Redefining the roles and duties of management

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to analyse the crisis of the business profession and the role that management education can play in renewing business management. It is argued that unless future managers demonstrate that they serve the common good in their daily practice, the legitimacy and moral standing of the business profession remain questionable.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper presents the Masters in International Management Program of CEMS – Global Alliance in Management Education as a pioneering example of developing reflective and responsible managers.

Findings – The future manager is defined as a reflexive practitioner who is committed to environmental sustainability, exercises social responsibility, works with sensitivity toward gender and diversity issues, harmonizes information and communications technologies with processes and organizational culture, applies holistic perspective in problem solving, cooperates with social and political actors, and is engaged in progressive entrepreneurship.

Originality/value – The paper shows that responsibility can be successfully integrated into a global management education curriculum.

Keywords Global responsibility, Management education, Curricula, Business as a profession, Reflective practice, Responsible management

Paper type Research paper

Today's business has huge impacts on nature and society. It considerably affects the fate and survival of natural ecosystems as well as the life conditions of present and future generations. Applying the imperative of moral responsibility developed by Hans Jonas, we can say that business and its managers have a one-way, nonreciprocal duty to care for the beings under the impacts of their functioning. As responsibility is always proportional with power, greater the impact of business on social and environmental stakeholders, greater its responsibility toward their well-being (Jonas, 1984; Zsolnai, 2003).

To manage business in today's complex environment requires responsible managers. The responsible manager can be characterized as having an ability to take multiple perspectives and make optimal balances across diverse value dimensions. The responsible manager enters into genuine dialogue with diverse stakeholders and communicates the company's policies and practices honestly and effectively. He or she aims to exercise trusteeship, trying to increase the total values assets of the organization, instead of only maximizing the financial return on investments.

The paper analyses the Master in International Management (MIM) program of CEMS – The Global Alliance in Management Education as an attempt for renewing the management profession by redefining the roles and duties of management for the twenty-first century.

1. Deficiencies of the business profession
The criticism offered by prominent business scholars shows that something is rotten in business profession today.

In his paper "bad management theories are destroying good management practices", the late London Business School Professor Sumantra Ghoshal points out that by propagating ideologically inspired amoral theories, business schools have actively freed their students from any sense of moral responsibility (Ghoshal, 2005, p. 76).

Ian I. Mitroff, former professor of business policy at University of Southern California in Los Angeles, claims that business school faculties are at best guilty of having provided an environment where the Enrons and the Andersens of the world could take roots and flourish. At worst they are guilty of being active accomplices and co-conspirators in criminal behavior (Mitroff, 2004).

According to Mitroff the problem is that business schools have promulgated:

- a mean-spirited and distorted view of human nature (by assuming that humans are completely and entirely ruthless, motivated solely by greed, and purely opportunistic);
- a narrow, outdated, and repudiated notion of ethics (materialistic egoism);
- a narrow and highly limited definition of the role of management (management is about making money and can be captured solely in economic terms);
- an overly reified conception of the subdisciplines of management (a fragmented and separated division of interrelated issues); and
- a sense of learned helplessness and hopelessness among business professionals regarding control of their lives (maintaining an attitude that they have no power to change the system in which they find themselves).

European business scholars are also concerned about the prevailing ethos of today's business. Eleanor O'Higgins of the University College Dublin and Yvon Pesqueux from CNAM Paris warn us that current management philosophies – what they call "managerialism" – give rise to the practices that have created scandals and business failures. They believe that management education as presented in the medium of business schools globally has acted as a cheerleader for the management models and practices portrayed above. This is manifested and reinforced by:

- the managerialist perspective;
- deference to powerful stakeholders, especially companies/prospective employers of students, and students themselves as "customers" or "consumers";
- simplistic tools and formulas to train students;
- academic tenure and promotion systems; and
- the extremes of popularist science and pedantic science (O'Higgins and Pesqueux, 2008).

Paul Shrivastava of the John Molson School of Business, Concordia University, Montreal, warns that the Occupy Wall Street movement questions core principles that govern modern corporations – principles ostensibly taught by our business schools. He argues that at present, most business schools teach corporate leaders the art of making money and fail to examine fair corporate governance. There is not a surprise that corporate managers, educated without an ethical viewpoint, do not have the framework to address the moral outrage over the societal and environmental impacts of big business that led to the burgeoning Occupy Wall Street movement today (Shrivastava, 2011).

We can agree with Joel M. Podolny, former Dean of Yale School of Management, who emphasizes that occupations are defined as professions to the degree to which they serve society. And unless management lives up to that service standard, it frankly calls into question what business is actually doing (Podolny and Khurana, 2007, p. 9).

2. A new approach in management education
The aspiration of CEMS – The Global Alliance in Management Education is to produce future international managers who can meet the demanding criteria of business management as a "bona fide" profession. Criteria for calling an occupation a bona fide profession are as follows:

- common body of knowledge resting on a well-developed, widely accepted theoretical base;
- system for certifying that individuals possess such knowledge before being licensed or otherwise allowed to practice;
- commitment to using specialized knowledge for the public good, and a renunciation of the goal of profit maximization, in return for professional autonomy and monopoly power; and
- code of ethics, with provisions for monitoring individual compliance with the code and a system of sanctions for enforcing it (Khurana *et al.*, 2005, p. 1).

CEMS is a strategic alliance of leading business schools and multinational companies. Founded in 1988 in Europe, the network has grown steadily, largely due to the success and popularity of the CEMS MIM program. Today, CEMS is the global league of leaders on the pre-experience Master's market and it cannot be equaled in terms of reputation of its members: 26 world-class academic institutions collaborate together with more than 70 corporate partners and three NGOs to offer international, postgraduate students a unique blend of high quality education and professional experience (www.cems.org).

The flagship program of CEMS is the MIM, which is a pre-career graduate program in general management. It provides a select group of the best international students

with the know-how and expertise needed to succeed in the new international business environment. Designed by both academic and business leaders, the CEMS MIM program bridges university education and business expertise, thus offering keen insights into management best practices. The program acquired high international reputation. It was ranked the best in the world by *Financial Times* in 2009 and first in the 2011 three-year ranking.

Based on the CEMS MIM program, a new profile of the future managers has been developed (Zsolnai and Tencati, 2009).

The future manager is defined as a reflexive practitioner who:

- is committed to environmental sustainability;
- exercises social responsibility;
- works with sensitivity toward gender and diversity issues;
- harmonizes information and communication technologies with processes and organizational culture;
- applies holistic perspective in problem solving;
- cooperates with social and political actors; and
- is engaged in progressive entrepreneurship.

Being a manager as reflective practitioner implies to understand the management role in a certain contextual setting, where the challenge for management is to understand that the style they represent might become obsolete due to organizational evolution, which requires a certain element of reflection upon their role in the organization. It requires understanding the management role in relation to the members of the organization. Even if all of the management virtues listed earlier are hard to embody simultaneously, these are important to take into account in order to serve as a good leader and a role model for the members of the organization. Also, to understand the complex nature of decision situations and not immediately accept any situation as a given, whereby existing solutions can be used without reflection (Junghagen, 2006).

2.1 Commitment to environmental sustainability

In order to achieve environmental sustainability, managers must accomplish the following[1].

Overcome the "business as usual" approach, which is characterized by a narrow, company-centric focus. Eco-efficiency, isolated efforts, the focus on direct impacts and so on are not adequate responses. Managers must come to understand the deep relationship between a "sustainable business" in terms of the "corporate entity" and the contribution of the corporate entity to sustainable development in a broader sense.

Internalize ecological limits into the decision-making process. Managers should embrace the concepts of boundaries, carrying capacity, resilience of ecosystems, and the nonsubstitutability of different forms of capital as norms for strategic planning.

Develop systems thinking. Managers should develop a specific focus on the multiple bottom line perspective to appreciate the interactions with the different constituencies. New approaches like industrial metabolism and industrial ecology could help managers to address the issue. The underlying idea is that business is a specific ecosystem that must be integrated into the biosphere. In business ecosystems, each process must be considered as a dependent and interrelated part of a larger whole.

The benefits of such an approach are reduced environmental damage and increased sustainability for both natural resources and human activities.

Foster a cooperative/collaborative attitude within the firm and among enterprises, companies, civil society and public authorities according to a stakeholder/relational view of the firm. Sustainability needs a profound rethinking and redesigning of the production and consumption patterns, and this is possible only through system innovations that involve broad networks of different organizations operating on a collaborative basis.

Assess business performance in a comprehensive way. Taking into account the overall sustainability of the company. Practical tools are needed to systematically evaluate the impact of products and services on the natural environment and society. Several methods of evaluating the sustainability of products, projects, and organizations have been designed which include environmental reporting and accounting, life cycle assessment, design for the environment, and total cost assessment. Along with the exploration and integration of new measurement methodologies, "absolute" indicators of environmental and social impacts are essential. They can be used to linking the organization with the ecosystems where it operates.

Consider the business role as that of a real engine of change and development to generate and spread sustainability-oriented innovation. Business has to provide critical contributions to a more sustainable and equitable world. Leading and responsible companies should voluntarily contribute through their innovative decisions and actions "to a better society and a cleaner environment" (Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p. 4).

Ensure the sustainability of business within the social and natural bounds. Business impacts the natural environment but also depends on ecosystems and ecosystems services. In other words business is "embedded" in the natural environment. New interdisciplinary approaches are required to integrate this insight into managerial practices and face the corporate sustainability challenge.

2.2 Social responsibility
The important general requirements of managers in the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be subsumed under the headings of choice, values, communication and innovation[2].

The importance of choice. To develop CSR in a professional way, managers need to be able to choose, prioritize and provide a sense of direction. It is very important to develop a framework or a vision for where to take CSR in the organization. Management has to prioritize the level of engagement and distribution of resources to various activities.

The importance of values. Management has to stand for something more than just profits if its commitment to CSR is to appear credible and trustworthy and an integral part of the organizational culture. If corporate CSR is about nothing more than optimizing economic value under changing environmental conditions, it is unlikely to provide any kind of real inspiration and ownership among middle managers, employees and other stakeholders. It is not only important for management to speak about values, it is all-important to practice what you preach, to walk the talk. When a company betrays its own espoused values with regard to CSR, it sends a clear message to employees – and other concerned stakeholders – that the corporate commitment

is mostly for PR. If a company is to benefit from CSR it has to deliver on its value proposition.

The importance of communication. While choosing and prioritizing what CSR activities the company will engage in and relating it to the corporate values and culture, the manager must simultaneously consider how to approach stakeholders in this process.

Companies are faced with increasing expectations not only to engage in CSR, but also to make their CSR commitment explicit and document it. This can be done not only through nonfinancial reporting (using the triple bottom line model and others), but also via corporate communication vehicles such as advertising, corporate branding campaigns, NGO endorsements, sponsorships, blogging, and such. The corporate interest in establishing a CSR profile is a question of legitimacy. If companies want to achieve strategic and competitive benefits from their CSR efforts, they need to communicate these efforts and make them explicit in one way or another – through public statements, formal policies, brochures, reports, and so on. However, such means of communication are not enough in and by themselves. Conspicuous communication of CSR engagement may backfire and managers therefore need to carefully consider how to get the message across to many different audiences without provoking criticism, skepticism or perhaps even fatigue.

Apart from these considerations regarding the external communication of CSR, there are also important challenges related to internal communication, where the big challenge is to ensure that CSR is properly integrated among employees in the organization. If employees experience that they do not have a say either in the formulation or the practical interpretation and implementation of values and responsibility priorities, they are less likely to feel a deep commitment towards corporate CSR.

The importance of innovation. Whereas many companies perceive their CSR engagement as a necessary component of their risk management portfolio, today many companies have started to frame their CSR engagement in terms of innovation and development. Today's corporate managers can achieve more than financial savings by reducing the amount of energy consumption in production. Approaching CSR as an opportunity for innovation and development may challenge managers' traditional ways of thinking about business and may stimulate new and unexplored ways of developing business that is sustainable as well as profitable.

2.3 Sensitivity toward gender and diversity issues

To foster gender and diversity management (GDM), managers should first gain deeper insight into the functional aspects of gender and diversity, the strategic and operational tasks associated with these issues, the benefits GDM can provide, and the conditions most promising to achieve desired outcomes. To do this it is necessary to consider gender and diversity issues in relation to organizational policies, structures, processes, and culture[3].

Initiating GDM. The starting point to establish GDM is to develop an overview of the demographic structure of the organization and to identify patterns of segregation such as by gender, age or ethnicity/nationality. In this phase, it is essential to make a business case for diversity, whether it is for customer satisfaction, better recruiting returns or another purpose. This is also the time to acquire reflexive knowledge and awareness concerning gender and diversity issues and their potential impact on business.

Developing strategies and objectives. Strategies, action plans and budgets are aligned with the organizational vision, mission and objectives to incorporate diversity. These activities should specify the diversity strategies, relevant decision structures and institutionalization measures. To define objectives and strategies across management functions it is vital to combine gender and diversity issues with other expert knowledge of functional areas in order to integrate GDM into daily employee routines and performance objectives. The development of strategies and activities in this phase should be organized in a participatory way. The communication and cooperation with employees increase the acceptance of GDM within the organization. The overarching concepts and activities should always refer back to the strategic goals and framework of the organization.

Implementing new policies and learning from outcomes. Managers should be knowledgeable about change management in order to effectively plan and implement GDM. Decisions about how to develop widespread participation and engagement in GDM and how, where and when initiatives should be introduced and the level of centralization, decentralization and coordination employed are all important to the success of GDM. Resource allocation is another crucial factor in this phase. A long-term funding commitment is important to bring about and sustain strategic changes in the organization and to send an important signal that GDM is one of the core tasks of the organization.

Leading GDM. Organizations can be strengthened with GDM to harness peoples' differences in order to create a productive environment in which everyone feels valued, talents are fully utilized and organizational goals are met. The organizational challenge is committing to and finding ways to bring about a strategic management change process in order to develop and sustain a competitive and diverse work force.

Managers can become driving forces for change by leading with their lives regardless of where they are located within the organization, whether they are men, women and/or members of a dominant or non-dominant group. They can bring about change through their own behavior, the questions they ask, the decisions they make, and their interactions with colleagues and subordinates. It is by facing, accepting, and embracing this day-to-day reality that organizations are changed and individual managers are transformed in the process.

2.4 Using information and communications technologies

Executive types of roles and duties. The first key managerial responsibility regarding successful information and communications technologies (ICT) management is to ensure that corporate agility is always in focus. Flexibility, speed and focus are key strategic measures and ICT adoption should contribute to enhance these[4].

The second responsibility is to provide growth and strategic sustainability. Developed markets are reaching a saturation point, forcing enterprises to address the mass consumer markets in developing regions with relevant and affordable products. The key to success is reaching and servicing these consumers in a cost-effective manner. The penetration and reach of ICT into these more remote or economically challenged communities is a crucial enabler.

Third, top management has to demonstrate integrity and unquestionable compliance regarding information use. In a world without secrets, public disclosure of potentially damaging information can no longer be prevented. Enterprises are learning to behave

more proactively to ensure that higher standards of ethical behavior are maintained throughout. Activists and consumers are taking full advantage of the power and reach of ICT-enabled social networking to monitor and enforce (through the threat or reality of public disclosure) standards of ethical, moral and environmental behavior that meet and even exceed those required by law, especially for multinational organizations seeking to benefit from less stringent requirements in developing regions.

The fourth area where senior management has roles and responsibilities is to create, enhance and maintain the innovation capabilities of the enterprise in order to be able to continuously adopt new technologies and seek effective use of them. Leaders can take many actions to make business more innovative, such as by stimulating creativity by moving people who are comfortable doing the same things out of their comfort zones and mixing them up with others from different discipline backgrounds, or breaking serried age demographic ranks by adjusting promotion and hiring policies.

General roles and duties in business administration. Many knowledge workers now have more computing power and bandwidth at home than they have in the office, as well as the ability to create virtual supercomputers across the internet. A lot of them routinely back-up their systems to local storage devices. Workers routinely post on social networking sites, but competitors could gain valuable information from this activity (or interpret supposedly anonymized search data) for identity theft or security breaches.

(i) Coping with information overload. The first professional challenge of individual ICT use is the overabundance of easily accessible data. Information is coming from all sources; therefore, establishing priorities, filtering, and selecting constitute an essential role and responsibility of managers. The use of search methodologies, decision support methods, and the handling of a mixed source of media are all important skills to be developed.

(ii) Managing empowerment. Individual consumer ICT provides control and empowerment to individuals. Digital natives, who enjoy user-generated content creation, regularly write SMS messages and are comfortable arranging all of their tasks with their gadgets. A reasonable balance is important in this respect; the pro-sumer concept, where the consumer takes on more and more tasks associated with the production process (like in IKEA, where they happily assemble the furniture), definitely has its limits.

(iii) Mastering project management. Delivering ICT projects on time, within budget and according to specifications is an evergreen task, for both the leaders of and contributors to such endeavors. At the same time, general business projects are also delivered in ICT-based environments, quite often in virtual environments supported by videoconferencing, instant messaging or teleconferencing. Communication skills, negotiation techniques, scheduling and other project management areas might be quite different than in more traditional circumstances.

(iv) Leading and working in ambient organizations. Some new-generation business models are based on the concept of virtualization. Distance work and education, working at home and "on the move," is becoming more and more dominant, especially in industries such as consulting and research. Despite the benefits of telecommuting and such to organizations, there are also risks because there is relatively little knowledge about how to exercise control and accountability in these settings. Creating virtual-team "alignment" – agreeing on effective ways to communicate, share

tasks and keep deadlines – is not easy, especially through different time zones and cultures.

Keeping privacy and respecting liability and sustainability. New technologies raise new problems of privacy and responsibility. RFID tags, biometric identification, and location-based services all create new problems. There is always plenty to do in security and risk management. On the issue of sustainability, every business department has a role to play, and that includes ICT. Equipment churn causes landfill-waste-management problems. With recycling regulations expected to gradually strengthen, it is important to become proactive in meeting them – especially because resistance could become a PR issue. It is also important to start tracking and analyzing electrical power consumption. With today's processor chip densities, water cooling is coming back into the data center at a time when the cost of electricity is rising steeply. So for both carbon footprint and cost-control reasons, it makes sense to place a new emphasis on power management.

The key roles and responsibilities with ICT for the future managers are centered around the tasks that individuals perform: how to shape the nature of customer service, organize work processes, operate supply chains and define new organizational structures. ICT has the capability under these circumstances to restructure old industries and form new ones.

2.5 Holistic problem solving

Managers need a better understanding of the existential conditions of human beings to avoid the fallacy of defining most problems narrowly and solving them in purely technical ways[5].

Given several biases in the sensing, seeing, analyzing and understanding of organizational problematic situations, a number of tools can improve our constrained decision-making processes and thus be helpful in most decision-making situations. We have formulated biases as practical limits to human rationality, and emphasized that these limits are not static but can be transcended. The manager's task is to increase his or her consciousness about human abilities and develop adequate tools to reduce some of the most significant limits.

Managers, however, should not reduce important problems to consideration of only one stakeholder group or only one dimension of a problem. It is essential that managers broaden the set of relevant stakeholders, giving particular attention to the impact on future generations and the environment. In the same vein, managers have to be conscious of the strategy of looking upon important problems in at least four dimensions, namely technical-scientific, interpersonal-social, systemic and existential.

2.6 Cooperating with social and political actors

Cooperating with social and political actors requires a great deal of cross-cultural competencies from managers. Cultural differences characterize not only different countries, but also different sectors. The government's bureaucratic culture (process-oriented functioning) may clash with an outcome-driven, success-oriented business culture, and this may pose very important practical barriers to the partnership[6].

Managers must acknowledge that working with governments implies that concepts like democratic control, public interest, and rule of law should be understood and taken seriously. The pursuit of self-interest must be attenuated and reinterpreted in light of basic political values and principles. For instance, unethical lobbying is not just unfair with respect to competition but corrupts the public values of fairness and rule of law. Ethical responsibility is elevated to a higher degree.

Managers must acknowledge that civil society organizations (CSOs) play an ever-increasing role in promoting human rights, social justice and environmental sustainability. Managers must make an effort to apprehend and accept the values and approaches of CSOs and work with them on developing new governance schemes or partnership projects. This requires self-reflective attitudes concerning their own values, an openness towards the other, and practical skills managing cultural differences.

A shared normative, values-based foundation will help to overcome potential discord among partners. Problems of the governance model are difficult to solve, but Habermasian communicative ethics and its implications could serve as normative underpinnings to the legitimacy of governance. Communicative ethics implies that only those norms that meet (or could be reasonably presumed to meet) with the approval of all concerned in a real, rational debate can claim to be valid. The debate should be as close as possible to the "ideal communication situation", which is free of domination and argumentative inequality, and in which participants do not act in a strategic way but perform a real communicative action. The validity of speech lies in its intelligibility, truthfulness, factual truth and correctness.

2.7 Progressive entrepreneurship

The progressive ways of doing business require that managers seek to build long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders and want to produce sustainable values for their whole business ecosystem. For this, engaged managers who consider business as a way to serve others rather than a means to "enrich themselves" are needed[7].

An important challenge for future managers is to become entrepreneurial. This includes the following characteristics.

Need for achievement. Entrepreneurs have a strong desire to achieve objectives they have set themselves. The new managers should be conscious of different goals and objectives in a sustainable world and realize that sustainable production and consumption needs a holistic perspective to understand the connection between producers, consumers, governments and other stakeholders.

Opportunity-seeking. Creativity combined with self-confidence ensures that they pursue many opportunities. The embracement of ecological responsibility turns the threat of environmental devastations into opportunities that will enrich both the environment and businesses.

Vision-driven. Entrepreneurs have a highly developed vision and can steer their actions with consistency. The striving for a better world will create engaged practitioners who seek to enrich society. Key skills of future managers are the capacity to change, to have an open mindset, to be able to learn from others and to nurture an entrepreneurial spirit.

The future manager must have the capacity to absorb the heterogeneous knowledge (knowledge from different sources) connected with new experiences. The outcomes

sometimes seem paradoxical and contradictory. This process of knowledge gathering will lead managers into territory with clashing dilemmas, but it will also lead to unique solutions. Recognizing the associations between different sources of knowledge is a prerequisite to handling the growing knowledge and unanswered questions in the awaiting ecological, social and economic challenges.

3. Conclusion

Unless future managers demonstrate that they serve the common good in their daily practice, the legitimacy and moral standing of the business profession remain questionable. As a business manager, one is not only expected to do well, but also to do good, and the same is true for any organization. Without reflection, the manager cannot truly adapt to a proper balance between doing well and doing good. (Junghagen, 2009) If we want to see managers in the future who not only can do well, but also do good, we cannot only focus on what is well and what is good, but must focus even more on the reflection process of how to do well and how to do good. And it does not stop there. The reflective practitioners will also need to understand why they do well and why they do good.

Notes

1. This section is based on Tencati *et al.* (2009a).

2. This section is based on Vallentin (2009).

3. This section is based on Danowitz *et al.* (2009).

4. This section is based on Bielli and Nemeslaki (2009).

5. This section is based on Ims and Zsolnai (2009).

6. This section is based on Boda *et al.* (2009).

7. This section is based on Tencati *et al.* (2009b).

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