BUSINESS EDUCATION AND BUSINESS RESEARCH IN IRELAND: THE WAYS OF THE PAST AND THE WAY AHEAD

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I would like to begin by thanking the organisers of this conference for inviting me to give the keynote address. I believe that the conference could prove to be a watershed event in Irish management education. Its very occurrence is indicative of the collective self-awareness that has now developed among the research community in Irish business education. I have based the title and theme of my contribution loosely around the theme of the Conference itself: "Management Research in Ireland: The Ways of the Past and Way Forward". It is a subject in which I share with all here a deep interest. As there may be a danger of self-indulgence when a researcher talks to researchers about research. I will try to avoid a dialogue among the converted by discussing management research in Ireland in the context of the way forward for management education and, more broadly still, in the context of major challenges and imperatives facing Irish business.

Before considering the "way forward", I think it instructive to begin by considering the "ways of the past". For present arrangements and dispensations towards management research have been shaped in major degree by the history of management education in Ireland and the place of research and inquiry in that history.

In the Shadow of Economics: 1900s to 1950s

When we look back over the period since the foundation of the Irish State, we discover for much of that period a none too flattering picture of either management education or management research. The initial signs appeared promising enough. Commerce Faculties were established in the early 1900s in the new colleges of the National University of Ireland. A School of Commerce was established in Trinity College in 1925. It is not easy to identify any champions of this development, nor indeed any well worked out rationale for giving a distinct academic focus to management education. But

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in any case not much followed from such promising institutional beginnings. Those appointed to chairs of commerce in UCD, or accounting in UCC, and their various assistants in the colleges of the NUI, made remarkably little impact, whether on the development of management education, on their own Colleges, or, needless to remark, on Irish business.

As would continue to be the case for many years, and to a significant degree still remains the case, the vacuum was filled by their colleagues in economics. It was the economists who very early on established dominance of faculties of commerce and who emerged as the major contributors to debates on economic issues, business and public affairs. In UCD and UCC, where small but significant programmes of study in commerce existed, the economists Tom Kettle, George O'Brien and John Busteed became significant figures in education and in public affairs. In this company, names like Charles Oldham, Barney Shields or A.J. Magennis, professors of commerce subjects or deans of commerce faculties over the period from the 1900s to the 1950s, remained very obscure indeed.

This in ways was a curious state of affairs. The academics charged with instilling in young students an understanding of the practical affairs of trade and business, had little voice in business affairs, practical or otherwise. We search in vain for their influence on major public debates in the early decades of the nascent state. It was the economists who were appointed to major commissions on public policy, like the Fiscal Inquiry Committee (1926) or the Banking Commission (1934-8). The practical engagement of major national business issues by university economists was accomplished in spite of their openly expressed scorn for the teaching of business in universities through degrees in commerce (cf. Meenan, 1980).

Reflecting on the mood towards commerce in the universities during the 1940s and 1950s, Michael MacCormac (1996) has remarked:

> People felt that there was no real theoretical basis for business or commerce or whatever it was called. The subject with a good theoretical basis was finance but it had not been introduced. People tended to think of accounting. The economists felt that it was all rubbish, that it wasn't a real science.

The economists also showed themselves more practically adept than their commerce counterparts in the raw world of university politics. So it was that such an unworldly figure as George O'Brien joined forces with UCD President Michael Tierney in the early 1950s to abolish the college's chair in commerce (Meenan, 1980: 202). O'Brien then emerged as dean of the country's largest commerce faculty - a position subsequently inherited by another economist and O'Brien's successor, James Meenan. Elsewhere, it was more a case of the more adept institution builders being found outside the ranks of commerce academics. In UCC it was the economist John Busteed who blazed a trail in establishing a productive liaison with the local business community, a liaison which led to the establishment of a Bureau of Economic Research at the College funded by local companies (Murphy, 1995: 252-5). In TCD the School of Commerce established in 1925 lay dormant, until replaced by the School of Business in the early 1960s. In Trinity, as elsewhere, it was economists who made a mark in both academic, business and public affairs.

Though the economists were influential in public and university affairs, their approach to research and scholarship was not without its ambiguities. When the first professor of national economics at UCD, Tom Kettle, was asked by the writer Padraic Colum what he intended working on, he is said to have replied (as quoted in Lyons, 1983: 197): "I shall write an essay on an outline of an introduction to a preface to a study of national economics."

Later, his successor, George O'Brien, was to declare that he did not regard publishing as part of his duty as a professor. Declaring that he had published as a young man to gain his university position, he continued (as quoted in Meenan, 1980: 212):

> I had shown that I have the capacity to write bulky learned volumes if I wanted to do so, and there was no necessity to continue repeating the demonstration. I was like the dog that has shown that he can walk on his hind legs. He is not compelled to pass through life as a perpetual biped.

But if economics could be criticised for its less than wholehearted endorsement of research, commerce remained positively inert. After all, George O'Brien continued to publish throughout his long academic career. James Meenan of UCD and David O'Mahony of UCC wrote important textbooks on national economics (O'Mahony, 1967; Meenan, 1970). Paddy Lynch showed great erudition in linking economics, sociology and politics in the best traditions of classical political economy. With John Vaizey Lynch wrote the classic business history, *Guinness's Brewery in the Irish Economy (1960)*, which linked that major company's commercial history with the evolution of the Irish economy for over a century - setting standards in that genre of business history never since reached on this island. It was the UCC economist, David O'Mahony, who wrote the first textbooks on Irish industrial relations in the 1960s (O'Mahony, 1964; 1965).

No university-level textbooks on commerce or Irish business emerged until the 1960s; few monographs, pamphlets or scholarly articles of any note appeared. It was as though the subject was seen by its academic purveyors as being quintessentially practical and therefore, in a quite literal sense, as inert in research terms. It was certainly seen as such by its detractors within the university system, who had long equated the subject with bookkeeping, typing and routine administration - a lower form of intellectual life ill befitting attention within the university system (cf. Meenan, 1980; MacCormac, 1996).

The reasons for the parlous state of business education for so long are not difficult to trace. Commerce subjects drew heavily on part-time teaching by lawyers, other professionals and some managers. The number of full-time academics in the area was small, and they had undergone little specialist training or initiation in commerce as a discipline, for little such existed - in these islands in any event. Commerce degrees enjoyed little prestige and thus little clout in terms of student pedigree or student numbers. As Joe Lee has pointed out (1989: ch.8), there was little demand for an analytical or intellectual approach to management from a business community dominated by small enterprise, for some three decades enjoying a protected domestic market. To quote Lee (1989: 572) "the bulk of Irish businessmen provided no market for business ideas, much less for ideas in general." The wider Irish university system also accorded little priority to research and publications. Appointments, promotions, resource allocation, and limited mobility in the academic labour market, provided few incentives for continuous scholarship and publication (Lee, 1989). More broadly still, commerce or management as disciplines were little developed internationally, and particularly little developed in Western Europe.

Research and the Development of Business Education from the 1960s

We can identify a significantly different phase of development in Irish business education from about the mid 1960s. This phase marks a sharp discontinuity from what went before in the development of the curriculum, in the emergence of new programmes, in the growth of student numbers and in the related growth in the size of the academic community in commerce and business studies departments.

What really stands out from the 1960s is the progressive development of commerce and business studies programmes in Irish universities, comparable in curriculum and organisation to international benchmarks, especially US benchmarks. Single business administration or commerce departments, such as that at UCD, spawned a range of academic departments and specialisms. Professorships and lectureships expanded practically everywhere; and the new National Institutes for Higher Education and latterly the new universities, University of Limerick and Dublin City University, quickly became significant forces in business education.

It should be emphasised too that much of the expansion was supported directly by the Irish business community. The banks, and a number of major Irish companies and multinationals actively supported chairs in business subjects from the 1970s. They began also to support the attendance of executives on MBA and specialist masters programmes, and showed a growing appreciation of the value of recruiting commerce graduates and holders of postgraduate degrees in business disciplines.

As the Irish business base grew and diversified, and traditional career outlets in the professions became relatively less lucrative, the status of business education rose progressively. Belying the commonly-held view that careers in the professions held some deep-seated cultural cachet in Irish society, as opportunities expanded in the business sector, students voted with their feet and the demand for places in commerce and business studies degrees rose sharply. This trend culminated in commerce and business studies becoming the popular student subject choices of the 1980s and 1990s.

With this growth in the teaching and programme infrastructures, commerce and business faculties seized control of their own destinies and became more significant and formidable forces in university life and university politics. By the 1980s the contribution of the third-level sector to business education in Ireland and the role of the universities in the professionalisation of Irish management had become significant by any reasonable standards.

And I think we should here pay our dues by recognising the enormous contribution to the development of Irish management education of figures like Michael MacCormac and Tony Cunningham of UCD, Aidan O'Reilly of the University of Ulster, and Ivor Kenny of the IMI. These and other pioneers of Irish business education frequently had to labour in hostile or indifferent institutions to establish academic programmes suited to an increasingly open and diverse economy. They also bridged the divide between the academic and practical worlds of business in highly effective ways.

Impressive though these developments in the teaching infrastructure were, relatively little changed in the area of research. In spite of growing student numbers and rising demand for executive programmes, few third-level textbooks emerged from Ireland during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The universities produced few research monographs addressing Irish business issues, and the output in international scholarly journals was limited. What became more marked, rather, as new programmes demanded learning materials, was a growing dependence on texts, monographs, models and cases primarily of US provenance. Not infrequently much of this material was of dubious direct applicability to a European context, much less to an Irish context. Yet the research spadework required to transpose the intellectual material to European and Irish circumstances, and to test and adapt models of North American origin, scarcely seemed to be underway anywhere. Rather models were tested and techniques adapted, if at all, through the straightforward expedient of relying on the intuition or experience of teachers or students - helpful but, of themselves, hazardous ways of testing the validity or transferability of ideas or techniques.

It was hardly surprising then that commerce and business studies in Ireland continued to have little impact on national or international debates on major business and economic issues. In areas like industrial policy, business performance, entrepreneurship, competitive advantage, the effects on Irish business of trade liberalisation, public debate continued to be dominated by economists, or by the special pleading of business interest groups. In addition, Irish business seemed to develop a new appetite for gurus and punditry. Sometimes the new appetite for "mantras" was fed by native gurus or pundits, speaking *ex cathedra*. More usually, it was international pundits who attracted attention, briefed on Ireland or even Europe to the degree permitted by their jet-lag when they dropped into local business conferences.

This state of affairs has persisted into the 1990s by and large. We only have to consider the limited impact of the academic management community on issues like the adoption by the Culliton Committee of an off-the-peg Porterian cluster strategy as a guide to Irish industrial policy. The research spadework for that strategy had not been done by the Culliton Committee. It is only now indeed being done by Paula Clancy, Larry O'Connell, Eoin O'Malley and their colleagues at UCD and ESRI, as part of a project commissioned by the National Economic and Social Council. On issues like EMU; Ireland's capacity to compete internationally in 'upstream' market segments; the future shape of Irish industrial relations and a host of other subjects, our contribution to public debate has been very much less than commensurate with the size of our current academic community. But I will return to this subject in my concluding remarks.

Before leaving the issue of the status of research from the 1960s, we should recognise instances where the short flowering of some research activity pointed more than anything else to how inhospitable the environment remained towards sustained inquiry in business studies. The rapidly developing Irish Management Institute conducted a series of useful profiles of Irish management during the 1960s and 1970s. The first of these was by Breffni Tomlin, followed up during the 1970s by studies conducted by Liam Gorman and his colleagues. The Irish Productivity Committee sponsored and conducted a series of useful studies in the 1960s and 1970s under the aegis of its Committee on Human Sciences in Industry (cf. Walsh, 1968). However, as funds came under pressure and as new demands were felt, these promising new research initiatives soon withered away. This is loud testimony to the continuing low priority accorded to research, even in institutions which appreciated the value and potential of systematic inquiry sufficiently to give it explicit focus, resources and organisation.

All was not however bleak. We should recognise the enterprise of Aidan Kelly and Bernard Moran, who established *Irish Business and Administrative Research* at UCD in the late 1970s to provide an outlet for Irish research, and later of Aidan O'Driscoll at the College of Marketing, who was the major force behind the emergence of the *Irish Marketing Review*.

We might ponder the reasons for the continuing marginalisation of business research in spite of the dramatic development of business education in the period from the 1960s to the 1990s. The simple argument sometimes put forward is that the demands of developing the teaching infrastructure "crowded out" any sustained concentration on research in third level institutions. The "crowding out hypothesis" is overly simple: we must rather recognise a series of forces which together explain the sharply one-sided development of business studies in Ireland from the 1960s.

Irish universities had not in any major degree altered the way they approached the resourcing or organisation of research generally. It was still all too often a case of teaching first, then essential administration, and research if there was any time left. Perhaps George O'Brien's honest declaration of many decades earlier that he viewed research as simply a "union card" to a tenured career, or as a young person's burden, still described the prevailing posture towards research in the universities and third level institutions. Many recruited to academic careers in business studies, entered through the MBA route. Their credentials as academics were thus established on foot of prior management experience, combined with academic study in which rigorous research training had little place. Nor had the appetite of business or public authorities for academic research on core business issues changed all much. If there was a growing appetite for new ideas on macro-economic and industrial policy during the 1970s and 1980s, there seemed to be little awareness of the cardinal relevance to Ireland's macro-economic or industrial performance of the features of firms and their interrelations in networks and sectors.

The Present Climate for Business Research

The question I wish to pose in conclusion is whether in the 1990s we have entered a new phase in the development of management education in Ireland, in which the prospects for research are substantially brighter than heretofore. Equally, I want to identify the major issues of research policy and practice we need to consider to chart our way in present business and educational circumstances.

I believe that a number of recent trends and developments in business education, as well as in the education sector more generally, are tilting the balance towards a growing appreciation of the role of research.

For one thing much of the expansion in numbers, programmes and departments which occurred over the past two to three decades has plateaued, and there is evidence of a growing concern among management educators with the academic worth, quality, vibrance and relevance of what is being taught.

Second, I believe that we are witnessing what the sociologists might call gradual change through "cohort replacement". Those entering academic careers in management now more frequently have been trained in a research-focused paradigm of business studies. Whether of course their research morale and energy lasts the pace, or whether it is allowed to flag over the course of their careers, depends in major degree on the institutions in which they work, and the external pressures on those institutions. Here, I think, we are witnessing the beginnings of a process in which universities in the Irish Republic will in future be held more transparently accountable than heretofore for their research performance. The pace of this process and how it translates into internal accountability within colleges remain to be determined. But few would doubt the significance of recent attempts by the Higher Education Authority to measure the research productivity of Irish universities (cf. Circa Group, 1996). In the UK, Northern Ireland and Europe, of course, business academics have for some time been living with the rigors of periodic and public research reviews.

At a more general level, one senses that the business community itself is now more at home with, if still quite ambiguous towards, a conceptual and ideas-based comprehension of business problems and challenges. This reflects the degree to which ideas and theories which provide the core of academic programmes in management and business studies have become the stock in trade of practising businessmen and women. It also reflects the growing professionalisation of management in Irish enterprises.

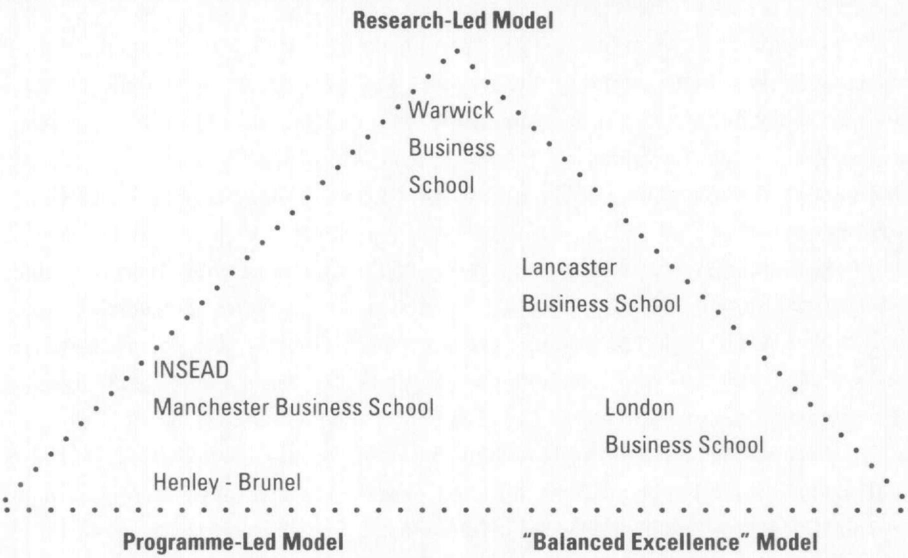
I cannot say that we are witnessing any major seachange in attitudes to business research in the business community, or in public agencies. It is, I think, instructive to see how the debate on national science policy and on innovation is proceeding with scarcely a mention of the relevance of business research (cf. *Science, Technology and Innovation: The White Paper, 1996*). It is revealing also that so few resources are being devoted to promoting basic management research in agencies such as Forfás or Forbairt, or in the main state departments with responsibilities for economic and business affairs.

There is however evidence of a growing appreciation of the importance of the dynamics of firms and sectors for the performance of national business systems. Some leading economists, like Kieran Kennedy, Eoin O'Malley and Rory O'Donnell, have explicitly argued for the need to place growing emphasis on managerial processes, on firms and on inter-firm relations, in the analysis of Irish economic and industrial development (cf. Kennedy et al., 1988; Kennedy, 1992). The long disparaged ugly duckling of commerce, it appears, may at last be taking on the features of a swan in the changing discourse of Irish economic analysis.

If these currents of change are working in favour of a new appreciation of management research in Ireland, quite how they will impact on strategy within colleges and business schools is far from a straightforward issue. National policy initiatives such as the White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation (Office of Science and Technology, 1996) and the HEA-commissioned report on the research productivity of Irish universities (CIRCA Group, 1996) envisage a future in which colleges will be assigned distinctive research missions and resourced in accordance with their performance with respect to such missions. Current proposals point to a policy model in which the universities will be expected to conduct basic research while the colleges of technology and regional colleges will be steered towards applied research and research aimed at meeting the needs of local industries.

Business schools aspiring to national pre-eminence and to international standing and reputation are likely to give, and to be expected to give, growing emphasis to research. But how much emphasis is given to research and how research demands are balanced with other educational demands, will reflect the wider strategies of universities and business schools. In the international arena one arguably encounters not one but several models of excellence in business education. These alternative models of excellence appear to accord significantly different "weightings" to teaching programmes and research. It could be argued that there are three distinct models of excellence in business education in Europe and arguably in the United States (see Figure 1). The first of these models is the 'research-led model' in which research critically affects hiring policies, promotions, tenure policies and marketing postures. While academic staff are expected to be competent teachers and teaching programmes are carefully managed, prestige, tenure, rewards and influence depend above all on research reputation. Schools like Warwick Business School, arguably pursuing such a model of excellence, seem increasingly to be aligning their marketing strategies with their research pedigree and attempting to attract students on the basis primarily of their research track-record. The achievement of high levels of proficiency in teaching and research, without emphasising any one of these as the main basis of competitive advantage, defines a second model of excellence in international business education: a "balanced excellence" model. The term "balanced excellence" is that used by George Bain, formerly Principal of London Business School, to describe that school's approach to fostering excellence and satisfying the demands of students and other stakeholders. "Balanced excellence" implies formal human resource policies which encourage academic staff to integrate their teaching and research duties, and to allocate their time and attention in a co-ordinated manner across both sets of activities. The aim is not to compete by being stridently research-led, but by being an excellent "all rounder" in teaching, research performance and programme management.

Figure 1. Models of "Excellence" in International business Education



A primary focus on programme management and teaching quality arguably provide the basis of a third model of excellence in business education: what might be termed a "programme-led" model. INSEAD in France provides an example of such a model; other institutions that come to mind include Henley in the UK. In this model, schools exploit their reputation for distinction and flexibility in programme organisation to attract students. They may also be able to avail of excellent hospitality facilities. Staff are hired primarily in accordance with their success as executive programme teachers. Research is likely to figure as a subsidiary but still significant support to a wider reputation based on the strength of teaching and the attributes of programmes.

It is interesting to speculate whether the co-existence of such broad alternative models of excellence among leading international business schools reflects a long-run "equilibrium" in international business education. If this is so, schools seeking to build or retain international reputations will be able to exercise a large measure of strategic choice as to the weighting they give to research as against the other activities in which they must engage. Alternatively, more general debates on the future of universities point towards research pedigree as *the* critical future determinant of membership of the first-league in an increasingly stratified higher education system (cf. The Circa Group, 1996). Could it be that business schools are different to other third-level institutions? Or could it be that what will increasingly define first-frank business schools and drive their human resource and corporate strategies is their contribution to the advancement of knowledge?

Business Research: The Way Forward

I would like to conclude by putting forward some proposals as to how the research community can improve the position of research in Irish business education.

Developing the Research Infrastructure

Much work remains to be done to invest in a basic infrastructure for management research in Ireland. It is better that this work is done collectively and co-operatively. It is gratifying to note the strides that have been made in Irish publishing in recent years, where the arrival of Oak Tree Press, in particular, has injected dynamism into business publishing.

But investment at the input side in the basic tools of research is still sorely needed. We still, for example, lack a proper sampling frame of enterprise and establishment-level business units in Ireland to permit the design of careful sampling strategies and the collection of statistically robust and representative data. Many surveys conducted of management subjects in recent years have "bookstrapped" their way to samples of uncertain provenance. We should recognise that this problem no longer afflicts our sister disciplines of economics, sociology and politics. These disciplines have taken the technicalities of data collection a great deal more seriously than has business studies. It is salutory to recognise that better quality data are currently available on such issues as social mobility, educational attainment, social values and religious beliefs, than are available on, for example, new enterprise start-ups and attrition rates, the diffusion of new manufacturing concepts in Irish business, innovations in human resource management and linkage activity between foreign and indigenous companies, to name but a few business subjects receiving some degree of public attention.

It also has to be recognised that having better sampling frames in present circumstances would be a mixed blessing. Given the small scale of the Irish business base, Irish companies, especially the small number of larger companies, are chronically over-sampled as it is. Leaving aside the research demands of the market research companies, the Central Statistics Office and IBEC, this state of affairs is the outcome both of our success and our disorganisation as an academic community. It is the outcome of our success because it reflects in part the growing numbers of business students who undertake research of some kind during the course of their degrees. It is equally the outcome of our disorganisation because we are at fault in allowing so many inexperienced students and researchers to pursue survey or case study access to busy firms and executives. The net result of this state of affairs is that inexperienced researchers damage the prospects of professional research, PhD-level research and university research projects.

We have to question whether students at various levels would not be better occupied, and would not learn better skills of investigation and analysis, working on data of more immediate availability, for example, official statistics, company reports, business press reports, trade publications and computerised data series. Research challenges abound in having to assemble, analyse and report on such data. Moreover, a research task of this character simulates more directly the research activity in which most current students will be engaged in the course of their professional careers. Perhaps the best means of responding to this problem is for the business schools collectively to agree a code of practice to "control the research traffic", so to speak, to much better effect.

Relatedly, I feel, we should consider exploring the development of data archives, for both quantitative and qualitative data relevant to Irish business concerns. Enough research has now been done to begin work in this area, and a collective effort to develop a business data archive would be well worth considering. One of the benefits of data archiving is that student projects and dissertations could be directed towards well-collected and recorded data, and away from the frustrating and often futile task of collecting primary data. Finally, I feel that much more needs to be done to lobby government and public agencies for more resources for business and management research. This is clearly best done collectively. Business schools have allowed themselves to become detached from the national debate on science policy and innovation. Nor has their distinctive voice been raised in debates on the future of education and the role of research in that future.

Co-operation in Doctoral-level Education

A second proposal I wish to make concerns co-operation between business schools in the area of research training at doctoral level. Currently, each business school on the island runs its own doctoral programme; a few programmes contain formal courses in research methods and advanced research techniques. The overall pattern of doctoral education is heavily fragmented. Compare this state of affairs with the high levels of informal or formal co-operation and that exists at doctoral studies level between universities in the United States, in Scotland or in Continental European countries like the Netherlands.

The preservation of each institution's autonomy, and even competitive advantage, is consistent with better inter-institutional co-operation in the provision of a pooled set of methods courses. It would enhance the learning experience of advanced research students if they were encouraged to move between business schools for formal coursework, or alternatively to come together to undertake coursework. Business schools would benefit by being able to ensure that a set of first-rate courses was available to support the research activities of their students. They would also avoid having to provide teaching-intensive advanced course for small numbers of students.

The Need to Engage Public Debate

The third proposal I would like to put before you is the need to engage more actively in public as well as academic debates on major management and commercial challenges facing business in Ireland, both indigenous and foreign. In public debate, we have long ceded the ground to pundits, economists and interest groups, perhaps because we did not have the research data with which we could speak with authority and our disciplines disinclined us from speaking *ex cathedra*.

There is no one best means of developing a higher national or international profile for Irish management research. However, what we can say with confidence is that international distinction is likely to be gained not by disavowing the challenges facing Ireland but by grappling with them intellectually in comparative and analytical context. This is the lesson to be learned from the significant contribution to international scholarship made by the Scandinavian countries, the small European democracies and by small countries further afield such as New Zealand. Witness, for example, the major contribution made to marketing theory since the 1980s by the Scandinavian pioneers of the "relational view" of markets (cf. Ford, 1990). Witness also the contribution to international public management theory of writers who have examined the New Zealand Model of public sector reform during the 1980s and 1990s (cf. Boston et al., 1996). A further example is provided by the significance of business developments in the "Third-Italy" for international debates on the fragmentation of consumer markets and the emergence of new models of production focused on "flexible specialisation" (cf. Regini, 1995).

Seeking more actively to engage public debate has implications for publishing. Nobody can, or would, question the importance of publishing in leading international refereed journals aimed at our peers in the academic world. It is important, however, not to stop there, or to focus solely on technical publications of this character and to view other types of publishing as essentially ephemeral or of less intrinsic worth. Business schools and business studies should support broad-based publishing activity; they should celebrate monographs, textbooks, policy-focused reports and even newspaper and magazine articles where they present work of quality and distinction. We should resist equating the quality of what is published with the publishing medium in which it appears because this dangerously stilts our professional obligation to communicate research and because we know that in reality no such easy equation can be made.

Fusing Business Research and Education

Finally, I feel we should learn from the lessons of the past and from exercises in research policy and research assessment in the UK and Europe. For the best part of three quarters of a century, Irish management education has shown little regard for research. It would be a damaging inversion of our history to seek to go forward by copying some of the worst absurdities of research assessment and research management in the UK and elsewhere. It has become all too common in response to exercises in research assessment for business academics to split into active researchers, who earn institutions their prestige, and active teachers, who earn them their revenue.

While a case can be made for some degree of specialisation as a way of increasing the output and the quality of research, a strategy of intensive specialisation must prove grossly sub-optimal in the long term. It is better by far that teaching and research form a seamless fabric of learning; and that researchers who are seeking to make sense of the business world through systematic inquiry should also communicate both the substance and the skill of their craft to students and executives. If those teaching management are merely "retailing knowledge", the quality of education is obviously constrained or impaired. We may have reached the point where a significant increase in the quality and vibrance of Irish business education now depends on research-based educational values and research-based aptitudes and competencies: values and competencies like openness to complexity, intellectual creativity, sensitivity to institutional context, and the relevance of concepts and techniques to the real world of practising businessmen and women.

Contrary to popular stereotype, in practice there tends to be a high degree of correlation between research competence and teaching competence. The scattered research academic, who would not be able to teach effectively if his/her life depended on it and the compelling teacher who is quite illiterate in research, each represents the exception rather than the rule. It might be said, in passing, that we have tolerated one of these characters a great deal more than the other in business education. A capacity to "dance on the boards", to others' "music" and others' "steps" has never been seen as much of a problem in business schools. But an excess of profundity, issuing in ideas which are tentative or not well articulated and packaged for students, comes more readily to be diagnosed as a professional problem.

Conclusion

This address has been critical of the lack of balance in Irish business education and of the marginalisation of research. As research gains increasing attention and weight it is important to ensure that it informs learning on management programmes and contributes to public and professional debate on major business issues. For this to be possible, the effective conduct and dissemination of business research cannot be reduced simply to technical papers published in specialist periodicals by professional researchers. Charting an effective course for research in business schools necessarily involves tackling wider issues of curriculum design and content, career structures and professional assessment. Our success in tackling such issues remains to be determined; and there is no saying that a group gathered here say twenty years from now will judge us as researchers any less critically than we may be disposed to judge earlier generations of business teachers.

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