can be promoted through entrepreneurs' active involvement in the education process, with the overriding objective being the dissemination of practical relevant leader knowledge among third level students.

The research focus is the nature of knowledge created by research at the interface between business and academia in the context of global competitive changes that are likely to affect the demand for such knowledge in the future. The paper concludes with a perspective on the evolution of knowledge transfer and the importance of dynamic collaboration between third level institutions and corporate leaders in modern Ireland. Finally, further research recommendations include the potential to expand the proposed model of practice-led education in the future.

INTRODUCTION

Growth theory states that knowledge is crucial for the sustained growth of high-income economies, and that knowledge diffusion can help to explain clusters of regions with persistently different levels of growth (Doring & Schnellenbach, 2006; Iles & Yolles, 2002). Specifically, contemporary literature has investigated the potential for regional institutions support in national competitiveness, wherein competitiveness is increasingly based on a country's capacity to develop and apply knowledge (Sizer, 2001). From an Irish perspective, recent government-sponsored studies have seen an intense search into the likely engines to enable Ireland's future economic growth in a global economy (Crawley, 2005). There are a significant number of policies designed to promote entrepreneurial activity on a regional basis and there has been relative success facilitating would–be entrepreneurs interaction with networks of experienced entrepreneurs and managers, venture capitalists, technical experts, and other specialists (Collinson & Gregson, 2003). Unfortunately, the same facilitation has not been afforded to the third level student population, as network activity tends to be restricted to the entrepreneurial activity itself (Augier & March, 2007), thus the dissemination of entrepreneurial knowledge among these stakeholders is less evident in this country. While this approach has worked traditionally, the educator now needs to develop 'multiversity' to meet the various knowledge and skill needs of a growing complex of stakeholders (Kerr, 2001), including third level students.

It is the authors' contention that Ireland's pursuit of a *knowledge economy* requires a honing of its business leadership skills and management capability in order to compete successfully on the global stage going forward and the 2004 Enterprise Strategy Report identifies management capability as one of the "essential conditions" of sustainable progress. Educational institutions

have an opportunity to position themselves as unique sites of knowledge generation and diffusion in this environment (Starkey & Tempest, 2005). The authors' discuss the need for a practitioner-academic partnership wherein mutual gains could be met from a community perspective and find that in order to cultivate entrepreneurial knowledge, business and academic communities should collaborate to provide a practice-based perspective in leadership education and training. Specifically, leadership skill development should be based on the integration of knowledge gained from experience and that gained from scholarship (Augier & March, 2007; Starkey & Tempest, 2005), although there is little agreement as to how this many be achieved in terms of educational practice.

By observing an active case study wherein a prominent business leader and an academic institution work together to offer a more-rounded practice-led leader perspective, the authors go on to propose a *leader knowledge dissemination model*, wherein indigenous entrepreneurs can stimulate the academic environment, and leader development can be promoted through entrepreneurs' active involvement in the education process, with the overriding objective being the dissemination of practical relevant leader knowledge among third level students. The research focus is the nature of knowledge created by research at the interface between business and academia in the context of global competitive changes that are likely to affect the demand for such knowledge in the future. The paper concludes with a perspective on the evolution of knowledge transfer and the importance of dynamic collaboration between third level institutions and corporate leaders in modern Ireland. Finally, further research recommendations include the potential to expand the proposed model of practice-led education in the future.

MANAGERIAL CAPABILITY IN AN IRISH BUSINESS CONTEXT

Recent years have witnessed dramatic growth in the Irish Economy with significant inflows of foreign direct investment and the evolution of a vibrant enterprise economy. The availability of a young, vibrant well educated workforce, increased female participation rates and net in-migration flows have all contributed to the rapid growth in the supply of labour. Equally, this period of economic growth across all sectors of the Irish economy has led to a breadth and deepening of Irish management experience in managing success and sustainability (Cunningham and Harrington, 2007). Changes in the environment in which businesses operate, characterised by technological change, globalisation and fragmentation of product markets, market liberalisation and organisational restructuring has all heightened awareness of the importance of developing and nurturing managerial capability (Enterprise Strategy Report, 2004).

There is now wide recognition of the fact that knowledge acquisition, sharing and effective management are prerequisites for competitive advantage in a wide range of markets (Grant, 1991; O'Regan & Ghobadian, 2004). The quality of management and leadership is widely regarded as being pivotal to organisational and national performance. The point was made forcefully by Minister Michael Martin recently when he remarked on the increasing complexity of the management task and also the nature of the skills required to compete in knowledge-based industries. In this context he suggested that *"management capability is now recognised as the most important long-term determinant of success for any company, whether that is at CEO, senior management or Board level"* (Speech, 2006). Similarly, Forfás suggest that *"as Ireland repositions itself towards high value added manufacturing and as the distinction between manufacturing activities and service activities becomes increasingly blurred, management skills*

become increasingly important" (Forfas Report 2007)*.* The Enterprise Strategy Group report 'Ahead of the Curve' (2004) stated that indigenous firms in particular require external assistance in developing their management capabilities and expertise. In the UK there have also been calls to focus attention on better understanding managerial capability and the potential that managers and leaders have for influencing organisational and national performance (Tamkin et al 2003, Burgoyne et al, 2004; Tamkin and Denvir, 2006). Specifically, the Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership UK stated in their report that *"good management and leadership is pivotal to investment, productivity, delivery of service and quality of performance across both the public and the private sectors"* (Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership, 2002).

However, for many companies increasing management capability is often relegated as a priority because of more pressing short-term business survival and growth issues (Minister Martin, 2007). Indeed while organisations increasingly view learning as a strategic competency (Crossan et al., 1999; Richter, 1998), they are at the same time struggling to change their cultures and processes so that they can capitalise on *what* people know. As Ghoshal et al. (1999:9) comment *"it is time to expose the old, disabling assumptions and replace them with a different more realistic set that calls on managers to act out a positive role that can release the vast potential still trapped in the old model"*. The writers emphasise the need to replace paternalistic exploitation with employability and value creation in the pursuit of sustainable competitive advantage.

The major challenge for all organisations irrespective of size is the ongoing adaptation of its core management paradigms and styles, to deal with new knowledge economy trends. This challenge is a major one for the services sector, where value proposition and business models are built on intangible rather than tangible aspects (Iles & Yolles, 2002). Consequently, having the right management talent and expertise whom have the capability to deploy multi-business models and manage the resource bank is critical to sustainable competitive advantage (Cunningham and Harrington, 2007). As Burgoyne et al. (2004:79), remark in their report on the development of management capability in the UK and its contribution to performance:

"Management and leadership capability in the UK (and elsewhere) is substantial and the quality of the capability is difficult to assess. The overall conclusion is that weaknesses in management and leadership capability cannot be proved to be a source of competitive disadvantage in economic and social terms for the UK, but that there is an opportunity to gain further advantage from its enhancement"

Graduates with adaptable management and leadership capabilities are obviously needed, although this depth of learning is somewhat elusive in the current approach to management education. Specifically, real learning, that is the development of new capability, occurs over time in a continuous cycle of theoretical action and practical conceptualisation (Kofman & Senge, 1993), thus education should ideally incorporate both theory and practice to ensure the student's learning process is complete (adapted from: Kolb, 1976 and Gomez et al., 2004). As the business school stands at the interface between teaching and practice (Stakey & Tempest, 2005), this paper seeks to investigate how to merge knowledge gained from experience by skilled

practitioners with that, which is gained from scholarship by academics in order to develop a student's management and leadership capabilities in preparation for the 'real world'.

TRADITIONAL VIEWS ON BUSINESS EDUCATION

Historically, business education's primary aim was to "*prepare students for successful and socially useful careers in business*" (Bossard & Dewhurst, 1931:55). The traditional format for business education takes its cues from the physical sciences, placing an emphasis on the foundational disciplines of economics, behavioural science, and the quantitative disciplines (Augier & March, 2007). This process is largely a linear one in which new knowledge is generated by university based researchers who codify and store this knowledge in scholarly journals. This academic knowledge is then passed on to students either through reading the papers or attending lectures (Readings, 1996). Essentially, this approach assumes a tension between experiential and academic knowledge (March, 2004 as cited in Augier & March, 2007), wherein knowledge gained from experience by skilled practitioners is considered an inappropriate influencer in the academic realm (see framework 1). Business schools with social science bases have traditionally tried to follow this format, which is to some extent the result of dysfunctional psychological state called 'physics envy'. As early as 1980, Hayes and Abernathy raised concerns about the "preference for...analytic detachment rather than the insight that comes from 'hands on' experience" (1980: 68).

There are other problems with this approach as it relates to business and management education.

1. In the physical sciences knowledge is created in a laboratory setting where the influences of the world are screened out and experiments can be conducted in controlled settings. In a social science setting no such controlled environment exists.

2. In the physical sciences the researcher is generally more intelligent and knowledgeable than the object being studied. In a social science study the 'object' of study may be the expert.

3. In the physical sciences the objective is to gather, codify, and transmit new knowledge. In the study of business and management the inability to codify knowledge is of itself one of the most important factors of firm heterogeneity and sustainable competitive advantage. In other words codifiable knowledge has a limited value in this context.

The past decade has seen a move to more participatory modes of knowledge production where efforts have been made to promote learners, who are active and are stimulated to handle confusion and complexity (Augier & March, 2007; Hess, 2007). There have been attempts to replicate experience through the teaching of cases and the linking of course work with temporary employment (Starkey & Tempest, 2005), and while relatively successful, it is a poor substitute for the real thing, due to its objective ethos. As learning is not complete at the end of the initial knowledge delivery [as capability enhancement has not been achieved], but rather at the establishment of good practice (Kang & Santhanam, 2004), there is a simultaneous and developing interest in understanding how students learn from actual and "now" experience rather than simulated ones, in the pursuit of capability development (Gomez et al., 2004). This form of education and learning holds more closely with Freire (1973), who suggests that education and learning is the precise symbiosis between reflective action and critical theorising. The
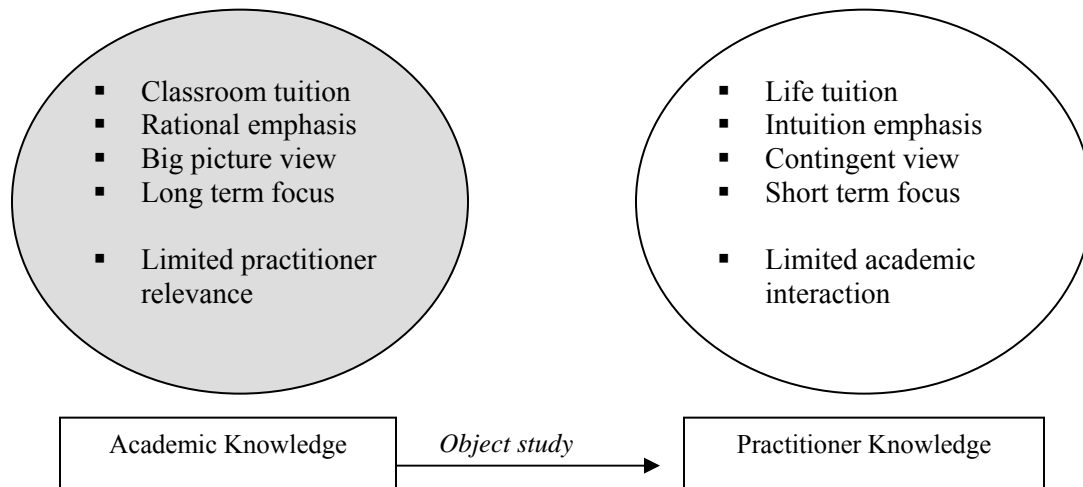
suggestion here is that action without critical reflection is incomplete learning (Kolb, 1976). Practitioner knowledge is by its very nature embedded in its context. This provides a richness and relevance not available from more detached and quantitative research. What it lacks however is the critical identification of the generalisability or the boundaries of its relevance. Thus there is a risk of orienting the third level system too much towards practical utility rather than pure knowledge (Starkey & Tempest, 2005). Hence while experience provides an important basis for education, learning and development it is the critical reflection on experience and the meaning derived from that process coupled with clarity of the application limits that creates real opportunities for learning (Schön, 1983). As stated by Boud, Cohen and Walker (1996:1):

"Learning involves dealing with complex intractable problems, it requires personal commitment, it utilises interaction with others, it engages our emotions and feelings, all of which are inseparable from the influence of context and culture."

However the education of future leaders has not developed much and the Irish 3rd level population is a case in point. While there is a growing recognition of the need for complex interactive forms of knowledge development in management research, management education remains stubbornly didactic and linear – teacher knows best. While this approach has practical benefits in the transmission of encoded knowledge, it loses the potential for the transfer of tacit knowledge and perhaps more worryingly reinforces a belief in students that this is how you learn (see framework 1).

Framework 1

3rd Level Knowledge Dissemination – traditional view

Framework 1

3rd Level Knowledge Dissemination – traditional view

- Classroom tuition
- Rational emphasis
- Big picture view
- Long term focus

- Limited practitioner relevance

- Life tuition
- Intuition emphasis
- Contingent view
- Short term focus

- Limited academic interaction

| Academic Knowledge | *Object study* → | Practitioner Knowledge |

The challenge of developing relevant actionable knowledge that prepares and enthuses university students not just to observe, but to lead and drive business activity must address the academic-practitioner relationship represented in framework 1. There have been numerous pleas for a rebalance of management education curriculum to encompass a more complete range of styles and strategies in order to compensate for the overemphasis on rationality and analysis (for example: Taggart & Robey, 1981; Augier & March, 2007), and prepare students more fully for future leadership in the business world. Specifically, there is a recognised need to develop intuitive awareness in management education (Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2007) and to stimulate right brain activity in business school tuition through the use of reflective techniques (Coutu, 2004). As graduates will be expected to synthesise disparate information, analyse competing functional priorities, and draw together and coordinate resources and individuals in a context that is often fluid and decentralized (Green, 2007), studying theories and functions in isolation is of

limited value. Furthermore, recent literature recommends management students have access to practice and informed feedback (Hess, 2007), and to consider practice as a form of 'research in motion'. Finally, there is a growing consensus that academics must have some role in creating knowledge for commercial applications, considering the central role of educational institutions in the creation and dissemination of knowledge in the knowledge economy (Nowatney et al., 2001). It is therefore the authors' contention that management education should be constructed to reflect both academic and practitioner perspectives, by balancing in-class training, routed in academic knowledge, with the experiential knowledge of business leaders.

ACADEMIC AND EXPERIENTIAL INTEGRATION

As stated above, there is a developing interest in linking academic ideas and knowledge to practice (Augier & March, 2007; Sizer, 2001; Starkey & Tempest, 2005). Bennis and O Toole (2005) argue that business school faculties simply must rediscover the practice of business, and that academia needs business cooperation in order to discover what goes on managerially in the firm (Starkey & Tempest, 2005). Watson (1993) reinforces this perspective by contending that management education should lead to three distinct characteristics: skills of intellectual analysis, interpersonal skills, and a body of knowledge about organisations. These writers argue the need to infuse the business curriculum with multidisciplinary, real-world, practical, and ethical ideas, questions and analyses reflecting the complex and challenging world business leaders face and it is difficult to see how this infusion can take place in a third level research environment driven by 'physics envy'. In part the problem lies in the definition of what constitutes valid knowledge and a reconciliation of the well worn rigour versus relevance debate. If management research and knowledge production is not produced to be relevant for managers, how can third level institutes

make their teaching relevant and influence the development of practice and ultimately the prosperity of the society that supports their existence. This argument has in part been addressed in the decade long conversation on Mode 2 knowledge production which identifies the need for contextualised and transdisciplinary knowledge production, knowledge that embraces the diversity of organisational life, rather than attempting to deconstruct it. In this form of research knowledge is co-created through the fusion of practice with reflective observation and is evaluated not just on the basis of hierarchical peer review, but in tandem by its utility to its multidisciplinary audience. In such a world the involvement of practice in the generation of knowledge is essential. Through a translation of these principles from a research environment to a teaching environment, by involving practitioners, we bring to the student population the laboratory of management. In their interaction with practitioners students can gain insights into the dynamic process of management and begin to synthesis rather than continually deconstruct their knowledge making management education a practice focused, theory founded exercise.

Similarly, the emerging field of strategy as practice within the strategy literature has enjoyed substantial growth in recent years in the academic community (Whittington, 2002; Pye, 1995; Cunningham et al 2005). This focus has evolved from a concern that current research policies guide management scholars to produce knowledge and strategy tools that lack practical pertinence for corporate actors, and have little significant impact upon management practice (Mintzberg, 2004).

As Minzberg and Gosling (2002:31) have observed *"contemporary business education focuses on the functions of business more than the practice of managing"*. Pfeffer and Fong (2002: 81)

suggest that what differentiates Business Schools from other professional schools are *"differences in terms of the proportion of faculty who move in and out of the profession or who practice it regularly, and the extent to which curricula in the various professions are or are not linked to the concerns of the profession and directly oriented toward preparing the students to practice that profession".* Contributors have thus called for new ways of doing research for a closer reconciliation of academic theory with managerial reality (Gopinath and Hoffman, 1995; Whittington, 2004) for example, looking at strategy as practice, and leadership as an integrated reflective role. There is also a need to understand how learning at Business Schools can be traced to overall improvement in work. As Bourgoyne et al. (2004:53) remark: *"there appear to be some tensions between the very largely positive feedback from students on their learning at Business Schools and how easily this can be linked to improvements in their performance at work. This is not to say that Business School learning does not affect performance, but rather that systematic attempts have not been made to document such a linkage".* Based on these perspectives, there is a balance to be met: *"maximise public benefit …while promoting a broader and more inclusive conception of knowledge"* (Kleinman & Vallas, 2001: 454).

In a recent account Green (2007) points out that some international business schools have pursued a more innovative approach to the curriculum, with an emphasis on "customisation" and "flexibility" whereby students are mentored through chosen career pathways. Others have evolved a more "integrative" model, requiring students to apply their knowledge in case and interdisciplinary projects (Hess, 2007). The experience suggests that students learn best through dialogue and through an exposure to real world problems and opportunities. The point is made forcefully by Professor Tom Malnight IMD in a recent interview to the Financial Times where

he suggests that: *"Classroom learning is too restrictive. We need to get students working on something that makes a difference"* (FT Business Education Report, May 14 2007). There is a legitimate fear that academic integrity could be damaged by a revenue-driven customer-focused view (Starkey & Tempest, 2005), and that third level Institutes should seek balance in context. The goal is therefore practitioner-academic interaction (Augier & March, 2007), rather than replacement of one by the other.

To date, there has been little agreement on strategies for strengthening academic and experiential integration (Augier & March, 2007), as many challenges face those seeking to establish an academic/practitioner interface in this environment. Specifically, business schools must ask 'how research informs teaching, and how teaching informs practice in management' (Starkey & Tempest, 2005:67). Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore academic/practitioner interaction in this context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research consisted of a single in-depth case study (Yin, 2003), incorporating a yearlong observation period and multiple stakeholder perspectives, whose purpose was to explore the academic-practitioner interrelationships in the dissemination of leader knowledge among third level students. The case length sought to understand the learning impact of this initiative over time (Pettigrew, 1990), while multiple perspectives provided for data triangulation (Denzin, 1970; Remenyi et al., 1998), particularly relevant in a single case environment (Kelliher, 2005). The introduction of a 'CEO in residence' was chosen as the appropriate catalyst for the review of business education in a third level setting, and the potential for co-created knowledge to facilitate

the development of management capabilities among these students (adapted from: Taylor & Thorpe, 2004). While a single study cannot provide sufficient evidence to make robust generalisations (Kelliher, 2005) it can establish the existence of a phenomenon (Denzin, 1970), ample for the purposes of an exploratory study of this nature (Remenyi et al., 1998).

Having identified the appropriate research method (an approach supported by Brown & Duguid, 1991 and Pettigrew, 1990 in this context), a literature review preceded the study, in order to gain some precision in formulating the research objective, which is: *To establish criteria for the dissemination of practical relevant leader knowledge among third level students.* As the CEO's introduction required individual and organisational adjustment, observational evidence offered the most appropriate means of assessing the level of adjustment in context (Sutton & Callahan, 1987). Thus, the authors observed the development of learning interventions by the 3rd level institute and CEO in residence, and subsequently observed CEO interactions with one undergraduate and one post-graduate class in formal, semi-formal and informal settings. These interactions included formal presentations of the CEO's 'life story', an audience with undergraduate flexible-term participants in a 'start your own business' project, and acting as a case subject for a post-graduate class assignment. The CEO in residence also participated in the business school's strategic planning process, and interacted with entrepreneurs participating in an institute-supported enterprise platform program and incumbent 'business plan competition'. Each intervention was in liaison with academics providing leadership management training, reinforcing the partnership ethos underlying the initiative.

The study itself amounted to an iterative process of data collection and data analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989), until an adequately coherent interpretation was reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, researcher observations were supported by informal conversations with the CEO in residence and individual staff members over the duration of the case, while student reactions were elicited through class discussion and the completion of feedback forms at the end of the academic year. One of the noticeable benefits of longitudinal observation was that general relations were often discovered in vivo, an advantage alluded to by Glaser & Strauss (1967), while the length of the case offered true insight into the workings of the practitioner-academic interaction in the context of the research question (Gomm et al., 2002).

This research sought to get as close as possible to the stakeholder experiences in order to describe both the unique and typical experiences and events within this environment as bases for theory (as argued by Dalton, 1959). An overriding concern of the authors was that the mere collection of in-depth case study data does not provide [theory] concepts in themselves (Van Maanen, 1979), and that they were essentially reliant on good theory and insightful analysis (Zuboff, 1988) in order to induce theory. Therefore, variables were identified early in the case and incorporated into a loose conceptual framework (framework 1) to focus the case investigation. This approach is supported by Crossan et al. (1999), who found that these tools could help define context and promote the move toward theory.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The pre-CEO environment in each class had moved away from purely traditional 'one-way' lecturing in recent years (consistent with the findings of Augier & March, 2007 and Hess, 2007).

This may have been influenced by class size, as each group consisted of no more than 50 students. Furthermore, both observed lecturers have industrial experience, offering practical insight into the workings of larger organisations all be it from a historic perspective. Each module incorporated the teaching of cases and the linking of course work with temporary employment in the case of undergraduate students (Starkey & Tempest, 2005). Students prepared 'learning logs' as an assignment relating to temporary employment, and a key concern from assessors was that "students tend to focus on 'what they see' rather than 'how they feel'" (Lecturer 2, 2007), suggesting an objective rather than reflective stance (as echoed in framework 1). The post-graduate students were in full-time employment, offering them the 'practice' Freire (1973) alluded to, and a key assignment in this module was the production of an academic article on a topic of choice. There was in-class interaction in both groups, although students were subdued when the lecturer attempted to interlink concepts or extract the student's own view, particularly in the under-graduate environment (reinforcing the findings of Kofman & Senge, 1993 and Green, 2007). Finally, it was difficult to get students to critique the presented academic 'wisdom' in both groups, particularly when that wisdom was presented in schematic form (an issue anticipated by Augier & March, 2007, and Hess, 2007 in the literature review). These findings suggest that students could practice and could theorise, but were uncomfortable doing both simultaneously (Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2007). As a practice/theory blend is necessary in capability development (Gomez et al., 2004) and the application of 'good practice' (Kang & Santhanam, 2004), this approach has shortcomings in terms of management education. Thus, while these modules were relatively progressive, they remained 'traditional' from a knowledge dissemination perspective (framework 1).

The CEO in residence – a successful well-known regional entrepreneur - formally presented his 'life story and philosophies' to both observed groups, along with other undergraduate and post-graduate groups. The presentations provided for question and answer sessions, which were longer and deeper in the post-graduate session, while the undergraduate group tended to ask their lecturer questions in retrospect, thus distancing the 'now' experience somewhat (Gomez et al., 2004).

The academic responsible for management training with each observed class set out an academic lesson in the context of the CEO in residence's life story, allowing for greater application of the practice-academic ethos, addressing the objective stance outlined in framework 1. These classes retained rich theoretical content (Augier & March, 2007); however these theories were now applied to a real entrepreneur's experiences. Post-presentation class discussion was notably animated with usually quiet students expressing a view. This created a dynamic class environment, wherein students interacted rather than 'leaving the teaching to the tutor' (Lecturer 1, 2007) suggesting right brain activity (Coutu, 2004) among the group. The tutor primarily took the role of facilitator in these sessions, managing student interactions and keeping sub-group discussion low. Notably, students from each group returned to the next class with additional insights and observations, suggesting critical reflection (Schön, 1983) by these participants.

Both groups of students applied aspects of the CEO's presentation to a number of theories in subsequent sessions, reinforcing the cycle of theoretical action and practical conceptualisation (Kofman & Senge, 1993), and ultimately providing evidence of reflected or 'deep' learning (Kolb, 1976; Gomez et al., 2004) not previously evident in simulated case examples. The post-

graduate group applied the story to their work experiences as well as to theoretical constructs, an approach anticipated by Kolb (1976) in the literature review. One post-graduate and one under-graduate team sought to study the CEO in residence in greater depth as a class assignment, providing for the integration of knowledge gained from experience and that gained from scholarship (Augier & March, 2007; Starkey & Tempest, 2005), and ultimately offering evidence of capability development (Gomez et al., 2004). Notably, several post-graduate students also referred to the CEO's presentation in their academic paper assignment.

In terms of student feedback, the majority of students in both groups mentioned the CEO in their module feedback forms. Students also commented on the module value in 'the real world' and its links to 'practice'. While this feedback cannot be solely attributed to the CEO's interaction with students, it is fair to assume it was instrumental in context. These comments should be tempered with Bourgoyne et al.'s (2004) view that positive student feedback does not necessary lead to improved work performance.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to explore a proposal for practitioner-academic partnership in disseminating leader knowledge. When studying framework 1, the nature of the 'objects' of the studies, managers, teams, organisations and leaders creates the first challenge. These 'objects' are not amenable to capture and dissection. To deal with this one can take two courses of action. One course is to eschew the study of the subjects themselves and engage in a study of their effects or results. This approach has been taken on with vigour by researchers but has left a generation of management researchers wondering why they matter so little to managers

(Hambrick, 1993). Worse still by focussing on the analysis of results and hypothesised causality management researchers have forgotten that managers actually matter and so have left a moral and ethical void in management education that loses sight of the role of free choice (Ghoshal, 2003). An alternative course is to engage with the 'objects' of the study. This usually involves constructivist approaches such as ethnographic studies or grounded theory development where researchers seek to understand the behaviours of their subjects through observation or interview.
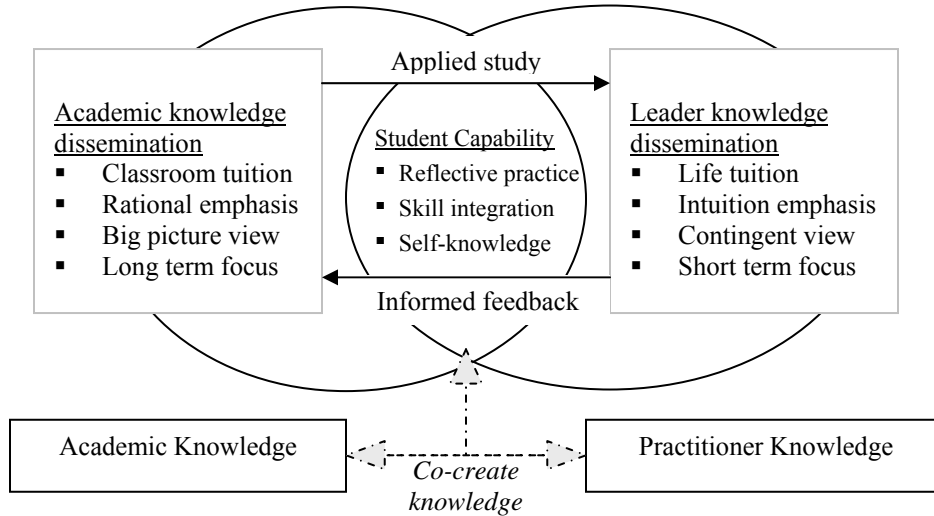
The problem with these approaches is that the former presumes researchers will, through analysis, prove things about the subjects and so hold the intellectual high ground. The latter assumes that researchers will only find understanding through the construction of a world seen through the eyes of the subject, giving primacy to the subject's view of the world. In neither case do we consider that through dialogue and interaction, both the subject and the researcher can co-create new knowledge. The co-creation of this new knowledge requires a movement beyond the dyadic options of positivism and relativism in research, to a contextually embedded form of realism. While the form of such research is the subject of much debate the advancement of mode 2 research (van Aken 2005) application in management and the robust additions of mode 3 (Huff and Huff 2001) appreciation and critique has offered a robust approach for the engagement of researchers and practitioners in transitory and transdisciplinary research activities where the burden of knowledge creation is shared and so captures the relative expertise of researchers and participants (Model 1).

Proposing a Leader-knowledge Dissemination Model

Based on the research findings and the issues highlighted in the discussion, the authors propose a leader knowledge dissemination model (Model 1), based on the principle of interactive learning and knowledge transfer clusters (as proposed by Sizer, 2001). This model contextualises dynamic collaboration between the university and corporate leaders, wherein experiential knowledge and academic knowledge are intertwined rather than in opposition (a perspective supported by both Sizer, 2001 and Augier & March, 2007). As stated by Kleinman & Vallas (2001: 454) in the literature review, the overriding goal is to *"maximise public benefit …while promoting a broader and more inclusive conception of knowledge"*. We have in Ireland particular issues in that we do not have the sustained history and due to the rapid pace of change in our economy the story will be outdated by the time it is clear enough to codify. The challenge is therefore to find methods of engaging those practitioners at the front line of Irish business evolution within the system of dissemination, in order to ensure relevance in a dynamic business environment (see Model 1).

Model 1

Leader-knowledge Dissemination - Management Education

The principle of this model is to host collaborative learning and knowledge transfer clusters of linked enterprise leaders and universities that are able to benefit from synergies to contribute effectively to a knowledge economy, by uniting academic and practitioner in the co-creation of knowledge. It has been established that education should ideally incorporate both theory and practice to ensure the student's learning process is complete (adapted from: Kolb, 1976 and Gomez et al., 2004). The leader-knowledge dissemination model promotes the cycle of theoretical action and practical conceptualisation among students through their interaction with business leaders (applied study) and the interception of key underlying theoretical constructs on the part of the academic (informed feedback) for subsequent reflection on what was heard. The proposed model promotes skills of intellectual analysis, interpersonal prowess, and deep knowledge about organisations (as advised by Watson, 1993), and seeks to develop each skill in management education, rather than focusing solely on knowledge attainment, prevalent in the traditional education environment (framework 1). This approach offers an opportunity for real

learning, and the development of new capability over time, as evidenced in the research findings. These capabilities were found to encompass intuitive skills (Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2007) specifically reflective practice, skill/theory integration and self-knowledge on the part of observed students – skills which are underutilised and therefore remain under-developed in the traditional management education approach (framework 1). Thus, assuming a student is *"someone who wants to think"* (Readings, 1996: 46), the leader-knowledge dissemination model offers an environment where 'thinking' can happen. By developing this capacity to reflect we not only teach students, but also help them to become adult learners with an awareness of the knowledge content and their own role as active participative learners.

CONCLUSION

If the world of management research benefits from transdisciplinary participative knowledge creation then it may not be such a stretch to believe that early career management education might benefit from participative learning approaches. Within organisations, leaders train their staff through involvement in cross-functional project teams that address real world problems. If we are to imbue our student population with actionable knowledge (and a means to regenerate that knowledge as their environment changes) then business schools will need to find ways of addressing real world issues in knowledge creation and dissemination. By no means is this concept new, indeed the Harvard case method is an evolution of the engagement of practising managers with students, however this paper proposes a deeper interaction than that of disseminated case examples, primarily a one-way interaction within the class environment. As Dey and Steyaert., (2006:29) remark*: "passion goes beyond the idea of objective knowledge and revisable truth; it lies at the interface of knowledge and the secret. Passionate learning therefore*

must exceed the limits, or limitedness, of pre-established business school curricula and cultivate both patience for knowing and a sense of playfulness. This is, however, not to suggest that prevailing business school pedagogies must be dismissed lightly, but that one 'needs to leave room within the programme, at the border of the programme, for the unprogrammable, for the uncalculabe'

As this study is exploratory in nature, the proposed model offers a basis for discussion on an integrated approach to knowledge dissemination in management education, with potential to expand this research in the future.

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