

Academy of Management Learning and Education
Proposal for a Special Issue on
New Histories of Business Schools and How They May Inspire New Futures

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Call for Papers

We might do well to re-examine what we are doing and show the executive judgment and courage necessary to implement radical change (Khurana & Spender 2012: 636).

Business schools are the institutional locus of management learning and education. In recent years, we have gained a greater understanding of how their structures, processes, and power dynamics influence pedagogy and curricula, management theory and research, faculty, students, graduates and society more broadly. We are also witnessing growing research into, and discussion about, the relative lack of innovation in management theory development, research, pedagogy, and curricula (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2012). While there have been a small number of inspirational works that have sought to push us towards changing business schools (Augier and March, 2011; Hassard, 2012; Khurana 2007; Spender, 2016), they have not yet spurred the change we might have hoped for.

One under-explored route to encourage innovation in this regard is examining how our historical understanding of the formation and form of the business school may be limiting change. Histories highlight particular characters and plots but what we do not include, or write out of, history, is just as important as what is written in (Jenkins, 2003). History is constitutive, in that our own interpretations of the past define and shape our present and our future (Wadhvani & Bucheli, 2014). Compared with other stochastic fields of study, histories of management and business are simplistically linear and mono-cultural. This constrains how we see them in the present, and can subsequently limit their future development (Cummings & Bridgman, 2016).

The conventional history of the business school tends to follow the emergence of American business schools: from the founding of the Wharton School in 1881, to the rapid growth of business school enrolment within American universities leading up to the 1950s, to the standardization of the schools after the publication of the Gordon-Howell and Pierson reports in 1959 (Hommel & Thomas, 2014). This history has been crafted over many years and now goes largely unchallenged. But it begs the questions: why is this the story we tell, who gains and loses

from its telling, and what events and people are missing from a narrative that should be inspirational for a broad range of people?

North American business schools have been studied at various points in a straightforward assessment style – what are they do, how could they “improve” (Bossard & Dewhurst, 1931; Gordon & Howell, 1959; Pierson, 1959; Porter & McKibbin, 1988), and also with a more complex analysis of context, history, power, and influence (Engwall, Kipping, Usdiken, 2016; Khurana, 2007; Pettigrew, Corneul, & Hommel, 2014). Work has also been done on the history of European management education (cf. Engwall, 2004; Harker, Caemmerer, & Hynes, 2016; Kieser, 2004; Kipping, Usdiken, & Puig, 2004; Tiratsoo, 2004; Usdiken, 2004), and some have looked at the global South (Cooke & Alcadipani, 2015). We are beginning to see alternative histories of the development of management theory and education (Bridgman, Cummings, & McLaughlin, 2016; Dye, Mills, & Weatherbee, 2005; Hassard, 2012; Peltonen, 2015). However, what about histories of schools of business and commerce from other parts of the world (Asia, Africa, Australasia, South America) in more detail? Or from earlier centuries? Or different examples from North America or Europe that did not survive or later morphed toward the standard form?

This special issue seeks to move things forward by looking differently when we look back. It encourages submissions that explore emerging interests, historical barriers to change, and their interrelationships by focusing on the emergence and development of business schools as complex entities that are interwoven with universities, the business community, government, and civil society. It also seeks submissions that explore how these broader understandings may stimulate innovation in the way we configure business schools and, consequently, how we teach, conduct research, view our profession, and relate to our stakeholders.

In this call for papers, we - professors/educators, researchers/inquirers, sufferers/critics, and aspirational as well as actual change agents - are the organizational actors, and business schools are our reflective historical setting; more importantly, they are our actual environment. We have a unique opportunity to push management theory, research methods, and interdisciplinarity to better understand and, more importantly, to reinvent business school(s) in light of what is socially or personally meaningful. We have contextual richness, personal and professional stakes, and a sense of crisis. Being able to change our practices from within, we are uniquely situated to bring scholarship, formal positioning, and inhabited experience to bear.

Better historical scholarship could, therefore, help us to change ourselves. To engage historical sensibilities and methods, and empirical richness, to push theory and change institutions. As a call for spurring this process we welcome contributions that address the following questions:

1. What people and events of business schools' past have been overlooked by conventional historical narratives?
2. What role could new histories play in debates about how business schools should develop? Can new understandings of the past inspire us to think differently for the future?
3. How can we write reflexive or critical histories of business schools that expose the power and politics of business education and what we teach, or do not teach, students?

4. Are histories being used within business schools or other organizations, such as accreditation bodies, academies and societies, to perpetuate traditional structures and/or norms? Why and to what effect?
5. What are the 'invented traditions' that support the institution of business schools and what purpose were they invented to serve?
6. What are the stories of the development of business education outside of North America or prior to the late 19th century? Are these different or the same as current norms? How, why, and what can we learn from these alternative histories?
7. How has history traditionally been taught in business schools? What are the positive and limiting effects of this pedagogy? How could we teach history differently?
8. Why should business school students learn more (or less) history? Or learn it differently?

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