

Special Issue of *M@nagement*: Call for papers

CRITICAL MANAGEMENT STUDIES AND MANAGERIAL EDUCATION: NEW CONTEXTS? NEW AGENDA?

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Rationale

It is now well known that business education institutions, including Business Schools (BS), have for years been successful through reproducing elitist legitimacies and discourses. For instance, Bourdieu emphasizes how they give an advantage to upper class children, who might be less successful in engineering schools. In the early 1980s Richard Whitley and others identified their role in the development of social elites, although there has been little systematic research on this since. Similarly, there is research by Lars Engwall and others showing how, historically, one goal of early BS initiatives was to improve the social status of businessmen and entrepreneurs in society. Of course, the BS is one of the most successful of modern institutions, and is now no longer solely an elite institution: there is a range of variance that is extremely broad so that some BS clearly service global business elites whilst others have a more restricted geographical, sectoral and social reach. With the expanded range, surely, comes an expanding role for social reproduction.

One constant, since the early days of the Wharton School, has been a search for what today are usually labelled “best practices”. The social reproduction of business elites entails a collective belief about the direct connection between knowledge of best practices and the quality of managerial decisions and actions. Sustaining the belief that optimal solutions do exist and can be taught is all the more crucial as BS operate in highly competitive environments and have to demonstrate their attractiveness in order to generate credible “vocations”. These arguments are well known to critical management scholars interested in educational matters. They partly account for the relatively slow-moving development of critical thinking capacities in the BS in that such thinking calls into question both the efficacy of best practice and the desirability of the reproduction and enhancement of dominant ideologies and elites. This goes a long way to explaining the persistent domination of those innovations in finance and economics that have brought the global economy to its present impasse, if not crisis. When they are mentioned, critical insights on domination and power abuses are mainly presented as anomalies rather than as issues that are worthy of in-depth discussions or opportunities for ethical inquiry, and they are likely to be confined to quite limited parts of the BS curriculum.

The goal of this special issue is to further our theoretical and empirical understanding of how current contextual transformations are likely to change the influence and content of the critical agenda in management education This includes how the ethical and economic crises and the deep subsequent and probable social upheavals (deterioration of employment

relationship, heightened individual isolation, aggravation of divergence of interests among social and economic actors) are likely to undermine the hegemonic power of entrepreneurial and neo-liberal management discourses as dominant ideologies. In this context, we might expect that the critical agenda should gain greater purchase. On the other hand, growing uncertainties also tend to reinforce “reassuring” forms of education: the fashion for topics such as corporate social responsibility or ethical leadership also perpetuate the quest for “good” practices and the reproduction of unreflexive tick-box approaches to management education. The risk with the current focus on “alternative” ways of running a business is to result in less attention being paid to issues such as domination or exploitation in a supposed “better world”; that is, the re-inscription and appropriation of critique by the BS mainstream with the danger that it becomes no more than “window dressing”. If there is such a risk, how can critical studies offer alternative ways of doing, including new managerial ethos that could be actionable in post-crisis organizations? Does the current context impose more constructive dialogue between mainstream and critical perspectives?

In this dual context, we welcome papers that are sensitive to the possible emergence of new practices in critical management education. This special issue takes a broad perspective on critical management education, from convinced critical or post-modern scholars to more mainstream sceptical academics from other theoretical perspectives. We particularly encourage submissions that:

1. Explore the consequences of teaching critical management education to (arguably) increasingly more receptive audiences.
2. Analyze possible new interactions between systems of production and reproduction of business elites and business education.
3. Contribute to refining the possible agenda for critical management education.
4. Illuminate the range of critical approaches to management education that can be explored in order to compete with more traditional management education.

Both theoretical and empirical papers are welcomed in this special issue. More specifically, we are seeking contributions on the following topics:

- i. What are the priorities for critical management education today? What new relationships are likely to emerge between business education institutions and economic/managerial elites? What consequences are those new relationships likely to have on the reproduction of the latter?
- ii. How far can critical education contribute to enrich our understanding of the current economic/social crises and to provide new intellectual tools to prevent from reproducing the mistakes of the recent past?
- iii. How is the critical education agenda likely to fare against the backdrop of increasingly diverse reformist and alternative visions of management education within and outside the critical stream? What topics should be developing on the critical agenda in order to counterbalance the new rhetoric(s) of entrepreneurs and ethical/responsible management? How can the critical agenda be articulated with these new rhetorical modes? Can we imagine more efficient means of resistance? In other words, could the critics be more than critical?
- iv. What is the current state of the critical education field on a worldwide level? How do the strategies and content of the critical education agenda vary? What variations across different “academic regions” (disciplines, research topics) can be observed in an increasingly fragmented academic world? How likely are those variations to broaden the traditional critical perspectives developed under the banner of CMS?

- v. How far is the current context amenable to critical education? Does it enable participants to be more open to this kind of teaching? Does it enable new possibilities for those who wish to pursue more radical critical teaching?
- vi. What are the requisite qualities for those who can successfully deliver critical education? Are these characteristics actively facilitated/cultivated/encouraged among young teachers?

We want to explore these types of questions and many more. We encourage new multi-theory/multi-perspective papers that enhance our understanding of the effects of new contexts on critical education.

Submissions

It is the policy of M@n@gement to accept submissions in English as well as in any language of your choice. To be considered for publication, papers must be electronically received by 15 January 2010. Please refer to http://www.management-aims.com/submission_en.html for submission instructions.

All papers will be blind reviewed. The special issue will be published in 2011.