

3-1-2013

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Recommended Citation

Giapponi, Catherine C. (2013) "Four Articles to Stimulate Renewal in Management Education," *Organization Management Journal*: Vol. 10: Iss. 1, Article 4.
Available at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/omj/vol10/iss1/4>

TEACHING & LEARNING

Four Articles to Stimulate Renewal in Management Education

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In this issue we are publishing an interesting mix of articles that explore different facets of teaching and learning. Through these four articles, we explore issues related to *what* we teach, *how* we teach it, and methods for evaluating the effectiveness of our teaching. In the first article, Robert L. Laud and Matthew S. Johnson examine *what* we teach in traditional MBA (master of business administration) programs. As the authors note, a debate over the relevancy of the traditional MBA curriculum has persisted for decades. For their article “Progress and Regress in the MBA Curriculum: The Career and Practice Skills Gap,” the authors examined MBA curricula and identified deficiencies based on interviews with business executives. The study found that executives valued soft skills as necessary for executive advancement. Yet these skills have had insufficient emphasis in MBA curricula. The authors contend that MBA curricula reform that provides greater emphasis on behavioral skill education is necessary to meet the needs of students, rising executives, and the business community. Why has this reform not occurred? While the authors identify and assess the structural and institutional resistance to change, they offer thought-provoking recommendations.

The second article, “A Manager’s Actions? An Exercise for Exploring Sexual Harassment,” written by David E. Desplaces and John R. Ogilvie, moves us away from broad curricular issues and brings us inside the classroom. Through an exercise based on a case scenario in a retail setting, the authors provide an opportunity to engage students in an exploration of sexual harassment from multiple perspectives, with particular emphasis on behavioral and legal dimensions. The exercise also provides an opportunity for student self-reflection as they identify and confront their own assumptions and perceptions related to the issue of sexual harassment. The third article, written by Kathleen J. Barnes and George E. Smith, is also

based on an experiential approach to learning. Unlike the previous classroom exercise, “Beyond the Textbook: An Approach to Facilitating Student Understanding of Organizational Culture in Organizations” engages students in a semester-long project. Students gain insight into the concept of organizational culture by gaining access to an organization and conducting a multi-method-based cultural analysis. Student groups work collaboratively to conduct the cultural assessments through direct interaction with organizational members. Both articles provide the readers with creative approaches to *how* we teach and afford students the opportunity to penetrate deeper levels of understanding and meaning through practical real-world applications of management concepts.

Readers of the Teaching & Learning section of *OMJ* are interested not only in developing new and innovative teaching techniques, such as the two experiential approaches described in the first two articles, but also in improving teaching effectiveness.

Finally, the fourth article examines how we evaluate *what* we are teaching and *how* we teach it. Linda R. Martin, Robert Dennehy, and Sandra Morgan explore issues related to the reliability of traditional instruments that assess teaching effectiveness and propose an innovative alternative. In “Unreliability in Student Evaluation of Teaching Questionnaires: Focus Groups as an Alternative Approach,” the authors review the inconsistent and conflicting research on the validity of student evaluation of teacher questionnaires (SET). As these evaluations are used both for appraisals in making tenure, promotion, and merit pay decisions and for the formative purpose of improving teaching effectiveness, the pursuit of reliable instruments is an important goal. Martin et al. propose the use of focus groups as a replacement for or supplement to the traditional student questionnaires. Recognizing implementation issues and potential institutional constraints related to a focus-group approach to teaching evaluation, the authors propose an interesting and thought-provoking alternative to traditional teaching assessments.

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The four articles take us through classroom teaching exercises, challenge the wisdom of the MBA curriculum in preparing our graduate business students for executive advancement, and stimulate thought on how to better assess our teaching and student learning to improve teaching effectiveness. It seems fit-

ting that the articles in the Teaching & Learning section of the spring issue of *OMJ* offer innovative ideas, challenge the status quo, and stimulate thinking about renewal in management education.