



Management history in other places

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper has been written to promote a multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary approach to the themes of management and business, especially in the exploration of the history of management and business.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper incorporates a critical, comparative review of papers related to the scholarly communications in the *Journal of Management History* that have been published in other discipline-based journals.

Findings – This paper demonstrates that, when it comes to scholarly consideration the subject matter can and indeed must be examined from multiple perspectives. This is not a new finding but one that reaffirms the importance of the multidisciplinary engagement and interactivity of business and management scholars, including when history is that subject matter.

Originality/value – Rather than being focussed on examining articles published within what might be called the “management history” literature, this paper has sought relevant articles outside that mainstream literature base, as a way of better understanding the interconnectedness of these different considerations.

Keywords Management history, Business history

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

When I was working at Macquarie University in Sydney, it was my privilege to come into regular contact with Professor Edwin Judge, a noted ancient historian who also served on the University’s Academic Program Committee. The committee’s task was to oversee the development and academic administration of the university’s teaching and research programs, providing the policy forum for ensuring the maintenance of sound academic quality assurance standards. This task included the consideration of new academic programs with appropriate recommendations made to Academic Senate and on to the university council.

On one occasion, the committee was engaged in a lengthy and passionate debate about whether a particular program, the subject matter of which was considered to be the “property” of one school, should be endorsed by the committee to be offered by another school. The respective disciplines’ warriors had girded their loins for a protracted battle and it seemed that an impasse had been reached. Professor Judge, who had been silent throughout the debate to this point was moved to lean forward and observe in his typically quiet and dignified way, “It’s always been my experience that, for any subject worthy of consideration, the subject matter can, and indeed must, be considered from multiple perspectives.” Both sides then, looking rather sheepish, acceded to the obvious and the program was endorsed.

In the same spirit of multidisciplinary, or interdisciplinarity if you will, this is the first in what I hope will become an ongoing series of occasional reviews of some other



journals that have published articles relevant to our agenda here in *Journal of Management History (JMH)*. The current review considers nine such articles, published across a wide variety of disciplines, but with the theme of relevance to today's research and practice as their common denominator. In this sense, it is an attempt to encourage interaction and interchange between our disciplines and journals, against the tide of specialisation and insularity. I would be grateful for your feedback, formal or otherwise, as to whether you view this as a useful addition to our journal's contents.

Accounting and accountability BCE

In the introduction to his exploration of the basis for economic success in ancient Egypt, Kemp (1989, p. 111) observes that:

A developed bureaucratic system reveals and actively promotes a specific human trait: a deep satisfaction in devising routines for measuring, inspecting, checking, and thus as far as possible controlling other people's activities.

As I wrote in an earlier piece (Lamond, 2006), the person with this aptitude, "as distinctive and important for a society as the genius of its artists and architects, or the bravura of its military" (Kemp, 1989, p. 111) was the scribe. Not just "a writing man," as Kemp's (1989, p. 111) translation of the Egyptian word would suggest, but mathematician, logistician, measurer, mobiliser, manager, and historian.

Carmona and Ezzamel (2007) also have an interest in this measurer, or at least in the activities of the measurer, as they examine the growing literature on record-keeping practices in Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt with a particular focus on processes of ancient accountability. Indeed, their focus is on the context-embeddedness of accounting and accountability at the expense of technical aspects of record keeping. Playing out the role of good management historians, they undertake this analysis on the basis of the great potential they see it has for enriching contemporary efforts to theorise the roles of accounting in organizations and society – they provide an analysis and critique of the literature compiled by Assyriologists and Egyptologists, together with a research agenda for future work.

The future research to which Carmona and Ezzamel (2007) refer includes a series of questions for examination, for example, whether more precise time measures than those reported in the extant literature were enforced in ancient economies, given the temporal dimension of accountability; how the scribes and their masters dealt with differences between actual and expected measures; and the extent to which this accountability played a role in ordering the lives of individuals and communities. This examination also provides a base for examining the trajectories of accounting and accountability across different historical episodes.

Household accounting in Australia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

In his maiden parliamentary speech in 1970, former Labor Australian Prime Minister the Hon. Paul Keating, castigated the then conservative government for what he saw as a set of economic policies that were forcing women out of their "proper" place in the home to take up work. He abhorred the fact that "husbands have been forced to send their wives to work in order to provide the necessaries of life" (Keating, 1970). Keating (1970) added that:

In the past couple of years the government has boasted about the increasing number of women in the workforce. Rather than something to be proud of, I feel it is something of which we should be ashamed.

The succeeding decades of women's liberation, significant increases the workforce participation rate of women, and the increasing difficulties faced by both sexes in balancing work and family life, have provided opportunities for Keating's opponents to poke fun at his expense, as they recounted his observations against him in subsequent parliamentary debates when he became Prime Minister. Latterly however, Carnegie and Walker (2007), in their study of household accounting during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, appear to provide some explanation for the development and prevalence of the views that Keating (1970) expressed at the time of his maiden speech.

Carnegie and Walker's (2007) study provides an arena for examining accounting and gender in everyday life. They introduce their topic by showing how the contemporary literature on household management in the UK and the USA offered prescriptions for accounting and accountability that were constructed around prevailing notions of female domesticity and, in turn, reinforced private patriarchy. They go on to consider the evidence of actual accounting practices, based first on the examination of 76 sets of surviving Australian household records from the period under review, and second by way of detailed scrutiny of 18 sets of accounting records and relevant biographical and family data on the household accountants involved.

Based on this analysis, Carnegie and Walker (2007) conclude that accounting in Australian homes was performed by women and men, and was focussed on maintaining records of routine transactions as opposed to the preparation of budgets and financial statements. They also found that areas of financial responsibility were defined by gender, and that household accounting was an instrument for restraining female consumption, particularly during times of crises. On the other hand, unlike the situation in the UK from whence many of the Australian residents had come as migrants, household accounting in Australia was not premised upon a gendered concept of hierarchical accountability. While married women in Australia were typically confined to the role as housewife, and their accounting primarily related to housekeeping, Carnegie and Walker (2007) found to indicate that the household accounts of married women were "approved" or "audited" by their husbands. To this extent at least, Australian society could be seen to be more egalitarian than that which its immigrants had left behind (Carnegie and Walker, 2007, p. 69).

Carnegie and Walker's (2007) study suggests that, much and all as some of our colleagues would have us believe that business in general, and management in particular, is somehow value free and takes place as a set of processes separate from the wider society within which their enactment is embedded, the context within which business and organisation is carried out does inform that praxis. The next three articles (Bernstein, 2007; Domine, 2007; Mazepa, 2007) are further reflections on that context – the regulatory framework of business (Bernstein, 2007), the history of commercial media in US schools throughout the twentieth century (Domine, 2007), and the political economic context of the communication and cultural industries in Canada.

The regulatory context of business and management

As we reflect on the events surrounding companies like Enron, WorldCom, and HIH, and consider the current sub-prime debacle currently unfolding in the USA (with its worldwide impact on financial markets), it is interesting to ponder on how the regulatory systems (or at least the lack of them) arise and form the context within which such events take place. In his article devoted to this issue, Bernstein (2007) argues that, in the USA at least the impulse to dismantle the regulatory apparatus in major industries during the 1980s and beyond appears to have had less to do with genuine advances in economic analysis and the formulation of public policy than with the pursuit of particular political and professional agendas.

Using archival evidence and narrative information gleaned from newspapers, official chronicles, and secondary historical literature, Bernstein (2007) situates the US deregulation within a set of historical processes that involved both the continued evolution of the professional community of economists within the USA and abroad throughout the twentieth century, and the political change wrought during the same period. Bernstein (2007) points to the Great Depression, the World War II and the subsequent Cold War era as the time when American economists arrived at a consensus that welfare gains could be won from regulation of markets in certain key industries. A combination of shocks to the economy and further elaboration in the economics profession, however, meant that, by the late 1960s, the consensus in the field was evaporating and the deregulation of the American economy was underway.

Bernstein (2007, p. 37) is not content to leave his analysis at this point though. He suggests that, while some future analyst might form the view that a profession committed to the understanding of the workings of the market would find some of its members ultimately placed in the position of arguing for the application of *laissez faire* principles, there are particularities of the historical forces accounting for that outcome that require a more critical assessment. As Bernstein (2007) points out, policy doctrines are, themselves, the product of a complicated past. In this regard, he (Bernstein, 2007, pp. 30-1) records the view of historian W.A. Williams that, throughout the span of his nation's past, the policy appeals based on the principle of *laissez-faire*, more often than not, were actually premised on the belief of *laissez-nous-faire*. Williams claimed, in other words, that the arguments presented in favour of reduced government involvement in economic life could be demonstrated to be strategies on the part of particular elites to secure opportunities by which they could exercise greater control over resources, the workforce, and households. In the same way, Bernstein (2007) concludes contemporary prescriptions for public policy, such as in the case of the demise of regulatory frameworks, rather than being the distillation of an objective body of theory, may well be the manifestation of a far more complex heritage.

Commercial media in schooling in the USA throughout the twentieth century

While not seeking a causal explanation but, rather, observing parallel events, it is worthy of note that, in the 1990s, when the processes of deregulation in the USA were at their height (Bernstein, 2007), the presence of commercial media (corporate-sponsored educational materials) in US schools increased by nearly 2,000 percent (Domine, 2007, p. 99). These commercial media exist in Domine (2007, p. 99):

... school hallways, buses, rooftops, cafeteria lunch menus, book covers, magazines, newspapers, political posters, year books, public service messages, vending machines, bulletin boards, gymnasiums, school athletic equipment, scoreboards, product sampling, contests, and incentive programs. Web site banners, pop-up advertisements, contests, internet surveys and computer desktop screen savers also serve as marketing mechanisms during classroom instruction.”

This apparently all pervasive presence of commerce in schools is maintained in spite of a 2000 report by the US General Accounting Office indicating that, although many of the commercial activities in schools yield significant benefit to advertisers, they appear to yield no tangible commercial benefit to the schools themselves (Domine, 2007, p. 99).

Domine (2007, p. 98) begins her survey of the history, research and policies related to this phenomenon by noting that, because the US Federal Government supplies only 10 percent of school funding, and local districts and states are left to generate the remaining 90 percent, it is perhaps not surprising to find that commerce in US public schools has been accepted for many years, as school officials continuously seek after business partnerships and innovative ways to generate revenue. She then examines each of four perspectives towards commerce in schools – celebrancy, protectionism, cultural criticism, and educated consumerism – and concludes that the main differential between them is the nature of and remedy for the presumed effects of commercial media upon “vulnerable” audiences (Domine, 2007, p. 109). Domine (2007) does not use the term “corporate social responsibility,” but the notion of the roles that corporations can/should play here is implicit in her exploration.

At the same time, Domine (2007) notes that each of the perspectives reflects adults’ views and their assumptions about how young people will interpret commercially mediated texts. She suggests instead, that US educational research, policy and practice should ultimately represent and address the perspectives of the students they serve. The research questions that have not yet been asked include: what are young people’s interpretations of and attitudes towards classroom commercial media? Specifically, how do young people think about and comprehend specific commercial classroom media (e.g. object, print, video, and digital formats)? What are their attitudes towards and beliefs about the use of commercial media within the public school classroom? Domine (2007, p. 113). Answers to these questions can generate substantial knowledge about youth perspectives of commerce in school classrooms. The findings can also be used as a springboard for inquiry into the perspectives and policies in relation to commercial practices and education in other countries (Domine, 2007, p. 113).

The political economic context of the communication and cultural industries

This next paper, by Mazepa (2007) provides an interesting intersection between Domine (2007) and Bernstein (2007). Bernstein (2007) has focussed on an historical appreciation of regulation of particular industries in the US context. Domine (2007, p. 113) concludes her paper, *inter alia*, with the observation that schools exist for the traditional (USA) “democratic purposes of cultivating democratic citizens.” While America’s youth are being “bombarded” by messages about their place in the capitalist economic structure through the US school system (Domine, 2007), north of the border, another “vulnerable” audience, in the form of Canadian citizens, is being progressively

transformed from citizens into consumers of public services, especially in relation to the communication and cultural industries (Mazepa, 2007). This is occurring at a time when technological convergence means the distinction between publishing, telecommunications, and broadcasting is collapsing, and Canadian Government reports are calling for a major overhaul of regulations governing communications in favour of market principles while still ensuring a continued commitment to public service (Mazepa, 2007, p. 45).

Mazepa (2007) says that Canada is often seen as one of the models of public service development in communications and culture, and that the first few decades of the twentieth century were foundational. Accordingly, her paper focuses on this time period specifically as a basis for providing a “proper” historical context for understanding and contributing to the further enhancement of the more recent developments. In doing so, Mazepa (2007) takes a political economy of communication approach to her examination of published and archival sources, with a strong emphasis on establishing the existence or otherwise of public service principles that are rooted in, and seek to facilitate, the democratisation of communication and culture.

Based on her analysis, Mazepa (2007, p. 53) contends, firstly, that the application of public service principles within liberal democracies such as Canada has been filtered through capitalist, market related negotiations with the businesses that constitute the communication and cultural industries. To the extent that this is the case, she argues that the result has been an operating model of public service whereby the public are viewed not as citizens so much as, simply, consumers of services – communication is considered to be a transmission between sender and receiver, and notions of democracy are subordinated to economic and ideological imperatives. This model has remained dominant despite the struggles around “public service” that have sought to introduce a prioritizing of democracy of, in and through communication, by way of an understanding of communication as inseparable from culture, and by facilitating public participation in the making of communication and culture. It is this understanding in which public service principles need to be grounded, says Mazepa (2007, p. 53) if there is to be enhanced policy decision-making.

Methodology, militarization and management history

Earlier in this issue of *JMH*, Grattan (2008) explores historiography and its place in the methodological armoury of management history. Regular readers of *JMH* will be familiar with an earlier series of articles that Grattan (2004a, b, 2005, 2006) has proffered on strategy, viewed through a military lens, for example, the Alanbrooke diaries, the Battle of Britain, and the Cuban missile crisis. Taken together, Grattan’s articles provide a fascinating foil for the following collection of articles by Richardson (2007), Cummings (2007) and Bishop and Phillips (2007), who proffer works variously at odds with Grattan in terms of methodology in management history (Richardson, 2007) and the place of military strategy as a foundation for management strategy (Cummings, 2007; Bishop and Phillips, 2007).

Grattan (2006) notes that management history is written for various reasons, such as describing company developments and the growth of the theories of management. He describes the attendant historiographical method as akin to a crafting process, which takes the form of collection (of the “facts”), selection, interpretation, and narration. Richardson (2007), on the other hand, asks “what if?” as a basis for

constructing alternative histories and their future implications. Rather than exploring the reality of the Battle of Britain, as Grattan (2005) did (or, at least, one viewer's version of the reality), Richardson (2007) asks the reader to suppose, for example, what would have happened if the battles of Verdun and the Somme had not been? These questions are used to describe and explain the development of alternative history, the "What if?" school of speculation about the past, as a basis for gaining insight into the present and the future. As Richardson (2007, p. 36) says, the present and future are not always what one thought they could become.

One might describe the difference between Grattan (2008) and Richardson (2007) in much the same way as Navarro's (2008, p. 388) fictional character, Ana Jimenez, who says of herself and the history professor she is interviewing, "... you're a historian and I'm a reporter; you look at known facts, I speculate to get to the facts we don't know." In any event, Richardson (2007, p. 43) uses this approach regarding the past to proffer some future "wonders" of alternative history, viz:

- If there is no successor technology to internal combustion, what then?
- And if stem-cell research produces more hoaxes?
- Suppose that the mind accepts intelligent design ...
- What could be a key development in the future of Russia?
- What may be the fate of democracy in the Middle East?
- What if the UN Security Council adds five permanent members?

Cummings' (2007) paper takes a different approach, exploring the limitations of military approaches to strategy as foundations for the field of strategic management. Cummings (2007, p. 41) notes that texts in strategic management over the last 70 years have regularly acknowledged the field's military foundations, and points, for example, to the Aristotelean quotation about the importance of a general's leadership that begins Barnard's *Functions of the Executive*, while Ansoff's book on corporate strategy outlines the historical origins of strategy in the grand military campaigns, and leading contemporary textbooks highlight corporate strategy's "military roots."

But, says Cummings (2007), these views of military strategy are overly simplistic. He uses Foucault's critical historical approach to examine the assumptions made about military approaches to strategy in the strategic management literature and shows that there is a much broader range of military approaches to strategy than that which has been used to inform strategic management to this point. Cummings suggests that drawing on this broader range of perspectives can encourage new thinking about strategic management.

Bishop and Phillips (2007) are one step further removed from Grattan, eschewing the militarization of strategy and the militarization of organisation and its processes that such an approach implies. Militarization, for Bishop and Phillips (2007, p. 27), means the adoption of military modes of organization and engagement in non-military environments and at a deeper level, it implies the repetition of basic attitudes to others and to life. Bishop and Phillips (2007, p. 37) are excoriating in their view, observing that:

This kind of militarization (that took place in post-war Germany), in its disavowal of the capacity for strategy and cunning, becomes merely the outspending of personnel and materiel in a massive poptlatch of attrition.

Their most serious criticism is reserved for the “reconstituted human sciences in Germany [*Geisteswissenschaften*] . . . in the ‘depoliticized’ and positivistic university of post-war Germany” (Bishop and Phillips, 2007, p. 37). In this, they seem to be at one with Baritz (1960), who was moved to characterise organisational social scientists as “servants of power.”

Instead they argue for an alternative means of engagement, with references to the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud, the critical theory of Theodor Adorno and the poetry of W.H. Auden. Bishop and Phillips (2007, p. 38) claim to show, for example, how Auden and Adorno help to reveal the similarities between Fascism and the American democracy imported to replace it, and suggest that the latter might not be all that different from that which it has replaced. Theirs is a *cri de coeur* for the return of the critical, the political and the speculative to the thinking of the human sciences. In the organisational context, this perspective is proffered in much the same way as Thompson and McHugh’s (1990, p. 43) extended consideration of the centrality of the critical in organisational social sciences, although theirs is an appeal to a radical Weberianism to inform their rationale.

The traditional British public house

Readers who remember the *JMH* article on erotic retailing by Kent and Brown (2006), who told the story of a journey from backstreet to online, the change in attitude towards both shops and products, and the development of shops selling their products to women, should not take consideration of Pratten’s (2007) article as evidence of some kind of trend on the part of the editor. Rather, given the preceding and proceeding discussions, one might well be moved to take one’s copy of *JMH* and repair to a pub/bar for further reflection over a glass or two of one’s favourite tipple.

In the same vein as Kent and Brown (2006) and Pratten (2007) presents an outline of the main physical characteristics of the British public house (the pub), its products and facilities, its clientele and licensee as at the middle of the twentieth century, as a basis for a subsequent illustration of the extent of change that has taken place in the products and facilities, clientele and licensees since then. Drawing on a plethora of secondary sources from the period studied, augmented by discussions with licensees, retired licensees and older pub customers, to collect their reflections on the industry. Pratten finds that, while women were becoming more frequent visitors, traditional attitudes and poor facilities meant that British public houses of 60 years ago had a largely male, working class beer-drinking clientele.

Concluding thoughts

I conclude where I began this paper, invoking the spirit of multidisciplinary/interdisciplinarity that is reflected in the critical and comparative review of articles related to management and its history that have been written from the perspective of different disciplines rather than, necessarily, that of the management historian. Some of the articles appear to reaffirm each other’s insights and provide a basis for “triangulation,” while others offer disparate views that, in turn, provide a basis for a comprehensive, or at least multifaceted, appreciation of the subject matter at hand.

The subject matter includes organisational praxis, accounting and accountability for the processes, and the social-, regulatory- and market-related contexts within which organisation and business take place. I leave the readers of *JMH* now to determine whether the attempt to encourage the interaction and interchange between our disciplines and journals that was the purpose of this initiative has been successful. Again, I would be grateful for your feedback, formal or otherwise, as to whether you view this as a useful addition to our journal's contents and scope.

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