

Part I

Liberal Management Education Today

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47315-6 — The Liberal Arts and Management Education
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Excerpt
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1 Towards a Liberal Management Education: Arguing the Case

This book argues that the road to reforming global higher education runs directly through management education. In this first chapter we set out the case for a liberal management education that is appropriate to the conditions of the contemporary university and the global political economy. Our address is multiple.

First, we speak to our colleagues in business schools. We speak to them with the confidence that, like us, they wish to offer the best possible education to students, and we speak to them in the hope that they will see both the wisdom and the practicality of experimenting with a new management curriculum that is blended and intermixed with vital knowledge from other social sciences and the humanities.¹

Second, we speak to all those committed to the global expansion of higher education, especially to leaders in higher education because without their vision and support, such necessary but sweeping reforms will not be possible. We interviewed leaders in two case studies who demonstrated that in the contemporary university, such direction from above is crucial, and conversely, experiments from below eventually become exposed.

Third, we speak to our students. In many ways the book is an improvisational performance of what their education might look like, an attempt to inspire and convince them to take a leap into unfamiliar but deeply welcoming waters. But first let us open our defence of liberal management education.

Much has been written on the future of the university, diagnosing management education either as a symptom of the decline of higher education values or as a tonic for those already decayed values. For those who see the disenchantment of the university's mission in its use of a profane managerialist language – most famously Bill Readings's *The University in Ruins* (1997) but also more recently in Stefan Collini's

¹ We will be addressing management education's current relationship to science and maths and its possible relationship, including the way a liberal management education might disturb and recombine the 'two cultures' thesis of E. P. Snow.

4 Liberal Management Education Today

influential writing about the UK system (2012) – business education and business schools are a pitch invasion by hooligans who do not respect the traditional separation of the university from the mundane world. On the other hand, for those who see the university tradition (and the traditional university) as an archaic and elitist remnant – most notoriously in Clayton Christensen and Henry Eyring’s *The Innovative University* (2012) – business knowledge and practices derived from the business world can revive and repurpose the global university. We take a third approach.

Management education is here to stay, and it will remain at the heart of the university today just as the study of religion was at the heart of the medieval university and the study of science of the modern university. As long as business is at the heart of global society, the study of business will be at the heart of the global university. This is neither an indication of ill health nor a cause for celebration. It is a fact. The question is what one does with this education today. The answer to that question will do much to determine the character of the global university and its capacity to confront the pressing problems of the day. We try to answer that question in this book by considering the reform of management education around the globe.

Our starting point is the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching’s 2011 report, *Rethinking Undergraduate Management Education: Liberal Learning for the Profession*, a milestone in higher education policy reformulation. The report called for nothing less than a rethinking of management education in its entirety. Rather than focussing solely on technical business skills, management education would welcome the humanities as the foundation of its curriculum, and the two forms of education professional and liberal, would be melded into a holistic curriculum. Thus planted at the heart of management education, the liberal arts would by implication also face a very different future. As we will argue, such a blending would not so much be the combining of two polar opposites as the uncovering and nurturing of the origins of management education in the humanities and social sciences. Even more important, this blend would give management students access to the vast trove of Enlightenment thinking on ethics at the heart of the humanities and to the benefits of holistic approaches to history and society at the heart of the social sciences. Management students would consequently be prepared as leaders of society and not just business, and they would be committed to an ethical planet not just an ethical business. Business schools have long espoused these goals, of course, but the curriculum to encourage this

kind of thinking has often been marginalised in favour of curricula focussed on narrower and more momentary business concerns. What we are calling in this book a liberal management education would ground the study of the business world within an understanding of the wider world more generally as is implied in the Carnegie Foundation report.

Yet the Carnegie report, admirable as it is, is far from complete and far from adequate. The most obvious deficiency is its focus on the United States alone. At a time when management education is already global, and growing exponentially in many parts of the world, a focus on the United States not only leaves out the rest of the world but also leaves unanswered many important questions that arise when one attempts to apply this analysis and prescription globally.

For example, how does one begin to talk about and develop a management education based in the humanities and the social sciences in areas of the world that do not have a broadly established tradition of teaching the liberal arts in higher education? Or how would one incorporate the traditions of science and engineering into liberal management education in parts of the world where the study of business has been tied to technical universities? Or how would one convince societies where higher education resources are scarce to invest in a curriculum that is heavily inflected with ‘academic’ and not just practical learning? Such questions are not within the national remit of the Carnegie report, but they are raised in this book.

Indeed, this book is centrally concerned with the global challenge of liberal management education. Moreover, it argues that the challenge of liberal management education is in many ways the challenge of the global university more generally. It becomes hard to avoid the more general conclusion that the challenge of global higher education is nothing less than to produce global citizens who can live ethically and sustainably while providing material, spiritual, cultural and social wealth for all of the planet. If the stakes appear high, it should be remembered that the humanities and the social sciences themselves emerged amid global ambitions.

The humanities marked the triumph of the Enlightenment over European tyrannies of church and state; their works, still studied today, consist of themes adequate to this search for a new world. The social sciences emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, as Auguste Comte said, ‘to predict and control’ the progress of this new world amid the challenges of mass society. Management studies was to be the field that would inherit this social scientific impulse in the transition

6 Liberal Management Education Today

from mass society to global society. But, as the Carnegie report makes clear, by forgetting its roots in the humanities and social sciences and by trying to go it alone, management education has failed to meet these challenges.

Our argument is that a liberal management education, grounded in its own living heritage of the social sciences and humanities, may finally be up to the task.

In this book, we will be primarily concerned with undergraduate management education globally. The Carnegie report distinguishes itself not just in its proposal to integrate the liberal arts and management education but also by its focus on undergraduate education, albeit in the United States alone. Most previous critiques of management education, including the most famous, such as those by Henry Mintzberg (2005), have focussed on postgraduate education, and especially on the MBA. Or such critiques have focussed on the rise of the business school and business scholarship, such as Rakesh Khurana's (2007) history of the field in the United States.

We will neglect neither scholarship nor postgraduate education – they cannot be fully separated without dividing the bodies of teachers and scholars working in business schools. But we aim to concentrate attention on the global phenomenon of undergraduate business education. Business education is changing the nature of the university around the globe, reconfiguring its student body, its faculty, its scholarship, libraries and resources and, perhaps most profoundly, its relationship to business and society.

For instance, the very idea of a university having stakeholders owes much to the rise of business education, especially at the undergraduate level. Previous professional education might have been in dialogue with professional bodies, and universities might have had relationships with local communities (sometimes fraught ones), alumni and government funders. But the idea that universities could calibrate their education to the needs of businesses would be unthinkable without the university's capacity for delivering business education.

In the postwar expansion of higher education in the United States, technical, agricultural and scientific education expanded, but the liberal arts maintained their centrality, reflecting the uneven rise of liberal democratic ideals in that period. Though liberal arts operated on a general principle of preparing citizens and literate and numerate employees, they could not concern themselves with the vicissitudes of national or global economies.

And yet this new relationship has also been problematic, not only because it is difficult – if not impossible – to harmonise the cycles of business or its innovations with the rhythms of study but also because the preparation of citizens risks being eclipsed in the effort. Now that higher education is embarked on a global expansion, such difficulties are thrown into even sharper relief.

The advent of the business stakeholder is just one change marked by the rise of management education globally. In this book we look also at the emergence of ‘ethics’ as a subject. Previously embedded in the curriculum of the humanities or rendered as rules and regulations in legal and medical education, ethics today floats free and causes some perplexity and anxiety as it drifts through curricula.

Pedagogy, too, is changing under the influence of management education, with the rise of case teaching, a method very different from textual analysis in both its procedures and assumptions.

So too are new subjects introduced in undergraduate education through increasingly influential management programmes. Leadership studies, for example, as well as entrepreneurship and team-building, are now widely required of all undergraduates, or at least available and popular with students regardless of concentration.

The power of management education is also altering existing subjects, from communication, literature and language to information technology, engineering and biotechnology. In many instances, universities are creating special provisions for business students in these already established fields just as scholarship in those fields arcs towards business and management studies.

These are among the important changes we cover in the book. With each of these changes comes the emergence of new educational and institutional dilemmas as well as new perspectives and angles on existing and historical dilemmas. Most crucially, the global rise of management education offers the best opportunity we have to match higher education to globalisation, an ambition begun with the humanities, continued with the social sciences – including its dialogue with the natural sciences – and culminating, we argue, in the need for liberal management education.

The book includes chapter-length cases from Singapore and London and prospects for liberal management education across the African continent and in the traditional centres of business school teaching such as the United States. At the heart of the book are three historical chapters demonstrating the interdisciplinary origins of management studies and

8 Liberal Management Education Today

the decades of intercourse between management studies and the social sciences and humanities. The point of these chapters is twofold:

First, they prove the point that management studies are genetically interdisciplinary and thus, we argue, ought to be taught that way.

But, second, it provides resources for doing so and for making the case to students for the true interdisciplinary makeup of management studies.

The research in this book comes from historical research, firsthand interviews conducted by the authors and from our experience lecturing, teaching and presenting research on management education around the globe over the last two decades. The book also offers reasons why ethics education fails – not because it is overwhelmed by other kinds of reasoning and values but because it has insufficient depth.

It also examines the specific institutional considerations in scholarship and pedagogy in implementing a liberal management education.

‘A Way Out’

The term *liberal management education* sounds a strange note. Does it refer to some form of alchemy in which the properties of the liberal arts are mixed with the properties of a management education? Does it signal a political position of liberalism inside business studies? Does it perhaps mean a loosening of the management canon, an invitation to learn without having to follow a structure?

Of course, the word *liberal* has all of these connotations in different contexts and more besides. But in what follows we will use this term to diagnose a problem in management education and to offer a way out of this problem for management education, a way out for the university, and a way out for society itself.

The phrase ‘a way out’ was chosen by Immanuel Kant in his short essay, *What Is Enlightenment?* (1784) (Kant, 1992, pp. 2–4). For Kant, enlightenment meant first and foremost ‘a way out’ of what he called the ‘self-imposed tutelage’ or the ‘immaturity’ of mankind. Enlightenment was a way out because it offered an alternative to accepting dogma, arbitrary authority or received wisdom by, as he famously put it, ‘daring to know’.

To dare to know was to think for oneself, to use reason, to seek truth. This audacity to know was what Kant believed characterised the thinking of his time, what came to be known as the philosophy of the Enlightenment. And in a lesser-known text, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, published in 1798, Kant also explained how this might be done in the

university and how this maturity of mankind might be achieved but also what obstacles stood in the way of students and faculty achieving this enlightened state of thinking.

For Kant, philosophy, and especially a philosophy that constantly questioned its own premises and existence, was the key system of thinking for achieving the freedom of enlightenment. Kant saw enlightenment also as an achievement of human freedom. He called philosophy in the university ‘the lower faculty’. He called what today we would call the professional schools ‘the higher faculties’. By this he meant they had to answer to the outside world, whereas philosophy had to answer, indeed must only answer, to itself. Thus the conflict in any education. Students and members of these faculties needed to find some way to reconcile a pursuit of education for itself, for enlightenment, with a pursuit of worldly vocation, which in Kant’s day meant medicine, law, or, ironically, because of the politics of church and state in his time, theology.

One will certainly recognise that this predicament of reconciling the lower and higher faculties in the university is still our modern predicament. In today’s university the liberal arts have replaced – or in some traditions augmented – philosophy as the lower faculty. From advice by and for university leaders to critiques of the failure of the liberal arts and to Jacques Derrida’s famous campaigns for philosophy in France, many have taken up the challenge first presented by Kant (Derrida et al., 1996; Menand, 2010; Miller, 2012; Readings, 1997). But few have examined this predicament where it is most sharp and perhaps most consequential in today’s global university, in management education.

What Is at Stake

Management education is the higher faculty *par excellence* today. Business schools, it may be argued, are the most worldly, the most subject to outside pressure and the most involved with life beyond the university. They are also among the most powerful faculties inside universities. Not surprisingly, even a brief look at management education suggests it is the higher faculty most at odds with the lower faculty. But this is far from a matter of mere academic politics or institutional imbalances.

Kant was concerned in both of works mentioned earlier not just with philosophical enlightenment for its own sake. He was convinced that reconciling the lower and higher faculties would produce enlightened individuals who would produce an enlightened society. He saw the way out for students as an ongoing, never-completed project of reaching maturity, as indeed he saw the project of enlightenment in society.

10 Liberal Management Education Today

The stakes for Kant were clear. The lower faculty had to be preserved and developed, not only for all students but also for all humankind. These are the same stakes we see in liberal management education.

Many have called for the renewal of the lower faculty in the university and the taming of the higher faculties. We ask whether the most powerful of the higher faculties must only be the enemy of this project or whether, as we suggest, a liberal management education might be the ally of such a project and a passageway between the lower and higher faculties.

We therefore begin with a look at management education and its predicaments, particularly focussing on the way it comes to externalise the project of maturity for students that is at the heart of Kant's project and the conditions and justification that produce this externalisation. We then look at the way management education might take its place in the university community and contribute to Kant's project, and we conclude with a case study in which we are trying to pursue just such a reconciliation of the faculties.

What Is Management Education Today?

What is a management education today? Are we so sure of the answer to this question that we are only disturbed by the introduction of the word *liberal*? Or does this unusual pairing remind us that the content, form and purpose of management education is itself an unsettled matter? Does the introduction of the word *liberal* reveal a certain lack of confidence or even faith in our definition of management education itself? A quick look at the literature on management education will yield an equally quick answer to these doubts.

It is far from settled, far from confident, far from certain. From Mintzberg to Drucker to Khurana, the careers of both the business school and business education have come under persistent and high-profile scrutiny. Any number of uncertainties about this education haunt the literature, even if they do not directly address the underlying conflict of the faculties as inaugurated by Kant.

Mintzberg (2005) notes that management is not a science: 'management certainly applies science; managers have to use all the knowledge they can get from the sciences and elsewhere. But management is more art, based on "insight", "vision", "intuition"' (p. 10). He summarises the practical role of the manager as follows: 'Put together a good deal of craft with a certain amount of art and some science, and you end up with a job that is above all a practice' (p. 10).

In an insightful article on the content of management education, Livingston (1971) wrote the following comments, also quoted in Mintzberg