

WHAT ARE BUSINESS SCHOOLS FOR? ON SILENCE AND VOICE IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Christopher Grey
University of Cambridge, UK

Business schools have become so established as part of the educational and business worlds that their purposes are rarely a subject of reflection, perhaps especially for those of us who teach within them. In this article, I offer some analysis of the purpose of business schools, which moves beyond seeing them as having an economic and technical function toward an account of their role in the socialization of managers and their ideological functions. I begin by noting a pervasive silence in business schools about what appear to be some of the realities of work in the global economy. At this stage, I am concerned with the whole institution of the business school in society rather than with particular subjects, curricula, or teaching methods. I analyze the silence of business schools in terms of socialization and ideology and then move toward the issue of how to give voice in place of this silence, which in effect means the development of a more critical approach to management education (ME). In discussing this, I focus more narrowly on pedagogy, particularly in relation to organizational subjects—partly because it is these with which I am most familiar and partly because this is where most of the extant literature on critical ME is to be found.

On Silence: Orthodox ME

“In Honduras, when filling out a particularly large order on a tight deadline, factory managers have been reported injecting workers with amphetamines to keep them going on 48-hour marathons” (Klein, 2000, p. 216).

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This story might be regarded as a one-off anomaly of no particular interest were it not for the fact that it fits a pattern of abuse for which Klein and many others have provided considerable evidence. For example, the International Labour Organization has identified the existence of some 850 export processing zones in which some 27 million people work (Klein, 2000). It is in these zones that the bulk of the world's sweatshops are to be found, and although the amphetamine example would be at the extreme end of the spectrum, working conditions are notoriously poor. For example, in the Nike factory in China, workers are paid 16 cents an hour for a 77- to 84-hour week (1998 figures). Overtime is not paid extra, there are fines for refusing to work overtime, and corporal punishment is used (see Klein, 2000, where 16 similar examples are listed). Such practices are not illegal within export processing zones, and they are mandated by the growth of international free trade agreements underpinned by institutions such as the World Trade Organization. The politics of these issues is of course fraught and, at the present time, in flux. But for present purposes, it is enough to say there is well-documented evidence for the existence of these kinds of organizational experiences as a reality for many of the world's employees.

Yet, these experiences rarely figure in management textbooks where a more sanitized, if not sentimentalized, version of the organization is to be found. Peter Senge (1993), for example, approvingly quotes a CEO who tells us that

“The total development of our people is essential to achieving our goal of corporate excellence . . . the fullest development of people is on an equal plane with financial success . . . practicing the virtues of life and business success are not only compatible but enrich one another.” (pp. 143-144)

The tone here is rather gushing, but it is clearly consistent with the messages found in many corporate mission statements (“Our people are our greatest asset”) and, in various ways, in the nostrums of human resource management and organizational behavior MBA primers. Very few other subjects give any consideration at all to working conditions. How are we to square this with the realities of at least a significant part of the world economy? Why, if such practices are apparently necessary to corporate competitiveness, do business schools not openly teach them? To answer this question we need to explore the following question: What are business schools for?

The Economic and Technical Case for ME

The standard answer to this question would be that business schools supply people who are technically equipped to manage better as a result of their

MBA's (and other qualifications), so they are hired by companies, which in turn perform better, contributing to the economic competitiveness of nations. Such a view is propounded not only by business schools and MBA employers but also by governments. In that sense, it is the orthodox account of business schools, and one that is endorsed by their critics (for example, those who deride ME as "mere technical training," inappropriate to universities). But there is a problem with this account: It has never been convincingly demonstrated that MBA graduates are better managers than non-MBA's or that companies and economies perform better as a result of their existence. Indeed, there has been pervasive criticism that something like the opposite is true (e.g., Hayes & Abernathy, 1980; Linder & Smith, 1992; Mintzberg, 1989). Certainly, countries that do not make extensive use of ME (e.g., Germany, Japan) do not seem to have suffered as a result when compared with those that do (e.g., United States, United Kingdom). In this sense, at least part of the meaning of ME (meaning primarily MBA) must lie in culturally contingent social and historical factors (Engwall & Zamagni, 1998) and not in its economic functionality.

It might be said that the negative evaluations of ME are disputed. But in itself, that disputation is very much the point. For at the heart of the problem of the economic and technical case for ME is the fact that its efficacy to practice and performance cannot, even in principle, be determined. One major difficulty is that there is no way of defining managerial effectiveness. Does a group or organization perform well on some measure (but what measure?) because of, independently of, or despite its management (Kanter, 1977)? Notwithstanding the hopes of positivists (Oakley, 2000), there is simply no way of designing the kinds of controlled experiments that would allow management to be separated out as an independent variable from organization or that would allow demonstrable causation. And even if this were not the case, an established understanding of the meaning of managerial effectiveness would still leave unresolved the contribution of ME. For example, even assuming that MBA graduates could be shown to be more effective managers than non-MBA's, the fact that the most ambitious and competent managers might well be predisposed to undertake the degree means these same managers would be likely to be more effective anyway.

At the very least then, there are difficulties with an economic explanation of ME at the level of national, organizational, or individual performance. Nevertheless, there clearly are some economic factors in play, most obviously the demand in the labor market for those with management qualifications. This is in turn reflected in the enhanced salary prospects MBA graduates typically enjoy. It is easy to see that the growth of ME is linked to a variety of demand factors, including the increased use of management tech-

niques in the public sector, the rise of management consultancy, investment banking, and hybrid managers. Such trends increase the demand for those equipped with generic management skills and knowledge.

Yet although though this is so, it remains a puzzle if there is no good reason to think that the people so equipped are necessarily better managers or consultants as a result of ME. Most would accept that a trained doctor or engineer is functionally superior to someone without such training, and this is recognized in law. This is, at best, contestable in the case of managers and is not recognized in law. The knowledge base of management is notoriously fragmented (Whitley, 1984), and despite generations of attempts, there is very little in the way of reliable, predictive, law-like generalizations that were the dream of early management researchers.

Cynicism or Socialization?

The most extreme way of understanding ME in the light of all this would be to see it as an entirely cynical charade. Thus, so long as no one knew, management students could spend their courses, say, sitting in a dark room and it would not matter because the value of ME is purely symbolic and credentialist. This, of course, would be difficult to sustain both because it would always be likely to be found out and also because the negative identity it would offer participants and providers would be almost unbearable. Yet, a less extreme version of this does, it has been argued, pervade ME. Watson (1996) referred to a “contract of cynicism” in ME wherein students accept and faculty deliver knowledge both know to be virtually useless. For students, the pay-off is the qualification; for faculty, it is a controllable and unchallenged encounter.

Although it seems plausible that some degree of cynicism of this sort can be found in ME, I doubt that it would survive and indeed grow if it were really so pointless. But we need to turn away from economic and technical explanations to understand what its point is. Elsewhere (Grey, 1997), I have argued that the significance of ME may reside partly in its capacity to “responsibilize” those subjected to it. The point is less the skills and knowledge it imparts and more its capacity to develop a certain kind of person deemed to be suitable for managerial work and enculturated into some version of managerial values. Indeed, it might be that the very willingness to undertake ME stands as a proxy (to employers) for a certain sort of orientation toward the world and commitment to its reproduction: a demonstration of being “the right kind of person.” In this sense, ME may be taken as a symbolic indicator of possession of particular sorts of values. An interesting anal-

ogy is that of the accounting profession. Here, it is commonplace for firms to recruit accountancy graduates although there are well-established data suggesting that such graduates on average perform worse in subsequent professional examinations than do nonaccountancy graduates. An empirical study of accounting firm recruitment showed that this was because hirers thought accountancy graduates had shown an early commitment to the idea of an accounting career and shown themselves to be the right kind of person, an attribute of considerable importance for fitting in to and advancing within the profession (Anderson-Gough, Robson, & Grey, 1998).

On this account, ME does have a functionality beyond the contract of cynicism, albeit one that is quite different from the conventional understanding of that functionality. In the latter, ME bestows skill as a bundle of techniques acquired by students for future deployment. In the former, ME develops the "skill" of appropriate selfhood—a technique of self-construction and identity and value formation. Such an understanding of ME is one that has considerable empirical support. Leavitt (1991) likened (approvingly) the socialization processes of the MBA in the United States to a boot camp and argued for the need to direct and enhance this socialization in ever more controlled ways. In more specific ways, feminist scholarship has indicated the ways in which a masculinist set of values is built into MBA programs and reproduced there (Sinclair, 1995). On this account, based on an empirical study in Australia, the MBA not only validates values of control and domination but also uses case studies of predominantly male leaders and, in the classroom, routinely silences or discounts the contributions of female students.

Moving to a more general level, Whitley, Thomas, and Marceau (1981) analyzed the MBA in terms of its relationship to wider structures of social inequality and elite reproduction. They found that MBAs were increasingly forming an elite (and, of course, we would expect that process to have developed much further in the two decades since this study), which necessarily implies the formation of some shared set of values or understandings because this is definitional to identifiable elites. In the same way, although not directly discussing ME, the work of institutional theorists suggests that a common set of educational and professional experiences will tend to inform isomorphism because these experiences lead to a common apprehension of organizational problems and their solutions. This would be another way of saying that shared values come out of common experience—scarcely a surprising claim.

All this does of course beg the question of whether the MBA in general constitutes a common experience. After all, it might be that different programs inculcate very different kinds of values and that we cannot speak of "the MBA" in the way that I have done. This is an empirical question that

requires further research. However, although in the early stages, there are studies underway that are beginning to provide evidence that there is a relative homogeneity within MBA programs fed in some large part by the existence of accreditation bodies and international ranking systems (Wedlin, 2000)

Taken together, it seems to be reasonable to say that the MBA does serve to socialize students into particular values. Indeed, it would be surprising if this were not so, for socialization is a familiar facet of educational processes more generally, at least according to one influential tradition in the sociology of education (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). In the United Kingdom, for example, it is possible to see a broad shift in the education of elites from the study of classics as a prelude to colonial administration to the study of social sciences as a prelude to entry into the bureaucracy of the welfare state to the study of management as a prelude of entry into global corporations and consultancies. Clearly, each of these represents a different mode of cultural reproduction and hence of socialization into different sets of behaviors, norms, and values. This is indexed by reports from empirical research that ME bestows a greatly enhanced sense of self-confidence upon its beneficiaries (Collin, 1996; Webber, 2001). In terms of sociological theory, we could say that ME offers individuals an entree into a managerial habitus entailed within which is the possession of certain sorts of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). This consists most clearly of habituation into the particular—and for an outsider, peculiar—language of contemporary management practice. The capacity to speak and understand this language is a major accomplishment of ME. Business schools are one of the producers of managerial language as well as being perhaps its most important distributor.

The Ideological Significance of ME

Habituation into managerial language is experienced as confidence enhancing for students for obvious reasons, but it has a wider potential as well. ME offers entry into the language code of business, whether this be in terms of the latest jargon and buzzwords or the arcana of computing, accounting, and finance. Particularly within the context of global organization, a shared managerial language as well as the values with which that language is associated offers a basis for communication and trust (Grey & Garsten, 2001), even when conditions of work are fragmented spatially and temporally. This kind of “scripting” goes beyond language to the extent that it offers roles, orientations, and a nascent sense of community. Moreover, because of the historically amassed status of universities, business schools are able to

legitimate this language by bestowing the hallmark of intellectualism and perhaps even science.

It should, however, be recognized that not just any language will do. Indeed, more important than terminology are the ideological messages expressed through language, which remain relatively constant as business language changes. In general terms, ME acts to endorse both market relations and managerial dominance as normal and natural features of social organization. Management is often depicted as an ideology-free technique and although debunking that depiction has been a key and oft-repeated insight within critically orientated literature (e.g., Anthony, 1977), it continues to be standard in ME programs. Thus, ME offers an unacknowledged politicized account not only of management but also of society. In this sense, it is important to note the relationship between New Right conceptions of the market society and enterprise culture and the rise of ME and to trace how this has developed more recently.

Thomas Frank (2001) suggested that recent years have seen the advance of an ideology of market populism in the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. By this, he intended not only the simple assertion of market primacy but also the linkage between markets and democracy. Under this ideology, markets represent the expression of popular will, and opposition to the market is therefore cast as antidemocratic and elitist, whether it is expressed by governments, intellectuals, or professional groups. This is important because it advances a political and moral as well as economic rationale for the market. Within this rationale, management thought occupies a very important place, Frank argued, for it legitimates corporate power. In particular, he singled out the breathless formulations of a new economy where organizations have souls and management is about informal partnership rather than domination (Frank identified Senge as typical in this regard).

Business schools, of course, have long been an important source of this kind of managerial thinking and, with respect to ME, are certainly one of its key conduits. They are able to perform a sort of double movement. On one hand, they bear the imprint of an engineering ideology that represents management as no more than morally neutral technique (Shenhav, 1999). On the other hand, they stand ready with an overtly moralistic stance in which the values of market populism and humanistic management are endorsed. And this should come as no surprise because the same duality has characterized much of the history of management thought (Barley & Kunda, 1992; Child, 1969). In both versions, stories such as that of the injection of amphetamines to prolong shifts are written out. Neither the picture of the morally neutral technician nor that of the morally inspired humanist could be sustained when confronted with this. And so ME either holds at a distance the real effects of,

for example, neutral-sounding outsourcing or condemns them as the reverse of good management practice—as easily dealt with anomalous events.

Business schools are therefore able to play a pivotal role in the ideological projects (note the pluralization) of globalized capitalism in promoting and, especially, socializing students into a sanitized representation of corporate management. That this should have occurred must be regarded as being at least in part serendipitous: It was not a part of a scheme or conspiracy. It is certainly true that there was a deliberate plan from the inception of business schools that they should raise the social status of business managers relative to established professional groups. Engwall (1997) noted that for the many philanthropists who funded early business schools, “their intention was primarily to raise the status of business men” (p. 90) rather than having any particular concern with what was taught in the new institutions. For example, writing of Gustav Mevissen, creator of the business school at Cologne at the turn of the century, Locke (1989, as cited in Engwall, 1997) concluded that “concerned to raise the low status of businessmen, he thought . . . to raise the businessman’s social status by conferring college degrees on members of the business estate” (p. 91).

This search for status is best understood in terms of the aspirations of a particular occupational group. As Child (1969) showed, an important part of those aspirations was the provision of a democratic and ethical legitimacy for managers. However, recent years have seen an interesting shift in which the notion or idea of management has enjoyed a great ascendancy as the solution to disparate problems, whereas managers as an occupational group have come under some considerable threat (Grey, 1999). On one hand, the widespread downsizing of the 1990s underscored the fragility of managerial employment. On the other hand, management may have taken on some of the taint of bureaucracy and is increasingly supplanted by notions of leadership, coaching, and team building. In this context, the wider possibility of ME acting as a proselytizer and training ground for market populism and for management as an idea has emerged piecemeal. It may in part be due to the well-intentioned predisposition of academics in liberal cultures to articulate humane versions of what the organization is or should be. Yet, these intentions cannot explain why throughout the world, corporations and governments provide substantial financial support for business schools.

This support stems in part from the perceived need for the greater deployment of generic managerial skills especially in the public sector and management consultancies. This might initially be apprehended in terms of attempts to spread market discipline and business values, and this was probably true in the early periods of the New Right “project.” However, it has subsequently taken on a distinct quality. As a term, *generic management skills* itself

implies the idea of management technique as a neutral artifact ready to be put to use in pursuit of values of all kinds, whether charity, health, banking, or industry. But at the same time, in terms of market populism, it represents an incursion against supposedly entrenched privilege. Management is the way in which “arrogant doctors” and public sector “elites” may be made accountable. Yet, there is an irony in this, for in the process what is created is a new category of expert—the manager or the consultant—who although not professionalized in the classical sense of the term, is possessed of techniques, language, and values denied to others. In this sense, it is right to cast ME as a form of elite reproduction although part of its claim to value is anti-elitism.

I should reiterate that none of this is to posit a conspiracy or a simple alignment between ME and any particular set of interests. Many years ago, Baritz (1960) coined the evocative term *servants of power* to describe the way business schools were related to corporate interests, and he tended to see these as relatively undifferentiated. More recent debates in social theory have emphasized the polymorphous nature of power and the fragmented character of interests (see Clegg, 1989). As with other institutions and social practices, ME operates within a complex terrain. To take just one example, both the notion of the manager and the painstaking process of ME stand in stark contrast to one of the most powerful of contemporary icons, the entrepreneur. Indeed, it is a feature of many entrepreneurial careers that they be associated with educational failure and drop out (e.g., Bill Gates, Richard Branson). Entrepreneurship is represented as the can-do attitude that just gets on with it, whereas management carries the stigma of corporate life (“organization man”). Mindful of this, business schools often strive, more or less convincingly, to develop entrepreneurship or to recast management as entrepreneurship. But their core operation remains the production of suitable personnel for, depending on their particular market, consultancies, investment banks, the public sector, or industry. So as a matter of expediency and not grand conspiracy, they must embody ideological positions that, at best, do not threaten the actual or perceived requirements of such employers who are often also involved in business school funding. However, the requirements of MBA employers are themselves quite variegated; therefore, it will not serve to see ME as the mouthpiece for a coherent, univocal set of interests. Indeed, aside from the issue of fragmentation of interests, business schools are themselves active players and as such cannot be understood simply as mouthpieces.

ME has had the good fortune to be carried by a tide of time and circumstance that have favored it rather than other forms of education or entitlement. As the idea of management as a cultural good has been in the ascendant, so has the demand for ME. As the hegemony of the market has been in the ascendant, so has the demand for ME. ME does not and could not offer a useful

technical training. But in purporting to do so, it does offer status and credentials to individuals and preselects and socializes those individuals for certain kinds of organizational employment. Through its socialization processes, it contributes to the provision of shared languages and understandings among managers. It is therefore dependent on wider cultural and political trends and can only be understood in the light of these. Moreover, it offers some legitimation of those trends. It might also be said, however, that ME is as a result highly vulnerable to shifts in the ideological terrain or, perhaps more likely, in the value put on general and generic management, especially by consultants and the public sector.

Understood in this light, it is easy to understand why the Honduran story—and more routine sweatshop practices—with which I started is so resolutely written out of ME. If ME is about status and legitimation, it must perforce be distanced from the more ethically dubious practices found in at least some real workplaces. Neither the status of managers nor the image of management as an idea are readily compatible with some of these practices, although their existence suggests they have an economic rationale. By the same token, the predominantly liberal-minded (in relative terms) faculty of business schools and, more certainly, the cultural capital of universities as sites of civilized values mitigate against overt endorsement of the increasing excesses of labor discipline in “turbo-capitalism.” How then might management educators write in or give voice to those matters on which business schools are largely silent?

On Voice: Critical ME

The past 10 to 15 years have seen the development of what has become known as critical management studies (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992). This development cannot be explored in detail here (see Fournier & Grey, 2000; Zald, in press) but suffice to say that it mounts a series of critiques not only of workplace practices but also of the philosophical and political basis of management. One obvious criticism of such an endeavor is that it can mean little if it is not reflected in a revised form of ME. More positively, we could say that the existence of critical management studies provides a new set of resources with which critical ME could be developed.

Within such an education, an important task is to give voice in the classroom to some of the messiness and suffering that characterizes management practice, even if this offends against the ideological missions of business schools. Such a task presents enormous difficulties and tensions for those who undertake it. Many of the insights of critical management studies are in a

form that is either so taken up with recondite theory as to be unusable in the classroom or so relentlessly deconstructive as to offer little positive guidance for pedagogy. Even if that were not so, there is the perennial problem that colleagues, administrators, and students are likely to be highly resistant to what they may see as irrelevant, improper, or ideologically suspect teaching. To this extent, critical teaching entails a degree of courage on the part of its proponents—although rather less than that required by, say, a trade unionist trying to build membership where it is forbidden. But, courage apart, there is also a need for a degree of subtlety so that rather than engage in a head-on rejection of orthodox approaches, we work to instill in a more modest way critical questioning in our students' minds. Thus, the notion of giving voice does not simply imply presenting students with a litany of or tirade against the defects of global capitalism. Critical ME entails a shift both in what is taught and how it is taught. How might this be achieved?

Approaches to Critical ME

Notwithstanding my comment on the limitations of the critical literature, there is now a growing set of writings that identify ways in which a more subtle critical pedagogy may proceed. These do not dissolve the problems, but they do offer some helpful insights into addressing them. They are valuable in that most of them describe actual classroom practices developed by the authors. Many of these writings identify the crucial issue of starting from the lived experiences students have of the messiness of organizational life. Although this experience will rarely disclose the kind of sweatshop experiences described earlier, it will almost certainly reveal some of the dynamics of power and control in the workplace. Rather than try to persuade students of the tidy textbook account of organizations or to preach from on high about their deficiencies, critical pedagogy invites students to make sense of their own experiences. This approach, one version of which is dubbed *critical action learning*, is explored in detail by Willmott (1997) and entails a mixture of the self-reflection found in action learning with the social reflection found in critical theory. An action-learning set seeks to work on particular problems brought to the set by participants, and it is this experience from which critical learning can proceed. For example, Willmott suggested that whereas an orthodox action-learning set might treat a member's problem in terms of what technical solutions existed, a more critical approach would focus on the social relations surrounding an apparently technical problem.

In a similar way, Grey, Knights, and Willmott (1996) discussed a management course that although not directly using action-learning methodologies,

again gives primacy to students' experiences of work as the key resource for exploration and then enables students to try to make sense of their experiences through a range of both mainstream and critical theoretical resources. The outcome of this may not be what the critical theorist would like or expect, but it is a nondogmatic way of at least raising critical ideas as a possibility. Moreover, such approaches have an appeal to students because they are grounded in what is demonstrably real. An alternative version of this approach is described by Roberts (1996). Here, student experiences in project teams are used as the crucial resource to develop an understanding of the complexities of managerial interaction and control. The advantage of this over the Grey et al. approach is that the experience being used as raw material is shared by all of the students rather than being whatever disparate experiences they happen to have had. At the same time, this focus on the group (rather than problems brought to the group, as in action learning) opens up the terrain of group dynamics and emotional needs.

Although these courses seem to be about the general issue of critical reflection for management students, other writings stress more specific objectives. Cavanaugh (2000) explained how he introduced North American management students to thinking about inequality. Again, his strategy was to use concrete experience—in this case, electing a class president—to see how issues of gender, race, and sexuality affect decision making. In a not dissimilar vein, Sinclair (2000) reported on an attempt in Australia to pursue issues of gender and sexuality in management teaching and thereby to address at a practical level the problems she raised in her 1995 article. It is clear from this discussion that much more is involved than simply adding these topics to the curriculum—course structure and the creation of a climate in which these issues can be raised require careful thought. Above all, there is—and this would be true for any attempt at critical pedagogy—the question of legitimacy. Students (and others, but students are crucial because good evaluations from them go a long way to assuage criticisms from colleagues and administrators) need to be able to see the value of what they are learning. This means being persuasive about the currency in business terms of issues such as gender. For Sinclair, recent interest in diversity can help in this regard, as can the growing importance of social responsibility and business ethics. Of course, the critical theorist may want to develop these issues differently and further than would an orthodox treatment, but their importance in the business community can serve as a way into criticality.

The pervasiveness of change in the business world can also be used to argue for the need for a flexibility of mind and a need to see problems afresh. This rationale informs Chia and Morgan's (1996) case for developing not

managers but “philosopher-managers.” This text, unlike the others I have discussed, does not describe classroom practice but does articulate at a theoretical level why managers in the contemporary world might need a radically different skill set from that envisaged by more orthodox, rationalistic approaches to ME. Something similar is to be found in Dehler, Welsh, and Lewis’s (2001) call for ME in the United States to be configured as complicated understanding as a counterpart to the complexity of the business world. Pedagogically, this entails a shift from the teacher as an all-knowing source of information to the teacher as a consultant or expert in not knowing (Raab, 1997), which is clearly consistent with the shift from textbook knowledge to students’ experience. After all, ultimately, if critical theory cannot speak to experience, then it has little to commend it.

What I think is shared by all of these approaches, apart from their focus on experience, is that the critical theory components of the course are not “front-end loaded”; that is, they emerge from the course rather than being presented as up-front blocks of abstract ideas. Moreover, there is little concern for theoretical purity in that a range of resources are drawn on rather than a careful delineation of schools of thought. In this sense, critical ME is quite different from a course in, say, social theory. Indeed, a key term in this regard would be *praxis*—the imbrication of theoretical insight and practical action. Another point of entry into praxis that has been suggested by critical educators is the use of fiction rather than lived experience as a resource (Czarniawska-Joerges & Guillet de Monthoux, 1994; Knights & Willmott, 1999). Like the Roberts (1996) approach, this has the advantage of offering a shared object of reflection and interpretation, but unlike that approach, it need not require the educator to get drawn into the difficulties entailed by the psychodynamics of groups, for which many critical educators will be ill-prepared. Using fiction again requires a persuasive case to be made for relevance, but its relative unfamiliarity opens up the possibility for new insights in a way business case studies, for example, may not. Fiction also allows us to present to students a range of experiences that do not normally enter the business school, which includes, to return full circle, those experiences of working life that are so resolutely written out of the standard textbooks.

In sketching some of possibilities for critical ME (see also Reynolds, 1997), I recognize there is a tension: In making critical theory relatively acceptable and relevant to students and institutions, it may be seen by the critical purist as simply diluted and compromised. Yet, the alternative, an entirely ghettoized critical approach to management, seems to me even less desirable. Of course, the worst of all worlds would be a form of teaching that

was both compromised and not accepted—but I am convinced that it is possible to avoid this. After all, Roberts's (1996) article has been described in the pages of the *Administrative Science Quarterly*, no less, as being "required reading for management educators" (Delbecq, 1999, p. 441). It would be idealistic to imagine that the whole business school establishment will be converted to critical ME, but the more modest goal of developing an accepted and valued alternative to orthodoxy may well prove achievable. Indeed, as critical management studies gains a following—as shown by its growing presence in the Academy of Management—it may well be that this process has begun.

Conclusion

This article began by asking why, if at least some organizations find it commercially necessary to make use of very poor working conditions, this was not normally represented in business schools. After all, if there is a commercial case for such practices and if business schools exist to train managers to be effective, then we would expect this to be the case. But that of course begged the question as to whether the purpose of business schools is indeed related to economic and technical effectiveness. Much of the article was concerned to show that this was not so and that rather the function of business schools lies in their role in socializing managers and legitimating management. Such an explanation of business schools is then able to account for their silence about so much of the reality of work, for to acknowledge that would undermine the legitimacy functions of business schools.

If business schools are to give voice to concerns not only about working practices but also about other problematic features of management—which might include issues of gender, ethnicity, power, the environment, and so forth—then this suggests the need to develop further the work that has begun in critical ME. Such a project has many difficulties associated with it, but from a review of published attempts at critical pedagogy, I suggested an approach that gives primacy to students' experience rather than to up-front theory or moralizing offers a way forward. In addition and in conclusion, the analysis that ME is primarily concerned with status and legitimation must, if true, open up a very promising arena for critical ME. For the significance of university business schools as a vehicle for legitimation is that they provide a freely given, independent endorsement of management. It is that freedom that presents critically orientated academics with both the possibility, and perhaps the duty, to articulate dissent.

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