



## EDITORIAL

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Special Issue

### **Modern Management Pedagogies and the Big Business of Business Education**

*Management education has the potential to play a vital role in today's dynamic business environment. Management degrees continue to experience strong enrolments at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level. However, despite, or perhaps as a result of this popularity, management educators face a number of challenges associated with the changing demographics of the student cohort and the large size of classes. Responding to these challenges has resulted in the need for management educators to adopt innovative teaching strategies.*

*This special issue of the Journal of Learning Design considers a range of pedagogical innovations and reflections that are focussed on these challenges and what they mean for the ways management education is done in and beyond the classroom.*

#### ***This issue***

In the introduction to *The Routledge Companion to Reinventing Management Education*, Timon Beyes, Chris Steyaert and Martin Parker (2016) provocatively ask "At a time when a pervasive performance culture encourages scholars [...] to invest their energies in their research profiles [...] why bother to focus on teaching, learning and education?" (p 1). This is a critical question for all academics but does seem to be an issue of particular relevance to those in management education – especially for scholars whose strengths reside in their teaching as much, if not more than, their research. Management education has the potential to play a vital role in today's dynamic business environment. However, some have questioned the very nature of what is taught in business schools and whether the overt emphasis on the employability value of a business degree has shut out the potential to promote "management as a profession to be pursued out of a sense of intrinsic interest or even service" (Pfeffer & Fong, 2004, p. 1501) or which connects at a more than superficial level with ideas of sustainability, managerial ethics and social responsibility (Schweigert, 2016). In part, these critiques have been a response to the need for business programs to reconsider their value proposition, purpose, positioning and program design (Datar, Garvin, & Cullen, 2011). Central to these concerns are questions around what we teach, who we teach and how we teach (Dyllick, 2015).

This special issue of the *Journal of Learning Design*, through five papers, will consider a range of teaching practices and reflections that are focussed on these very questions and what they mean for the ways management education is done in and beyond the classroom. This editorial positions the contributions to this issue in the context of the broader challenges and opportunities facing management education.

### ***Meeting the challenges of teaching and engaging large management classes***

Business schools account for large numbers of student enrolments in many higher education institutions and there has been an increase in students choosing to undertake a double degree which features a business degree to enhance employability and business acumen<sup>1</sup>. As a result, it is not unusual to find large classes (>150 students) within the management offering, with first year management units, at times, reaching class sizes in excess of 1000 enrolments each semester in the Australian higher education sector. The large size of first year management classes poses a number of engagement challenges for teaching staff which range from the physical nature of the teaching space, the diversity in student demographics, the technology available to assist student engagement, and class timetabling.

The first paper in this special issue takes up the theme of student engagement in large classes. Using Giddens' (1979) structuration theory and reflections on their own lived experience as teachers of large first year classes, **Mervyn Morris** and **Jane Tsakissiris** examine how the context of face-to-face classes shape activities, student behaviours and responses to these activities, and student learning outcomes. Their contribution foregrounds the importance of context in the learning experience.

In the second paper in this issue, **Sukanlaya Sawang**, **Peter O'Connor** and **Muhammad Ali's** contribution focusses on increasing student engagement in a large class using technology. Focussing on the potential for the use of KeyPads to enhance student engagement in a large classroom, this study found that students with a positive attitude toward the use of KeyPads or who felt a social pressure to use KeyPads were more likely to intend to use KeyPads. They further found that student intention to use KeyPads was a moderate positive predictor of actual Keypad use and that those who used KeyPads tended to be more engaged by the lecture than those who did not. This study provides academics and university management with some useful insights into the impact of technology on the level of student engagement and suggests the use of interactive technologies like KeyPads can lead to higher levels of student engagement by helping students to move from being passive listeners to active thinkers.

### ***Meeting the challenges of online education***

More and more learning is taking place outside of the classroom environment and there has been a sharp increase in the adoption of blended and online learning (ABDC, 2014). Innovation in higher education pedagogy is lagging somewhat behind technological change and our capacity to respond to change. Indeed, our students are sometimes better than us at looking at tools and technologies differently and more innovatively and identifying new ways of learning. Digital natives are typically far more developed than the current academic workforce, making the divide between student expectations and academic capabilities a widening gap.

The online learning environment can also present challenges for many academic staff who increasingly are required to develop and exercise higher levels of technological competency, digital literacy and pedagogical proficiency on top of their regular academic workload. The third paper in this special issue by **Jenna Gillett-Swan** reminds us that while technological advancements may have increased the diversity of students who can now participate in higher education and have fundamentally changed the ways that students choose to engage with their learning, we must always be cognisant of the impact of delivery decisions on students. Gillett-Swan explores the tensions associated with the widespread adoption of blended learning and flexible delivery modes. She notes that students electing to study externally often face a number of barriers to their full participation in coursework units which may not be experienced by those engaging in these same units via face-to-face or blended enrolment modes. In particular, external students may experience isolation. The barriers to participation appear particularly evident in group-work activities. Drawing on reflections of several years of facilitating student learning online, this paper provides a critical commentary on some of the challenges faced by external students and the implications of an increasingly online delivery framework for teaching practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Double degrees are undergraduate courses involving two bachelor degrees that are studied concomitantly. In most Australian universities the structure of a double degree program typically do not involve formal integration of content, skills or teaching between the two degree discipline areas (Russell, Dolnicar, & Ayoub, 2007).

### ***New approaches to management education***

It has been suggested that business schools need to undergo a fundamental transformation in the way that they promote their degrees and what they teach if “they want to be a provider of solutions to the crises of responsibility and sustainability ... [and to] keep and regain their legitimacy” (Dyllick, 2015, p. 16) and to “serve society by providing responsible leadership for a sustainable world” (Muff, 2013, p. 487). In particular, Muff (2013) challenges the:

... management school of the future [to] begin with its own internal transformation. A school that embraces the vision will walk its talk in a transparent and inclusive manner, leading by example through being the change it wishes to progress. (p. 502)

This change necessarily includes transforming teaching and learning practices. Management education is changing in response to external demands and societal changes and education for sustainability is an increasingly common feature of management education required by many accrediting bodies. A key example of this can be seen in the adoption of the Principles of Responsible Management Education by many Australian business schools “to inspire and champion responsible management education” (United Nations Global Compact Office, 2008, p. 2).

The fourth paper in this issue by **Paul Davidson**, **Jane Tsakissiris** and **Yuanyuan Guo** reports on an international comparison of the delivery and design of Human Resource Management education in Australia and China. The authors apply an open systems perspective to argue the importance of establishing productive relationships between academia, professional associations, regulators and industry to support the creation of a learning environment that supports the development of “work-ready” human resources graduates. A comparison of the Australian and Chinese curricula indicates similarities in terms of approximate programme weightings of general business units, core human resource management units, and elective units. They suggest that curriculum design needs take into account the need to remain research-based academically, yet industry-focused, in the context of an international workplace; a key to this is collaboration.

In the fifth and final paper of this special issue, **Judy Matthews** and **Cara Wrigley** advance the valuable contribution that design thinking is making to business and management education. They argue that this can be evidenced by the increasing number of higher education programs that teach design thinking to business students, managers and executives. However, as they point out, the multiple definitions of design thinking and the range of perspectives associated with it have created confusion about potential pathways. They explore the potential for design and design thinking to influence higher education business programs and present potential directions for management education around four distinct educational approaches: human centred innovation, integrative thinking, design management, and design as strategy.

Management education has much to offer and learn from other disciplines. The contributions to this special issue show a commitment by the authors to advancing effective pedagogy in management education and, between them, they engage with all of eight categories of innovative pedagogical practice identified by Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada and Freeman (2014) and the majority of the elements which comprise them (Figure 1).

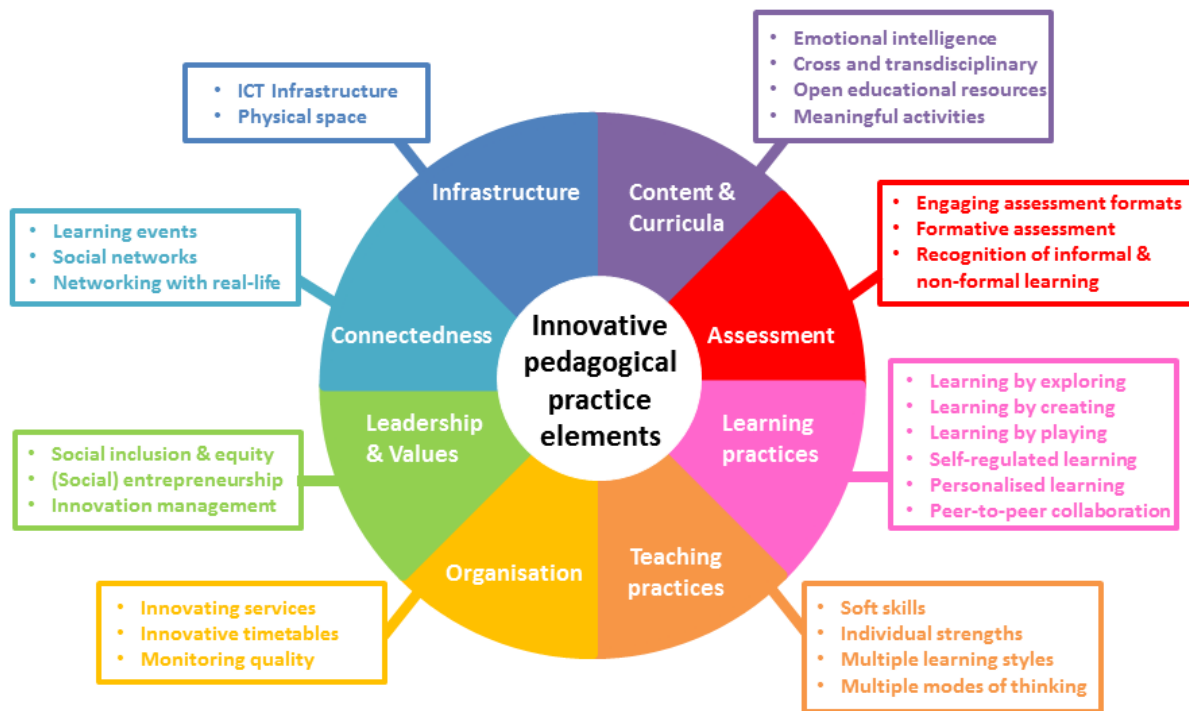


Figure 1. Elements of good pedagogical practice (adapted from Johnson et al., 2014)

Effective management education needs to engage with a range of pedagogical practice elements to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved and students are engaged in their learning. However, while all the papers in this special issue engage with student-centred pedagogy, it should be recognised that there is a competing force that promotes administrative performance indicators of student satisfaction and course attractiveness above sound pedagogy. Restricting teaching performance indicators to input from a single stakeholder group (students) and the use of a single quantitative measure is reductive and may have perverse outcomes, particularly given such assessments are known to be a biased and unreliable indicator of teaching quality (Boring, Ottoboni, & Stark, 2016). There is widespread recognition that effective evaluation of teaching and curriculum needs to draw on evidence from a number of sources (Alderman, Towers, & Bannah, 2012) as an over-reliance on post-experience student survey data to evaluate teaching practice and performance is both dangerous and counter to any ambition to build confidence and capability (Cathcart, Greer, & Neale, 2014). Indeed, the increasing emphasis on student satisfaction and employability outcomes as the unitary measures through which teaching excellence is demonstrated or valued does not necessarily promote or facilitate innovation or risk-taking behaviours. Instead, these kinds of metrological regimes risk reducing human endeavour into inputs and outputs, metrics or scores (Barry, 2002) which may elevate the pursuit of metrics above all else as they can signal that it is not necessary to contribute beyond what is measurable. It is imperative that as management educators, we do not lose sight of what is most important.

This special issue and its contributions are focussed toward returning the management education conversation back to what is important—good pedagogy that enhances student learning and values reflective practice. We commend its contributions to you.

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