

Call for Papers

Special issue on “Charting a New Territory: Practitioner-Scholarship in Action”

Engaged Management ReView (<http://emr.case.edu/>)

The classical model of management scholarship relies primarily on the ‘pipeline’ model to close the gap between academia and practice. The model expects that academic results will have an effect on practice, if scholars just smoothly and appropriately package and communicate their research results to relevant practitioner audiences. The knowledge flow is mainly one directional: interactions between scholars and practitioners follow the idea of a knowledge conduit which originates from academic discovery and delivers it for practical application through appropriate packaging. Debates around the effectiveness of the pipeline model—from scholar to practitioner—have consequently focused on the effects and quality of transfer mechanisms: how to appropriately package academic knowledge products (such as genres, writing styles, relevant forms of synthesizing research knowledge), the choice of delivery mechanisms (journals, social media), how to identify welcoming practitioner audiences (such as identification of communities of practice, and mechanisms for identifying and synthesizing knowledge for practical use in such settings). These mechanisms have mainly been adopted from other established academic fields like medicine (Estabrooks et al 2003, Innvaer et al 2002), or psychology (Baughmann et al 2011; Bellamy et al 2013), and have dominated reviews of the management scholarship impact (Mohrman et al 2011).

Despite nearly 100 years of attempts to close the gap, many feel that the pipeline model has not effectively advanced ways in which academic scholarship can influence and infiltrate practice. To the contrary, many still claim that academic research lives in its ivory tower and fails to contribute in addressing relevant research problems. Moreover, such claims have not decreased but increased during the recent years (Mohrman et al 2011). At most, there is positive evidence of how to improve ways of synthesizing and using scientific evidence while addressing specific managerial decision problems such as hiring decisions or ways of incentivizing employees (Rousseau 2006).

Therefore, over time the pipeline model has been augmented and expanded with the idea of ‘engaged’ scholarship. This model argues for the importance of leveraging insights from academic inquiry to management practice by seeking to integrate practitioner knowledge and insight during the problem identification stage. Management scholars are therefore expected to collaborate through engaged scholarship inquiry with management practitioners by identifying and addressing pressing business

problems while formulating at the same time valid academic knowledge. The 'engaged' model underlies most research within early socio-technical movement such as the work by Tavistock institute (Trist 1981), multiple calls for the validity of action research (Susman and Evered 1978), or recent ideas around engaged management scholarship (van de Ven 2007, Bartunek and Ryles 2014).

In the engaged model the flow of knowledge is bi-directional: the practice provides the impetus, direction and data to the research process while scholars contribute by providing theoretical models and explanations and by promoting rigorous ways of collecting and analyzing evidence. The model forms a significant advancement in articulating usable knowledge that is more salient for the business context. It recognizes the value of mutual interaction and participation during inquiry and seeks complementary effects by integrating practitioners' experience and needs with scholar's knowledge and inquiring skills (Mohrman et al 2011).

However, significant limitations remain in the engaged model in how academic knowledge fuses with practice. In this model both sides still assume traditional and polarized roles: practitioners focus on needs, problems and experience, and scholars pursue theory building and related method. The institutional positions with regard to producing or consuming knowledge go unchanged. Practitioners and scholars live in their separate communities and each party carries a distinct and separate identity during interactions. Accordingly, the engaged model does not really address long term issues related to generating absorptive capacity (Cohen and Levinthal 1990) within the business community to absorb generated knowledge nor the challenges how the scientific knowledge is truly integrated into management action.

Therefore, during the last 20 years another augmented model has started to take shape, called 'practitioner-scholarship' model. Most recent efforts at implementing practitioner-scholarship model originate from the innovative efforts to create new types of interdisciplinary and problem focused executive Doctoral programs (most often called Executive DBAs though several other titles are used for such doctorates)¹. The purpose of these executive doctoral programs is to prepare their graduates to operate in complex managerial settings and have a lasting impact on management cognition and action by engaging them in problem driven research to address specific identified research problems by the managers themselves. The model advocates creating a new breed of 'practitioner scholars' who can work at the 'liminal' space between the academic and the practitioner world.

The practitioner-scholarship model augments and expands the impact of academic scholarship in several ways. It approaches managerial action as a situation where scholarly skills and competencies can strongly contribute to identifying and addressing complex managerial problems and executing related decision situations. Such skills cover identification and use of evidence and associated inferences (both qualitative and quantitative inference skills), understanding broadly threats to valid inference (e.g. research designs), and the value of using of competing theories and models to identify problems, explain situations and choose alternative courses of action. The scholarly skills also cover investments in absorptive capacity: ability to search for and find relevant research results, absorb and assimilate it, and translate it to management action.

The practitioner-scholarship model is partly founded on the extended idea of evidence-based management- the specific pillar of the pipeline model that advances the solution of the packaging

¹ See <http://www.executivedba.org/>

² See <http://weatherhead.case.edu/degrees/doctorate/doctor-management/>

problem (Rousseau 2006)- as it focuses on promoting better use and search for scientific evidence. Therefore, the model seeks to build the essential absorptive skills among managers to search, interpret and assimilate academic research knowledge. The practitioner-scholarship model is influenced also by the engaged model – it extends its partnership idea by engaging managers to research their lived problems jointly with management scholars during and after the program as to produce new management knowledge (Aram and Salipante 2003).

The practitioner-scholarship model, however, radically differs from the previous bridging models. It formulates new ways of dividing roles and identities during the research process: both sides of the practice-academia divide now participate *jointly in creating new academic knowledge*- the collaboration draws now on extensive common ground- a large and extensive overlap of cognitive skills, inquiry responsibilities and associated skills. This changes significantly the dynamics of knowledge identification and generation to one of joint search and collaboration of evidence and explanations. The practitioner-scholarship model has also a radically different axiological element: the promise of the value of looking at and approaching any management practice as a stream of events, which can be subjected to rigorous scholarly inquiry by the manager for improved action. The whole field of management is viewed as a large living laboratory. This calls for new ways of thinking about the epistemic and axiological foundations of management scholarship.

The oldest of these programs (Case Western Reserve Doctor of Management Program)² is now over 20 years old. At the same time, most of the programs in this new educational arena are just starting to produce graduates. So, it is time to evaluate the practical role and impact of such programs in promoting practitioner scholarship, critically reflect how to characterize and evaluate it, and, specifically address research challenges associated in understanding the impacts of this new type of ‘practitioner-scholarship’.

The special issue of Engaged Management ReView titled “Charting a New Territory: Practitioner-Scholarship in Action” seeks to address these challenges. Specifically, the aim of the special issue is to advance studies of the epistemology and nature of practitioner-scholarship, identify and discuss the specific roles and functions the new form of management scholarship can play in the management field, identify theoretical models that capture cognitive, affective and axiological dimensions of practitioner scholarship, and review the nature and foundations of related ‘management knowledge’. We also seek contributions towards educational models that can advance practitioner-scholarship skills. The special issue is open to both empirical research and theoretical essays on the following topics (not excluding other relevant contributions):

- Theories and models of explaining practice impacts of management research
- Epistemological and axiological foundations of practitioner scholarship
- Evaluating practitioner scholarship and dimensions of practitioner scholarship
- Interventions and models to engage in practitioner scholarship in managerial settings
- Identity and practice of practitioner scholarship
- Changing epistemology of management practice and where practitioner scholarship fits
- Case studies and practice reports of engaging in practitioner scholarship
- Educational models that advance practitioner scholarship

² See <http://weatherhead.case.edu/degrees/doctorate/doctor-management/>

Submissions should follow general guidelines for manuscript submissions in Engaged Management ReView. The submitted manuscripts can follow essay, empirical research or translation paper genres. Submissions need to be made through the EMR website: <http://emr.case.edu/>. Also, shorter research notes (up to 4000 words) written in the form of essays around specific aspects of practitioner-scholarship are welcome. The special issue will be managed by EIC of Engaged Management ReView, and the review board of the special issue will include: Jean Bartunek, Richard Boyatzis, Richard Boland, Dipankar Chakravarti, David Cooperrider, Lars Mathiasen, Emma Parry, Denise Rousseau, Paul Salipante and Pierre Volle.

Special Issue Schedule:

Submission Deadline: February 26, 2017

Review Finished: May 27, 2017

Final Submissions Due: August 19, 2017

References

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