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TEACHING & LEARNING

Context and Content: Four Ways to Learn about Management Education

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Over 20 years ago, Barbara Rogoff (1990) wrote that individual thinking processes relate to the cultural context and social interactions that provide guidance, support, direction, challenge, and impetus for development. Her book examined how children's thinking is stretched by the immediate social contexts of problem solving and collaboration with others but it can certainly be argued that our ongoing learning occurs in the same way. The ability to see social context as part of the learning process is a key part of understanding continuing developments in management education. With this in mind, the Teaching & Learning Section is pleased to present four strong manuscripts on a variety of topics. The first three articles are experiential exercises with the capacity to make significant impact in our classroom work. The fourth draws on concepts from the sociology of the professions, including jurisdiction, professional identity, and characteristics of professional work to offer a framework for refocusing graduate business education. A fuller description of the articles follows.

“Cultural Identity and Ethical Decision Making: An Experiential Exercise” by Cheryl Tromley, Cathy Giapponi, and Roselie McDevitt uses national culture as an organizing theme to understand ethical decision-making. The article offers a case study and role-playing exercise that encourages learners to absorb the norms of two fictional cultures in order to understand the business decisions of a furniture manufacturer trying to maintain its supply chain in a sustainable manner. The case has interesting context of interpersonal and cultural dynamics and allows participants to see the role national culture plays in ethical reasoning and the resolution of ethical conflicts. This is a powerful message as we see the ways corporate social responsibility plays out in a global economy.

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The second experiential exercise, “A Case of Ability and Disability: What Managers Must Know about the ADA” by Elizabeth Corrigan and Carol Cirka provides an opportunity to develop and enrich student understanding of the employment of persons with disabilities. The exercise improves student knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act but extends the learning by helping to dispel myths that can influence employee hiring decisions. Student teams work on the selection of an entry-level accountant from among a group of applicants that includes candidates with disabilities. This gives them the opportunity to consider disability in making an employment decision. One of the strengths of the exercise is that it explores the implications of reasonable accommodation while considering *disability* in the context of *employee ability*. It builds thinking agility and widens the context of employment decision making. This important perspective will serve students well as they aspire to be responsible managers making hiring decisions with an increasingly diverse workforce.

In the third article, we take a slight turn towards strategic thinking with “Pizza, Pizza, Pizza: A Competitive Strategy Exercise” by Norman T. Sheehan. Sheehan describes an engaging experiential exercise applicable to any course discussing aspects of organizational strategy. The exercise asks student groups to analyze competitive strategies for several pizza delivery firms, using a variety of business decision tools (e.g. strategy canvas, value curves, and Judo strategy). The objective is to formulate new competitive strategies based on comparative analysis. In addition to engaging student groups in a multitude of strategic management concepts, one of the advantages of this exercise is the direct use of the “Red Queen Effect” which suggests that competitive moves from one firm invite more aggressive competition from competing firms (Derfus et al., 2008). In our current business environment, a better understanding of the threats and opportunities of aggressive competition is a welcome enhancement to management education and the thought processes of our business students.

The experiential exercises published in this issue of the Teaching & Learning Section are designed to enhance student learning through experience, action, and reflection. However, the authors of the fourth article examine management education from a broad epistemological and pedagogical perspective. Written by Mark Somers, Katia Passerini, Annaleena Parhankangas, and Jose Casal, "Management Education and the Professions" identifies the challenges posed by a perceived disconnection between graduate school management education and management practice. In particular, the authors identify criticisms of the pedagogy-practice gap related to the student lack of understanding of the *process of managing*. Drawing on concepts from the sociology of the professions, including jurisdiction, professional identity, and characteristics of professional work, the authors offer a framework for refocusing graduate business education. We are confident that this thought-provoking article will stimulate debate over the suitability of the professional model in management education. Our assumptions

of cultural context and social interaction will also be part of the conversation as we try to tease out how management education must change to keep pace with a rapidly expanding global perspective.

Finally, in the manner of learning as a function of social context, this introduction is a collaboration of three current and former editors of the Teaching & Learning Section. It was a pleasure to work on this project with my colleagues Cathy Giapponi and Barbara Ritter. We hope that *OMJ* readers will be stimulated by these articles and share their learning with their students.

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