

Editorial

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Introduction

In the aftermath of the global financial crisis, and the looming environmental crisis, management researchers have increasingly addressed the fundamental cultural, economic and organisational challenges that societies across the world are facing. The unifying theme from the 2012 conference was 'transformation': what new methodologies, theory-building approaches and areas of investigation does the management academy need to create value for our stakeholders. Similarly, there is a need to respond to repeated calls for the renewal of management education and practice. At a time when management may be associated with corporate greed and unethical behaviour, the 15th Irish Academy of Management (IAM) returned to the fundamentals of management theory to re-consider the merits of ideas and principles proffered many years ago in equally challenging times. This editorial introduces the special topic forum on 'Transforming Management Research & Education'. By specifically assessing the current status of research as well as practice, this paper not only identifies the key issues in current research and proposes an agenda for future research, but also points out the challenges that scholars will encounter in pursuing the proposed research agenda.

The special issue seeks to examine transforming management research and education, a key debate in academia and international business which touches on all disciplines of management. A total of 12 papers were accepted into the full review process after desk rejections. All papers were reviewed by at least three referees using a standard double-blind review process. All accepted papers went through at least two revisions, and in some cases, three revisions. One of the editors was recused from this process when their co-authored paper was reviewed. We are extremely grateful to our colleagues, across all disciplines of management, who served as referees for this special issue. Their reviews were detailed and incisive, frequently with useful developmental comments. Without their participation the special issue would not have achieved the high quality it has. The five papers published in this special issue responded to the call for papers.

The development of the economic and financial crisis has caused management education at business schools to come to the attention of critics. In a trenchant and pointed manner, the question is being asked about how business school education contributed to the publicly and broadly criticised failures that lead to the global financial crisis (Currie et al., 2010). Concurrently, international management education programs are facing strong criticism from various stakeholders. Central to this criticism is the contention that they are out of touch with the real world and irrelevant to the needs of practicing managers (Mintzberg, 2004). Most business schools are on their way to reconsider the aims and role of international management education. Many of them are currently redesigning at least specific courses within their programs and placing a stronger focus on the international, ethical, and sustainability dimensions of business education.

Against this backdrop, this editorial aspires to bridge the gap between research and practice. Therefore, in addition to introducing the articles that are part of the special topic forum, we aspire to provide a better understanding of the concept of transforming management research and education. By assessing the current status of research as well as practice, we not only identify the key issues in current research but propose an agenda for research on management research and education, but also point out the challenges that scholars will encounter in pursuing the proposed research agenda. Before proposing an agenda for future research, we thought that it would be appropriate to preview current work so as to provide a contextual grounding for our research agenda.

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Papers in the special issue

The paper entitled 'Ethics Policies, Perceived Social Responsibility, and a Positive Work Attitude' by Valentine and Godkin explores how ethics training and an ethics code work with perceived social responsibility to encourage positive feelings about work. Employers that emphasise ethics often encourage a variety of positive work-related outcomes, yet the manner in which different ethics policies and corporate social responsibility enhance employee attitudes is still subject to investigation. Using survey data collected from 781 individuals employed in an education-based health science centre, the results indicated that hours of ethics training and a shared ethics code operated through perceived social responsibility to enhance a positive work attitude, measured as job satisfaction and an intention to stay. Creating an ethical environment and emphasising socially responsible business practices should encourage employees to respond more favourably to the workplace. In particular, it demonstrates that organisations can use ethics codes and training place added emphasis on corporate social responsibility and in doing so enhancing employees' work attitudes.

In 'The impact of demographic and situational factors on training transfer in a health care setting' Cowman and McCarthy assess the impact of training transfer within the Irish health care system. Training transfer is the extent to which human resource development (HRD) interventions result in a change in trainee workplace behaviour post-training. Training transfer is an important dimension of training effectiveness (Donovan et al., 2001). However, studies on training transfer are not extensive (Clarke, 2002, 2007) and some of the findings are inconclusive. Drawing on a study of 124 trainees across 77 similar organisations within the Irish health care system, the Cowman and McCarthy research investigates the effect of demographic variables (age, educational background, position), situational variables (time since training, tenure, recruitment to the training programme, preparation for training) and organisational size on training transfer. Regression analyses report that current position significantly impacts training transfer in terms of direction while method of recruitment to the training programme, age and employment tenure were all significant predictors of training transfer complexity. The findings report that age is not a barrier to training transfer. These results have important implications for HRD practitioners with regard to the profile of the workforce in this setting, the training and development function and trainee recruitment.

Heaslip and Barber investigate the logistical interface between humanitarian and military organisations in 'Improving Civil-Military Coordination in Humanitarian Logistics: The Challenge'. Within the emerging field of humanitarian logistics, the civil-military logistical interface has achieved only minimal attention in academic literature even though most Western nations have a civil-military division within their defence departments. Due to fundamental differences between humanitarian and development agencies and international military forces in terms of the principles and doctrines guiding their work, their agendas, operating styles and roles, the area of civil-military logistical coordination in humanitarian relief has proven to be more difficult than other interagency relationships. This paper presents recent research that proposes a model for logistics requirements in humanitarian operations, taking account of where and how civil-military involvement can be most effective and efficient across all phases of humanitarian operations. Interviews were conducted with key personnel in humanitarian and military organisations. The model proposed here appears to be robust and workable in a range of geopolitical and operational circumstances. It shows that the greatest impact of military involvement is most beneficial in the initial crucial life sustaining days immediately after natural disasters. In contrast, in manmade complex emergencies, military assistance to the logistical provision of aid is more beneficial when widespread military expertise is provided.

In 'Reconsidering the Rigor Relevance Gap: The Need for Contextualised Research in Risk Societies', Galavan et al. examined the methodological challenges that constrain management research. Rather than call on individual researchers to simply close the rigor-relevance gap, they examine the ontological and epistemological differences in the management research traditions. They conclude that the gap is sustained not because of any unwillingness on the part of researchers, but because of systemic differences associated with the methodological perspectives. To examine the way forward they first examine the proposition that management is a profession and ultimately reject the medical parallel which largely avoids the win-lose paradigm that drives so much innovation in business. They challenge the concept of rigor in the light of postmodern perspectives and in particular what Nowotny (2001) describes as a risk society and argue that rigorous research in this paradigm must be contextualised. To argue otherwise would see researcher as slaves to their methods. In pointing the way forward they set the challenge of contextualising business in the context of its societies and its governments and we pick up this theme when we conclude this paper and discuss the multi-level challenges that management research should address.

In 'Exploring the applicability of classroom learning to real-life contexts: how effective is professional it

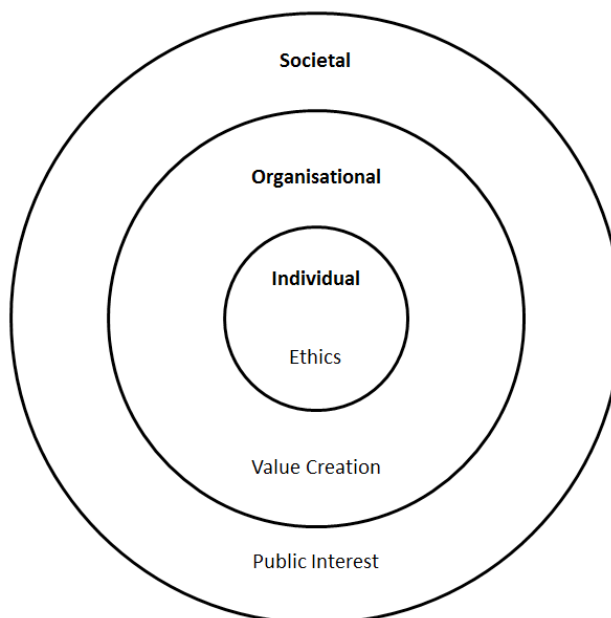
management education?', Murnane and Browne explore whether it is possible for the abstracted classroom setting to approximate real-life work contexts, thereby enabling the active physical, mental and emotional engagement of learner/practitioners within their community of practice, which have been demonstrated in the literature to be central to learning. By understanding knowledge to be performative – a 'dynamic and ongoing social accomplishment' (Orlikowski, 2006: 460), rather than a representation or commodity – we view knowledge, or more accurately 'knowing', as a capability that emerges from, is embodied by, and embedded in recurrent social practices (Foucault, 1980). The fluent knowing-in-practice that distinguishes an expert practitioner from a novice (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 2005; Lave and Wenger, 1991) is developed through the reflexive interaction of the practitioner with their peers and their real-life work practices (Becker, 1972; Gherardi, 2009; Jordan et al., 2009). Murnane and Browne utilise focus groups and interviews with participants on a professional IT management training programme to explore the abstracted classroom setting. The results show that real-life contexts can be approximated to an extent, such that learner/practitioners are enabled to learn from their own and each other's experience of addressing issues in relation to IT management.

Future research – challenges and opportunities

The fundamental issues for management education can only be addressed when we take a step back to define what it is we are trying to achieve through our business schools and then considering the means of enacting these objectives. Core to this is the conflicted identity of the business school as a tool of business or a tool of society. It is our contention that it is unhelpful to think of these as alternative concepts, and that a more holistic perspective is required. What has become clear in the recent past is that our free market policies, most visible in rapidly scalable systemic infrastructure such as banking, cannot serve the needs of society on its own. This criticism is not based simply on the principles of free markets, but on the assumptions that underpin it, which state that actors are rational and informed, whereas we know them to have limited decision making capacity and cannot be fully or equally informed when operating in opaque complex systems. One proposal to solve the problems is for more regulation and indeed we believe this has an important role to play. However, in the globalised economy, regulation will always be some way behind practice and uneven across the playing field. There is also a more fundamental issue here in that policing behaviour is a reactive and costly exercise. It is more efficient and effective to find means of avoiding the unwanted behaviour in the first place. In the 1970s, the concept of Zero Defects was introduced into quality management. It radically transformed the perspective of the quality manager from the reactive role of quality assurance, testing product for compliance before it left the factory gate, to the role of champion and educator who helped motivate staff to embrace doing things right the first time. The result was higher job satisfaction, higher quality outputs and lower costs. Using the same line of thinking, it is our belief that we need to develop means of building in positive societal perspectives to management work, rather than regulating out errant behaviour after the fact.

To encourage a movement to ownership and leadership of the issues, we believe that a shared purpose for organisations must be embedded in management learning and education that examines three levels, the individual, the organisation, and its societal context.

At the individual level, we must ensure that managers can embrace their roles as active agents rather than passive implementers of economic theory. Presented more forcefully Ghoshal (2005: 76) noted that 'the general delegitimization [...] of management as a profession [...] by propagating ideologically inspired amoral theories, business schools have actively freed their students from any sense of moral responsibility'. In this special issue, Galavan et al., acknowledge that it is difficult to frame management as a profession in the same manner that would do for medicine, but this in no way precludes a desire for managers to act ethically. Yet even with a well-developed individual drive for ethical behaviour, managers must also engage with purpose at the organisational level. At this level we propose a simple clarity of purpose focussed on value creation. While value creation has been an assumed goal of organisations (why else would societies allow capitalist organisation to exist), the field of strategy has undermined the objective in the pursuit of shareholder value and a focus on value capture that is inherent in the ubiquitous Five Forces Model (Porter, 1979). Within this framework, it is equally valid for managers to focus on value capture instead of and not after or with value creation. This type of behaviour is a zero (perhaps negative) sum game for society as value captured by one organisation is simply value lost by another. Only through a focus on value creation, it is possible to build effective and sustainable organisations. The final level, the societal level requires organisations to maintain a focus on the public interest, not just the shareholder interest. In doing so, organisations acknowledge that their ultimate legitimacy is derived from the role they play in society not just the stock market.

Figure 1. Levels in the creation of societal value

What we are calling for here is a move to examining each of these levels as integrated and reinforcing levels through which managers must negotiate their organisations legitimacy. The call is of course easy, the response is more challenging. We have come through a period where most Western political systems have been able to hand over the responsibility of wealth creation to their market economies, needing only in the North American model to control the footprint of government and in Europe to use government to reduce the friction of cross border trade. The acceptance of this model then spilled over into New Public Management and largely unquestioned application of market based models of management to public sector organisations. Central to this approach has been an underlying theme of pressing for best practice. This obsession with best practice creates two issues. One, we simply do not have the research knowledge to be able to define what is best (Currie et al., 2010). Two, best practice can only be conceived of in the context of its contextualised operating system. To simply focus on best practice is to eschew the critical capacity to challenge the system within which it operates. But to challenge these systems, we must conceive of business schools, their teaching and their research as tools of society, not business. Certainly, we must understand how to help managers improve their organisations and generate profits from value created. But this is not enough; we must strive to go beyond improving existing systems and understand how to change these systems when they fail to optimise value for society. We do not go as far as Ferlie et al. (2010) in calling for a separation from industry into a school of public interest, but rather channel energies into understanding the dynamics right across the spectrum of social science, professional, and critical perspectives, as to avoid the engagement with industry would be to create a separation that might yield more objective insight at the cost of the influence. We believe that the move to engage with public interest is to ensure that this influences practice, not only to critique it. We must therefore strive for ways to address rigorous research across the levels while maintaining a relevance at all levels.

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