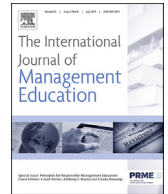




Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

The International Journal of Management Education

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijme



Telling (emotional) stories about management education



Maria Humphries-Kil

Research and Community Associate, School of Public Health & Psychosocial Studies, Faculty of Health & Environmental Sciences, Auckland University of Technology, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, New Zealand

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 13 December 2016

Received in revised form 31 March 2017

Accepted 31 March 2017

ABSTRACT

Countless inhabitants of Earth continue to be insecure, unsafe, and unwell. For many people this situation is an outcome of the neo-liberal influence on market directives in the decade under review in this special edition of *IJME*. For others, it is a situation with roots elsewhere but not systematically remedied. Many people die or their vitality is diminished because we allow it. My intuition is on high alert. My emotions are aroused. Anxiety, outrage, and fear swirl in me. I struggle to find hope and joy in my profession. I want to write emotionally about the significance of emotions for a conversation with the community of PRME scholars. In past attempts, I have been advised to write a more scholarly piece. My intuition cries a resounding “No!” We are not short of rational and scientific papers on the enabling of systemic degradation of our humanity and the environment by functionally trained graduates of business schools. The work of our intellect, the investment of our time and resources, and the placing of our political influence also entail emotions – stunted, exploited, or intelligently incorporated into our lives. The expression of and reflection on feelings must have a place in the PRME community. I hope to read more about how feelings motivate and inspire us – and through us, an emotionally intelligent pedagogy.

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1. Introduction

A few years after the emergence of the PRME, the *Journal of Management Education* (JME) - a publication of the Organizational Behavior Teaching Society (OBTS) - produced a special edition to highlight PRME related work-in-progress and to explore its potential. The issue was published in 2009 and provides a useful marker in the decade of the PRME under review. As a long-time participant of OBTS and as a twice serving Board Member, I had been keen for OBTS to become a signatory to the PRME. I was hopeful the PRME would open opportunities to nurture streams of more critically orientated management education. At the same time, I was intuitively concerned the PRME might eventuate as a showcase of stories serving aspiration rather than actuality - light on critical analyses of the broader context of management education in and for what is generally referred to as global development or globalization. I was anxious about the little attention in our field given to the works of for example [Susan George \(1999\)](#); [Henry Giroux \(2007\)](#) or [Stuart Clegg \(Clegg & Ross-Smith, 2003\)](#); ([Clegg 2003 a & b](#)). I gave voice to my concerns by submitting a rather sharp cautionary polemic for consideration by the readership of that special edition – a readership I consider my peers. It was a consciously emotional piece of writing appealing for a more critical perspective on the rise of growing (not diminishing) inequality within and among United Nations affiliated jurisdictions and the escalation of environmental degradation globally. The polemic was rejected out of hand and I remain sad about that.

E-mail address: mariatheresiahumphries-kil@aut.ac.nz.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2017.03.016>

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I have had little cause to change my mind about the concerns I raised there and my plea for a more passionately expressed discussion among ourselves about the process and content of management education for a world worth working for.

Perhaps to be expected, the reason for the rejection of my passionate outburst to that earlier special edition of the *JME* was that the writing was too emotional and lacked scientific evidence or rational support. I agree it was emotional. I *felt* extreme anxiety about the tolerance of growing inequality, the explicit and implicit rationalization of employment based exploitation, climate change denial, and the misplaced faith in the neo-liberal project at the turn of the 21st century to bring about justice. Management education seemed focused on producing work-ready functionaries unable or unwilling to discuss the possibility that the system they would be employed to manage might be harmful to people and planet.

We are not short of rational and scientific papers on the enabling of systemic degradation of our humanity and the environment by functionally trained but ethically or politically under-educated graduates of business schools. Attention to systemic degradation, weak ethical engagement, and the facilitation of exploitative practices through functionalist management education was raised in *The Academy* more than twenty years ago by such prominent voices as Stanley Deetz (1992); David Steingard and Dale Fitzgibbons (1995), David Boje (1995); Roy Jaques (1996); Pushkala Prasad (1998, 2005); Korten (2001); Mats Alvesson and Hugh Willmott (2002); Bobbie Bannerjee (2008) and many others. They brought fresh hope that the amoral and ahistorical education producing uncritical functionaries and domesticated citizens could be interrupted and transformed.

The Wall Street Occupation of 2011 came and went. A surge in critique of growing systemically generated inequality hit the media beyond scholarly circles (e.g Klein, 2014; Korten, 2010, 2015); Stiglitz, 2012, 2002, 2010; Piketty, 2014). The Academy of Management convened several conferences with seductively critical titles and the European EGOS community invited explicit scrutiny of the impacts of historic colonization manifesting on contemporary contentions.² It seemed for a while that more critical stories in and for management education could be told with their transformative intent as their clarion cry. Some 'Dark-Side' stories could be told in discrete conference contexts. The very title of such a stream of work suggesting something still shadowy – something not fully 'in the light of day' – but never-the-less a chink of light that might foster new growth.

The catastrophic stories of climate change experts became more compelling. The Paris Climate Conference (2015) took up the baton. Connections of climate change, social inequity, and political instability are being strengthened. We now have the SDGs. PRME representation and uptake of the issues has been significant. If the outcomes of all this collective effort for a 'just world' articulated in the jurisdiction where the PRME has traction is taken as the 'evidence', the jury is in. Management education over the past decade has *not* helped redress the degradations the MDGs articulated and the SDGs now intend to tackle. What *has* changed in this forum is a willingness to associate the degradations of concern more closely with the 'model of development' that has so long been taken-for-granted – increasingly articulated as 'the neo-liberal model' and its perceived excesses. It is a critique well known and long debated among the critical theorists of the Management Academy – and studiously ignored or selectively indulged for the twenty years or more I have been involved in wider *JME* circles.

Support for free markets has predictably come under increasing challenge. We are witnessing the rise of political polarization with a trajectory framed in terms of national security welcomed by some and articulated as a path to neo-fascism feared by others.

Emotions are necessarily involved. By the end of 2016, Christine Lagard, Managing Director of the IMF could sensibly address an audience of folks concerned with the need to make capitalism more inclusive.³ She reports that in the global economy too many people "feel left behind ... a populist sentiment is growing that threatens to shift the needle against economic openness."⁴ At the conference on Inclusive Capitalism she addresses the role of business in supporting a more inclusive global economy. She reminds the gathering of the projected economic potential of greater involvement of women in the economy and the dismal projection of growing youth unemployment. She appeals to the emotions of the gathering by a motivational recounting of the pioneers of inclusive capitalism - Carnegie and Rockefeller and the industrial towns of the 19th century that "demonstrated the spirit of inclusion". No mention is made of the people placed at radical competition with each other for the limited opportunities to access these gated communities with their strong disciplinary rules for privileged residency. No mention is made of the historic realignment of feudal powers with baronial and democratically articulated interests (St Jane & Humphries, 2013) in the taking of land for farms, roads, towns, hydro-stations and so on – then as now. No mention is made of the countless indigenous people removed, undermined, marched, starved, to the point of genocide as the basis of capitalist wealth the world over, then as now. Today, many people on Earth are still insecure, unsafe, unwell. Many die because we allow it. It may be that at a given point in time the gender, age, ethnic identity of the included and excluded may vary. The underlying doctrine of capitalism itself however has again escaped close scrutiny for its part in human and environmental exploitation.

The deflection from the exploitation endemic in the capitalist doctrine and denial of responsibility for associated social and environmental degradation has been woven into what might be referred to as an influential grand-narrative of our times. The

² See for example: AoM annual theme on "Doing well by doing Good (2007)"; "Dare to Care (2010)"; "Informal Economy (2012)"; Academy of Business in Society Symposium on Ethics and Social responsibilities; EGOS 2015 theme "Organizations and the Examined Life: Reason, Reflexivity and Responsibility".

³ <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/10/10/SP101016-The-Role-of-Business-in-Supporting-a-More-Inclusive-Global-Economy>.

⁴ <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/10/10/SP101016-The-Role-of-Business-in-Supporting-a-More-Inclusive-Global-Economy>.

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