Chapter 18
Plowing a Fertile Ground for Transformative Management Education

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ABSTRACT

This article argues in favor of a holistic and ethically grounded educational framework for managers, oriented to fine-tune business with developmental requirements. Considering the multiple environmental, social, and economic challenges the world faces today, business goals are approached in terms of genuine humankind developmental obligations. Acknowledging the urgent need to prevent some eschatological scenarios, a critical and mindful methodology is used to diagnose, evaluate and reorient the role of business and management education. Sustainable development goals (SDGs) are proposed as beacons to channel and ethically assess the potential of business to contribute in concrete terms to integral development, using them as prisms through which comprehension, criticisms and transformations can be articulated.

INTRODUCTION

This article presents a dialectical framework for management education, purposefully inclusive, flexible and open to multiple business functions and concerns. With the teleological intention of contributing to the wellbeing of humanity in harmonious respect of nature, the author seeks to escape conventional conceptions of business training, by inviting interested parties mind potential eschatological scenarios that loom in the horizon.

Even if eschatology gets confused with scatology, it is worth to exploit the semantic ambiguity in order to interrogate businesses and mind their effects, even if only for educative purposes. Could the study of business outputs, help explain some dangers that threaten life, and push humankind closer to

potentially fatal events? Awareness about the ultimate fate of humanity can paradoxically trigger mindful actions and reactions that make the planet and the people, the business of business.

Although too pessimistic or inconvenient for some, denying the negative impacts of business will only worsen them. Ignoring environmental degradation, poverty, hunger, gender inequality, conflicts, and human stupidity; among many other facts that have escaped the prevalent realm of business, is not only irresponsible, but also suicidal for business. Daydreaming cannot correct climatic change, nor will it resuscitate extinct species, or generate sustainable profitability.

The good news is that business has the potential to generate sustainable value for the whole of society, which implies revisiting the assessment criteria and educational frameworks used to guide economic activity. Management education cannot longer claim ideological neutrality. Although the complex connections are usually ignored; management transcends boundaries, and entails epistemic challenges with real survival consequences. Something evident when the historical and political defies of business education are analyzed (Nino, 2011).

Some dire un-sustainable forecasts urge renewed business mindsets, and fresh educational approaches, oriented to meaningful transformation, and grounded on truthful diagnosis and critical prognosis for action. Carefully procuring an educational proposal, capable of inspiring change and stimulating lifelong learning, the following pages articulate an open and comprehensive endeavor, which balances criticism with positive propositions. Promoting more life-sensible management education, the paper questions customary business-training objectives; and sows seeds of hope, with ideas that nurture interdisciplinary dialogue, meaningful learning and ethical sensitivity, by widening the concerns of conventional management.

Among the expected fruits, this approach hopes to empower students and business agents, facilitating their genuine engagement with the world, integrating diverse sources of learning, both, critically and creatively. Always with the ultimate purpose of orienting learners' managerial expertise in order to help prevent and solve socially pertinent problems, while sophisticating their ethical reasoning.

Echoing calls to make business a force for good (Honeyman, 2014), and striving to give sense and meaning to business students and practitioners (many of whom accept transcendent expectations are out of business); this proposal wishes to generate awareness of their potential to go beyond standard expectations. Applying Kohlberg's concept in multiple ways (McDonough, 2005), generating economic prosperity, social well-being and environmental balance.

BACKGROUND

Usually, defined in very narrow terms, business continue making conventional decisions, disconnected from nature, and probably in the dark in terms of holistic effects and feedback loops. As in Plato's cave, multiple dazzling impacts are ignored, although paradoxically they can enlighten new scenarios for transformative action. The pressing need to preserve breathable air, drinkable water, fertile lands; can shock and temporarily blind business. However, this daze can be dialectically shifted to help business avoid permanent stupefaction.

Popular business ideas are short of generating overall prosperity, of assuring food security, well-being and healthy lives. Indicators show that economic and social upheavals are eroding institutions all over the world, and that natural resources are increasingly polluted and depleted, with the consequent social tensions, effects on health, and quality of employment.

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