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Editor's Introduction

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Editor's Introduction

The search for a revised paradigm of management research is definitely on!

Over the last 10 years there have been many attempts on both sides of the Atlantic to explore the division between management theory and management practice, with the aim of establishing a 'relevant' management research, rigorously pursued. More recently discussions have focused on conceptions of management research as 'explanatory' science as opposed to 'design' science. Briefly, whereas the former emphasizes the production of 'normal science', pursuing understanding, explanation and the production of formal laws as output, the latter is more appropriate for the professional sciences, delivering as research product, technological rules (i.e. 'what works, for whom in which circumstances').

Voronov's paper attends to this debate. It constitutes an intriguing essay bringing together traditionally disparate fields which have been situated on either side of the above argument.

He establishes the argument by dealing with 'archetypal' approaches to both critical management studies (CMS) and organizational development (OD). His exploration of the detail and subtleties of both positions does just enough to avoid reification and 'straw man' critiques, enabling him to identify areas of significant common interest and the main shared preoccupations of both camps, namely that both have a focus on change, an emancipatory interest and both have been marginalized in the USA, although this is less so in Europe.

In this sense, both constitute non-mainstream aspects of business and management work. But this fact does not detract from the contribution to the debate for the main thesis in the article turns on the issue of the preoccupation with power as a concept central to both fields. The call is for an extended conversation across the sub-fields which, it is argued, can only be of benefit if contributors from each area each can be heard by the other. Creating synthesis by creating dialogue concerning the twin key concepts of power and change will benefit our understanding of traditional academic theory and offer the possibility of taking a fresh look at the waves of change with which practice has to cope. In this sense the aim to influence both theory and practice is important as a potential outcome.

As we search for fresh ideas, my view is that although Voronov has not produced the definitive statement, the article is thought provoking and refreshingly radical at a time when new ideas are at a premium.

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