2004 Presidential Address

REFLECTIONS ON ENGENDERING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY WITHIN THE ACADEMY

ROSALIE L. TUNG
Simon Fraser University

For some time now, organizations have been concerned with the issue of sustainability. In 1999, for example, the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index (DJSI World) was launched to rank the world’s top 2,500 companies on the basis of economic, environmental, and social criteria (DJSI World, 1999). This search for sustainability has, no doubt, been rendered more salient by a seemingly endless stream of revelations about financial shenanigans and wrongdoings among once admired companies and executives, such as Enron and Martha Stewart, to name just two.

As one who researches, writes, and teaches about organizations, and as a mother who cares about what I pass on to my daughter, Michele, so that she and others of her generation can live in a better world, I, too, have given much thought to this subject of sustainability, particularly as it relates to organizations and communities that affect me most and that I, in turn, have some influence on. In preparation for my role as president of the Academy of Management this past year, and as events have unfolded over the course of the past twelve months, I have given much thought to what it means to build and foster a sustainable community within the Academy. Here I would like to share with you some of my reflections on engendering a sustainable community within the Academy of Management.

As fate or divine intervention would have it, in late April of this year, as I began to work on today’s presentation, my university, Simon Fraser University, held a special convocation to confer honorary doctorate degrees on three Nobel Peace Prize laureates. They were Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who won the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his work to end apartheid in South Africa; the fourteenth Dalai Lama, who at the age of two was designated as the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people and is now a world-renowned spiritual leader, winning the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize; and Professor Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian lawyer and judge who advocated an enlightened interpretation of Islamic law to include “democracy, equality before the law, and religious freedom,”1 and the 2003 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, making her the third Muslim and eleventh woman to win that much-coveted prize.

On the afternoon of the same day as the special convocation, these three exemplary world citizens, along with two other people, whom I will introduce later, engaged in a five-hour-long dialogue, “Balancing Educating the Mind with Educating the Heart.” This half-day dialogue was cosponsored by my university, Simon Fraser University, and my alma mater, the University of British Columbia. As I sat through the special convocation and half-day-long dialogue, I found myself not only taking notes frantically but, more important, saying, “Amen” to many of the themes and issues discussed therein, because they paralleled very closely the two themes that have been central to my current term as an elected officer of the Academy, and, in fact, to much of my professional life. These two themes are diversity and the need to balance educating the mind with educating the heart.

Let me first share with you my thoughts on diversity. As you know, I have chosen diversity

1 Unless otherwise stated, quoted material comes from speeches and remarks given at the Simon Fraser University Special Convocation, April 20, 2004, Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver, Canada, and the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University Roundtable Dialogue: Balancing Educating the Mind with Educating the Heart, April 20, 2004, held at the University of British Columbia.
as the theme for my year as president. The choice of the diversity theme is no mere accident. My gender, cultural heritage, and life experiences have made me acutely aware of the need to embrace and value diversity. In truth, diversity in the Academy is a reality from which none of us can escape. Let me cite some statistics that pertain to the Academy in this regard. Our 15,000 plus members come from more than 90 countries throughout the world. Over 30 percent of us live outside of the United States. We have 24 divisions and interest groups, each with a distinct domain statement to reflect the different research interests and perspectives of its members. The Academy’s members include researchers, teachers, consultants, practitioners, and students, and our members come from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, are at different stages in their professional lives, and espouse different religious traditions and sexual orientations.

Through my several messages to you in the “President’s Message” in the Academy of Management Newsletter, through the institution of the diversity initiatives and innovations awards to our divisions and interest groups for 2003–2004, and through the establishment of the diversity bulletin board, I have encouraged us to celebrate the differences yet commonalities that bind us together as members of the Academy. At the special convocation and dialogue featuring the three Nobel Peace Prize laureates, I gleaned additional insights on diversity that I want to share with you here.

In the first place, the special convocation was held at Christ Church Cathedral, one of the oldest places of worship in Vancouver, Canada. The three laureates represented three of the world’s major religious traditions. In the afternoon dialogue, Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi (commonly known as Reb Zalman) was also on the panel. Reb Zalman is a leading Jewish spiritual teacher and spoke at the 2002 Academy of Management meetings in Denver, in an all-Academy symposium organized by Andre Delbecq. In short, the world’s four major religious traditions were represented at the events of that single day in late April 2004. That is truly diversity!

In his acceptance speech, the Dalai Lama observed that my university’s action—namely, the simultaneous conferring of honorary doctorate degrees on members of various religious traditions—truly “pays respect and reflects the fact that all of us are equal.” The Dalai Lama went on to say that “all religions have the same potential to increase human value.” Professor Ebadi, in her acceptance speech, likened diversity and the need for valuing diversity to God’s giving a mirror to humankind only to be shattered by us mortals into a thousand pieces. She said that because each of us has seized on only one piece of the mirror, none of us could claim to have the truth and the whole truth. Therefore, it is important that we “listen and tolerate opposing opinions.” Archbishop Tutu, in his acceptance speech, simply reminded us that while differences may exist among family members, it is important to bear in mind that “there are no outsiders” in a family. He added humorously that this applies to all family members, however “ghastly” some of them might be.

At the August 2003 Board of Governors meeting in Seattle, I led a day-long exercise that included not only members of the board but also chairs of the various Academy committees to brainstorm ideas on how we could value diversity within the Academy. I summarized the major highlights of that exercise in the October 2003 Academy of Management Newsletter. Several aspects of diversity were explored and discussed at the August 2003 board exercise.

One pertained to the diversity of research paradigms. Some argued that the Academy’s publications already reflect this diversity, pointing to the variety of topics published in our journals and the geographic diversity of the authors. Others disagreed, asserting that although our journals appear to be receptive to different topics, they publish only those articles that conform to “North American research templates.” To put it differently, it appears that while authors from around the world can meet with success in getting their research published, this is only as long as they have been socialized into the North American “way of thinking and methodology.”

The proponents of greater diversity of research paradigms argued that “diversity of research templates does not mean lower standards” (Tung, 2003: 3). In the diversity online forum (Academy of Management, 2003), C. R. (Bob) Hinings, a long-time and highly respected member of the Academy, pointed to the important role that the Academy of Management could play in promoting the notion that “quality (should be) seen through a broad rather than a
narrow lens . . . [Furthermore], such a lens has to be international in scope.” In other words, Bob encouraged the Academy to seek and promote “quality pluralism.”

In a similar vein, Eleanor O’Higgins, outgoing chair of the Academy’s International Theme Committee, borrowed from the Irish political scene and called for “parity of esteem”—that is, the need for “mutual respect and recognition of each other’s traditions, viewpoints, contributions and dignity” (Tung, 2003: 3). Eleanor, your words certainly echo or, should I say, the Dalai Lama’s call for “mutual respect and admiration” certainly paralleled your exhortation for “parity of esteem.”

Another aspect of diversity discussed at the August 2003 Board exercise pertain to the Academy’s emphasis on research versus teaching. Thus far, much of the Academy’s services, such as annual meetings and journals, are slanted toward those members with a strong research orientation. To get a better handle on the extent to which our members come from institutions with a research versus a teaching orientation, Susan Taylor, an outgoing member of the Board of Governors, and I undertook a fairly ambitious project attempting a crude classification of the level of research among university affiliations of our current members. We went through the affiliations of 8,683 current members and categorized the research orientation of their institutions along a 6-point scale, 6 being very heavy research and 1 being almost no research (see Table 1).

We found that only a quarter of our members belonged to heavy to very heavy research orientation universities and roughly one-third belonged to institutions with little or almost no research. Despite the obvious limitations associated with our crude classification scheme, it nevertheless highlighted the fact that a sizable proportion of our members do not belong to institutions with a heavy research orientation. This does not imply, however, that members from teaching institutions do not engage in research at all.

The finding from this crude classification was intended to highlight areas in which the Academy can continue to make improvements, and it has made us realize that members who come from institutions with a lesser research orientation might perhaps be underserved by the Academy, because, at present, approximately 90 percent of our current activities and services appear to be directed at only 25 percent of our members. The remaining 75 percent of our members certainly deserve equal attention and treatment. To channel the Dalai Lama’s observation that “all religions have the same potential to increase human value,” because both teaching and research have the same potential to contribute to the generation and dissemination of knowledge on management, the Academy has to provide equal value to all members, regardless of their emphasis on research versus teaching.

Thus, the Academy has to reexamine, rebalance, and expand its portfolio of services and programs so that all members receive equal treatment and attention. In this way, the Academy could be likened to the “shining city upon a hill” that the late fortieth President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, alluded to many times during his presidency. In his farewell address from the Oval Office, he articulated what he saw in this city:

It was a tall, proud city . . . teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace . . . And if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Classification Scheme of Research Orientation of Members’ Affiliations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Very heavy research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Heavy research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Some research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Little research but increasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Little research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Almost no research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Not enough information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8683

Tung
and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here” (Reagan, 1989).

In a similar way, a sustainable Academy of Management community should be “teeming with people of all kinds . . . (working) in harmony and peace.” In other words, our Academy community, too, should be open and truly receptive to anyone who seeks to generate and disseminate knowledge in management, regardless of his or her teaching versus research orientation, stage in career development, race or ethnicity, gender, religious tradition, and sexual orientation.

Furthermore, by providing equal value to our members who come from all different traditions, we can overcome what Reb Zalman has alluded to as the “misguided notion of inclusivity”—that is, “if you come under our umbrella as a lesser adjunct, we will accept you.” This misguided notion of inclusivity extends to other attributes, both ascribed and acquired, that our members bring to our community, be they based on stage of career development, race, ethnicity, gender, religious tradition, and/or sexual orientation. As Professor Ebadi emphasized, “It is important to find those points of commonalities and leave behind those things that separate us.”

In short, in the true spirit of diversity, there is a greater need for the Academy to broaden its range of offerings and to become more welcoming of differences if it genuinely seeks to be a professional home for ALL members—not just for a select few. This reality has prompted me to push for changes in the Academy in this direction. When I was elected to the leadership of the Academy some four years ago, I was surprised that while the Academy had a Statement of Strategic Direction, developed in April 2001 under the presidency of Andy Van de Ven—Andy, I must say this was something that we really needed, and you did a great job—it had never really engaged in long-range planning. To remedy this situation, in the past twelve months we have embarked on an envisioning exercise to project the future direction of the Academy in light of the needs of our members and to discuss ways to better serve these needs. In short, we have now embarked on the why and how of creating a sustainable academic community that all our members can truly call our professional home.

In the August 2004 Board of Governors meeting, Joan Weiner and Jill Kickul, outgoing and incoming chairs of the Teaching Theme Committee, respectively, conducted a two-hour-long exercise on how to enhance the teaching mission within the Academy. On the afternoon of the same day, I led a Board exercise to explore alternative publishing outlets. Many issues and ideas were discussed at these two exercises. In the near future, the Academy will roll out some new programs to better serve the professional needs of our members.

Under the Statement of Strategic Direction, we have articulated our common goal—namely, to create and disseminate knowledge in the area of management. To build and foster a truly sustainable community, however, we must be fully cognizant of the need to accommodate the diverse aspirations and orientations of all of our members in striving to meet that common goal. To quote one of our members, Enrique Nunez, who contributed to the diversity online discussion:

As the premier organization in our industry, I believe the Academy has a responsibility to support nascent scholarly efforts by groups that have been traditionally under-represented in academe. This support should not come as a measure of goodwill, but rather as an acknowledgement by the Academy of a changing society and of the unique contributions of individuals that reflect those changes (Academy of Management, 2003).

Furthermore, to quote Professor Ebadi, we have “to accept that everyone may bring ideas to the fore that may differ. . . . In other words, to value diversity is the first principle of a healthy community.” In a healthy community, she continued, “members could fully express their viewpoints without fear of humiliation.”

The second theme that has been central to my current term of elected office at the Academy of Management and, indeed, to much of my professional life is the need to balance educating the mind with educating the heart—the title, coincidentally, of the half-day-long dialogue I spoke of earlier. Over the course of my involvement with the Academy of Management during the past twenty-seven years, I have been disheartened and saddened on some occasions by how some of us have become so obsessed with career and prospects of career advancement that we have consciously or unconsciously engaged in behav-
ior that shows complete disregard for the codes of conduct that govern us as members of a professional association, as well as disregard for the norms of civility that should guide us in our interactions with one another as members of this large academic community. In other words, have we lost our sense of community? According to Reb Zalman, “Ever since the Renaissance, we have been exalting individualism and lost the meaning of community. That’s the reason why the kibbutz, designed as conscious intentional communities, were established to rekindle the spirit of community.”

This apparent loss of a sense of community may sometimes lead us to undertake actions and to engage in behavior that might be perceived as selfish, self-centered, and sometimes even downright hurtful. To put it differently, have we, in the course of our single-minded pursuit of generating new knowledge—that is, educating the mind—ignored the need to educate the heart? In order to build and create a truly sustainable community, we undoubtedly need to engage in both types of education, because educating the mind alone cannot ensure sustainability, nor can it help us cope with the challenges and opportunities that confront us in our professional and personal lives, many of which involve moral choices. In fact, the wrongdoings in our corporations today can be traced, in part at least, to the past failings of our business schools to place due emphasis on educating the heart to complement the education of the mind.

Here is a summary of the highlights of what the Nobel Peace Prize laureates, Reb Zalman, and a fifth distinguished member of the half-day-long dialogue in late April 2004 had to say on the need to balance educating the mind versus educating the heart. The Dalai Lama lamented that “education alone sometimes does more harm than good. Mere knowledge alone creates higher expectations, some realistic, and some which are not. This can lead to mental unrest.”

In a similar vein, Professor Ebadi referred to the unparalleled advances in technology in the twentieth century that equaled or surpassed the technological innovations collectively made in the preceding nineteen centuries. Despite that fact, she raised the very poignant question of whether the twentieth century was a good one. She noted that the twentieth century witnessed two world wars that took millions of lives. She referred to the continuing local, ethnic, and tribal wars taking place around the world today. She went on to say:

In the seventeenth century, soldiers lined up for battle. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, men simply need to press a button and millions will be destroyed. This shows that intellect and educating the intellect alone are not adequate for human happiness. We need to nurture our hearts as well.

Archbishop Tutu perhaps summed it up best when he asked us to reflect on those individuals who succeeded in making a lasting influence on society. In the case of the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta, another recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, he noted that we refer to her “warm heart”—not her intelligence. In the case of Mahatma Gandhi, Tutu said, “Even though he was a very bright lawyer and had the potential of becoming a brilliant jurist, he is not remembered for his judicial brilliance but for his advocacy of nonviolent rebellion.” In his typical humorous form, Archbishop Tutu remarked that Nelson Mandela is “not even an interesting speaker. Yet people hang on to every single word that he utters,” because his action carries more than his words. In many ways, Archbishop Tutu’s remarks reminded me of the late Ronald Reagan’s farewell address, where he commented on his nickname, the “Great Communicator”:

But I never thought it was my style or the words I used that made a difference; it was the content. I wasn’t a great communicator, but I communicated great things... The greatest [leader] is not necessarily the one who did the greatest things, but one who inspired others to do the greatest things (Reagan, 1989).

According to Archbishop Tutu, in Africa the highest praise that a person can lavish on another is the saying “A person is a person through other persons”—or, to put it differently, “This person has what it takes to be a human being.” In other words, if a person chooses to dehumanize or demean others, that person is really dehumanizing or demeaning him or herself. In the African language, in order to be deemed a worthy human being, that person has to demonstrate “gentleness and compassion.” In my opinion, gentleness and compassion, attributes that can only be developed and fostered through ed-
ucation of the heart, should become as central to our academic family as educating the mind.

I would like to close by borrowing a Coast Salish tradition that Dr. JoAnn Archibald, the fifth member of the dialogue, shared with her fellow panelists and her audience. Dr. Archibald is a member of the First Nations or Aboriginal People in Canada. She received her master’s degree and Ph.D. from my university, Simon Fraser University, and is currently a professor of education at the University of British Columbia. The Coast Salish is one of the First Nations’ tribes in western Canada. According to the Coast Salish people, the way to build a community is to form a circle. In her words, “In the concept of a holistic circle which embraces a policy of inclusion, no one is marginalized.... [Furthermore] there is always room for one more person in a circle.”

I would like you to join me in this Coast Salish tradition. Raise your left palm facing up as a symbol of receiving blessings from above, and your right palm facing down as a symbol of giving back to the earth or repaying the blessings that have been bestowed upon you. Your raised left palm should touch the turned-down palm of the person to your left. As you can see, unfortunately, I do not have anybody to my left and right. If Dr. Archibald were here, she would ask me not to worry, since there is always an elder on either side, even if I do not see him or her. In this way, we are building a sense of community in the Academy where each of us seeks to give back to the association as much as we have received from it.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to serve as president of the Academy.

Postscript

After the presidential luncheon, I received a letter from Zeynep Aycan, one of our members, dated August 28, 2004. She reminded me that the Coast Salish tradition that I used to end the presidential luncheon is very similar to that practiced by the famous whirling dervishes in Turkey. She wrote that the whirling dervishes are

the mystical dancers [that] belong to the Melevi sect of Islam which was founded by Mevlana, one of the great philosophers and founders of Sufism in the thirteenth century Islamic tradition. The Sema Ritual is a ritual of dance and music with lots of symbols. One of the most important symbols is the position of the hands: the right hand is facing up, symbolizing the gifts received from God, and the left hand is facing down, symbolizing giving to the people. The person in the middle is only a humble vessel in this wonderful transaction.

The similarity between the Coast Salish tradition and the Melevi sect of Islam in this regard is yet another indication that the commonalities that bind us together as a community are far stronger than the differences that separate us.

REFERENCES


Rosalie L. Tung is the Ming and Stella Wong Professor of International Business at Simon Fraser University. She was formerly a Wisconsin Distinguished Professor, University of Wisconsin System. She received her Ph.D. from the University of British Columbia. She has been elected as a fellow of the Academy of Management, Academy of International Business, and the Royal Society of Canada. Her current research interests include the use of ex host country nationals in international assignments and the role of culture in partner selection in strategic alliances.