Showcase Symposium on

DESIGNING THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS SCHOOLS:
PERSISTENT PROBLEMS IN CHANGING CONTEXTS

Program Session #: 1221 | Submission: 11785 | Sponsor(s): (MED, BPS)
Scheduled: Monday, Aug 10 2015 1:15PM - 2:45PM at Vancouver Convention Centre in East Ballroom A

Organizer and Moderator:

Victor Z. Chen
Assistant Professor of International Management
Belk College of Business
University of North Carolina, Charlotte

Roundtable Panelists:

William H. Glick
Dean and H. Joe Nelson III Professor of Management
Jones Graduate School of Business
Rice University, USA
Chair Elect of the Board, AACSB International

Peter Lorange
President, Lorange Institute of Business, Switzerland
Former President, IMD, Switzerland
Board Member, EFMD

Henry Mintzberg, OC OQ FRSC
John Cleghorn Professor of Management Studies
Desautels Faculty of Management
McGill University, Canada

John-Christopher (JC) Spender
Research Professor
Kozminski University, Poland

"Showcase symposia should be the very best symposium submissions received and should be expected to attract a large audience. They do NOT need to address the conference theme. Each Division Program Chair may select up to 10% of symposia accepted by their division to be designated as showcase symposia." (AOM Website).
OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

In his 1967 JMS article, Herbert A. Simon argued that the central problem of designing a business school is to find ways to integrate disparate bodies of knowledge and skills into a synergistic relationship for the goal of improving managerial practice. Such knowledge and skills come essentially from two relatively isolated bases of information: “the world of practice” through business participation, and “several sciences” through multi- and inter-disciplinary academic activities (Simon, 1967: 2). This article, along with Simon’s philosophy of organizations (Spender, 2013), has made a profound impact on the design of modern business schools hereafter (Khurana & Spender, 2012).

Although Simon is a giant exemplar himself of such knowledge integration within one individual, the design problem of knowledge integration for improving managerial practice remains an insurmountable challenge for most of today’s business schools (Lorange, 2010). It is for this purpose that this symposium is proposed to revisit some key problems Simon (1967) raised about fifty years ago that remain relevant today and to explore feasible solutions in today’s new contexts.

ISSUES TO BE COVERED IN THE PANEL DISCUSSION

PERSISTENT PROBLEMS

The first problem is the raison d’être of the business school or “Business School Goals” (Khurana, 2007). Simon stated that “the tasks of a business school are to train men for the practice of management (or some special branch of management) as a profession, and to develop new knowledge that may be relevant to improving the operation of business” (1967: 1). For instance, specifically, what we (should) mean by “improving”? Do we take for granted the business performance metrics in use by the executives, which are grounded in shareholder values or economic value-added largely because of the broader capitalist system (in the West)? If we don’t, what should we mean then? As responses, several radical ideas flourished in recent years, ranging from Roger Martin’s (2009) “ethics embedded” to Henry Mintzberg’s (2014) “balancing society”, to a 2014 Academy of Management (AOM)Professional Development Workshop led by Paul Adler on “alternative organizational goals”. In the end of the day, however, all these contenders will have to solve Michael Jensen’s (2002: 238) puzzle that “Multiple Objectives Is No Objective […] unless the dimensions are monotone transformations of one another”. More importantly, even if business schools manage to find answers, how can they be an influential (as opposed to merely an advocating) body to enforce these answers given that their place in the real value chains in the business world and in politics is if not trivial then unclear?

The second question is what types of knowledge and skills should MBAs and other executive graduates possess to be effective management professionals? For this question, Simon discussed a few major challenges that persistently constrain the integration of knowledge and skills from “the world of practice” and those from “several sciences”. Although new theories crop up from time to time, from Henry Mintzberg’s (2005) “Managers Not MBAs” to Roger Martin’s (2007) “Integrative Thinking”, fundamental conflicts between the very natures of knowledge sets from the two worlds persist. For example, the very beauty of scientific research lies in an academic and laboratory environment in which complex real-world phenomena could be decomposed into reduced, simplified, and “unrealistic” questions, where being “unrealistic” is highly desirable. However, the essential necessity in real managerial skills is the ability to address a complex issue by simultaneously recognizing and responding to various inter-connected sub-problems. More practically, what comparative advantages do scientists and business professionals respectively possess for knowledge access and creation? How could their different comparative advantages be complemented to benefit both?

The third question is how to operationalize change in the business school model toward the knowledge integration. Such a change should entail both education and scholarship that not only impact but lead and transform (Pettigrew, 2011). Innovation of pedagogy, research methodologies and publication outlets take not only an educator and scholar’s mindset, ambitions, but also the overall institutional environments, especially including the tenure evaluation systems, that enable or even spur such innovation (Yip, 2009). It also takes bold experiments, patient support and engaged discussion with a wide range of stakeholders, especially including practicing managers, as well as learning from peer schools like medical, law, and engineering schools. Practically, among the central barriers is the fact that business scholars, especially management scholars, are relatively disconnected with and outside the team of control, authentic information, and timely knowledge about the specific operations and processes inside the companies (Yip, 2009). Another problem is of course the absence of the performance metrics that evaluate the real impact of business scholarship and education (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Innovations that seek to solve these problems should also be adaptable to particular local, temporal, and even individual situations, more than one set of principles that aims merely to converge global standards or a ranking that serves special interests (e.g., media rankings) (Glick, 2008).

Lastly, as Simon (1967: 2) noted, “the business school knowing […] is, of course, a metaphor”. All solutions should come down to the individual professionals who are working in or with business schools, including the deans, educators, scholars, practitioners-in-residence (or their various alternatives), as well as external stakeholders such as funders, regulators, and accreditation agencies. Questions we have to ask include: What types of knowledge and skills should each of these individuals possess? What should be the ideal career and training program for each of them all the way from graduate studies, to business access and participation, and
to a collegial life? Who should be the judges over their performance (e.g., the academic peers, the journals, or the business communities)?

NEW CONTEXTS

Business Schools face an environment with unprecedented global growth and radical innovations. Today, global business leaders come from multiple backgrounds, represented by well-traveled engineers, scientists, artists, and even musicians (McMillan & Chen, 2012). Outside the top-20 well-funded business schools, mostly located in America, capitalizing on a brand of a long history, mostly affiliated with leading universities, with cross appointments in areas like history, economics, psychology, and sociology, other business schools produce research in journals that management never reads, on issues that border on the metaphysical, and now face rising irrelevance because of brand dilution and talent challenges from fast growth and radical innovations (McMillan & Chen, 2012).

Some emerging contexts today are notable. First, business schools today do not only compete among themselves, but also with a rising breed of corporate internal trainings and corporate universities, which are typically associated with well-known consulting firms (e.g., Deloitte University). This new breed of competitors are not only developing high-quality and relevant training services, but also seeking to create and disseminate knowledge in outlets that are usually more publicly visible than academic journals (e.g., WSJ, McKinsey Quarterly, etc.). Their knowledge creation has been benefiting from a unique network of clients (e.g., BCG’s publications based on face-to-face interviews). By hiring top Ph.D. graduates and faculties from leading schools, they have also devoted significant efforts to improving the rigor of their research.

Second, education and research, especially in business areas, have undergone unprecedented democratization, facilitated by multimedia technologies, virtual classrooms, free online courses (e.g., Coursera, MOOC, etc.), free lecture videos (e.g., YouTube), and online publications on professional or personal websites before journal issues (e.g., ResearchGate, Google Scholar, SSRN, etc.). If knowledge is what business students are primarily looking for, they could find many cheaper and even free ways to obtain it. The requirement for differentiated products and services of in-class education becomes higher. Still, however, students see in-class environment a unique platform to have one-on-one discussion with the faculty on ad-hoc questions and to interact and network with other elite students with diverse background.

Third, although US- and UK-based brand schools still remain the most attractive places for the most talented prospective students, globalization, return migrants from academics, rise of emerging markets, and an increasing demand for understanding local contexts have spurred the creation and development of elite schools in other regions in the last few decades. For instance, among the top 50 schools in the FT Global MBA ranking 2014 are China-based HKUST, CEIBS, and HKU, India-based IIM-Ahmedabad and ISB, Singapore-based NUS and Nanyang, and South Korea-based Sungkyunkwan. These schools benefit from their supportive local business communities, a strong regional economy, and entrepreneurial spirit as new cornes. They are new contenders who are attracting the most talented students not only in their own regions but from all over the world.

ADVANTAGES OF THE SYMPOSIUM TO THE INTEREST DIVISIONS

This symposium seeks specifically to solve some persistent problems in business schools in the new contexts and to lead our future. As such, it should be of direct relevance to all participants of the AoM meeting. It is especially important to and can benefit two groups of participants, MED (management education and development) and BPS (business policy and strategy). For the first group, this symposium offers a good chance to showcase the leading insights and ideas of the best practices to integrate business practice and scientific knowledge into management education. Special attention will be paid to the reinvention of research and teaching programs and how such programs can mutually reinforce each other. For the second group, BPS, this symposium is a good application of organizational design and change theories. It is especially exciting for this group because it is a chance to apply the theories into our own industry – the business schools.

A PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF THE SYMPOSIUM

In 90 minutes, this symposium will take the style of a moderated roundtable conversation. Victor will kick off the workshop with a 10 minutes introduction, focusing on the objectives of the workshop. The next 50 minutes will be an open discussion among all the panelists. Spontaneous thoughts, interruptions, and interactions are all welcome in the workshop, although the focus should be on developmental ideas and actions rather than critics. The last 30 minutes will be devoted to a genuine and interactive discussion with the audience. The attendance is free of charge but requires RSVP.

Confirmation letters of the panelists are attached in the end of this proposal.

Reference


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**Confirmation letters**

**From:** Bill Glick  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 18, 2014 9:15 AM  
**To:** Victor Z. Chen, Ph.D.  
**Subject:** Re: Request to be a Panelist in a proposed PDW at 2015 Vancouver AoM

Victor,  
Thanks for the invitation. Sounds like a good session. I’ll be happy to participate.  
I like your proposed line up of panelists.

Bill Glick  
Dean  
H. Joe Nelson III Professor of Management  
(713) 348-5928  
http://www.business.rice.edu/future/

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**From:** Peter Lorange  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 18, 2014 2:51 AM  
**To:** Victor Z. Chen  
**Subject:** AW: Request to be a Panelist in a proposed PDW at 2015 Vancouver AoM

Dear Victor,  
Thanks. This is a great initiative – I am on!  
And, Happy Holidays!  

Freundliche Grüsse / Kind regards  
Prof Dr Peter Lorange  
Chairman
From: Henry Mintzberg  
Sent: 2014年12月17日11:54  
To: Victor Z. Chen  
Subject: Re: Request to be a Panelist in a proposed PDW at 2015 Vancouver AoM

Happy to Victor. Count me in.

Henry

Henry Mintzberg  
Cleghorn Professor of Management Studies  
McGill University  
1001 Sherbrooke West  
Montreal H3A 1G5 Canada  
1 514 398 4045  
e-pamphlet “Rebalancing Society” now up on  
www.mintzberg.org  
TWO@mintzberg141  
or www.mintzberg.org/blog

From: JC Spender  
Sent: 2015年1月6日8:59  
To: Victor Z. Chen, Ph.D.  
Subject: Re: Greetings from Manhattan

For sure - I know Henry and Peter well, Bill from long ago. For various reasons I can explain later, it is helpful for me if my name appears in the program. Kozminski University!

Regards, JC

JC Spender, 411 East 57th St., New York NY 10022 www.jcspender.com

-- Antes de imprimir este e-mail piense si es realmente necesario