

Introduction: And Now for Something Completely Different—Business School Envy?

From its inception, *AMLE* has had a history of articles that critique and challenge the practices of business schools and those in their employ. These pieces have addressed issues such as our impact on students and organizational practice (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010; Donaldson, 2002; Ghoshal, 2005; McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2006; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002), our male-oriented educational cultures (Kelan & Jones, 2010; Simpson, 2006); the completeness and alignment of our curriculum (Navarro, 2008; Rousseau & McCarthy, 2007; Rubin & Dierdorff, 2009; Starkey & Tempest, 2009); our readiness for managing our own changing organizational environments (Friga, Bettis, & Sullivan, 2003; Mitchell, 2007; Seers, 2007); and our increasing emphasis on rankings, either those for our schools (Gioia & Corley, 2002; Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2008; Trank & Rynes, 2003), or of our individual scholarly performance (Adler & Harzing, 2009; Giacalone, 2009; Ozbilgin, 2009). Although the challenges raised by these articles are by no means unwarranted, after reading article after article that questions how well we serve our constituents, position our institutions, and evaluate ourselves, a reader might begin to wonder whether business schools and their inhabitants can do anything well. Such a focus on our shortcomings certainly could be a contributor to faculty cynicism (Bedeian, 2007), and an increasing discomfort for our students to be identified as “managers” (Brocklehurst, Grey, & Sturdy, 2010).

Subsequently and partially in response to such articles, we are seeing the beginnings of a countermovement of work that presents business schools as at least neutral and even positive contributors to our students and society. Neubaum and colleagues’ (2009) study that found no differences in moral philosophies of novice and senior business students or nonbusiness students provided hope that we are not adversely affecting our students through our curricula or teaching practices. By arguing their potential as identity workspaces, Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2010) presented a case for business schools as a source of stable identity for managers in fluid organizational settings and as a provider of opportunities for managers to create new identities for themselves. Although small steps, these contributions help build a foundation for extolling some of the positive aspects of business schools.

This issue’s Exemplary Contribution takes the case for celebrating the work of business schools and their adherents to another level. In a spirited piece that reflects their enthusiasm for the work that we do, Mike Peng and Greg Dess not only challenge the notion that management scholarship is deficient, but argue that in fact the systems and assessment mechanisms presently in place to evaluate the worth of our publications serve a positive role in motivating us to produce better work than what we might have otherwise. Using an analogy of the Olympics and its participants to reflect business schools and faculty, Peng and Dess contend that the pursuit of excellent scholarship is what allowed business schools to advance beyond trade school status. They note that relevance certainly is possible as one pursues scholarly excellence, but it may not be immediate or based upon a single article. As we pursue excellence in scholarship, we may well produce streams of research that demonstrate relevance or become relevant by bringing the fruits of such research to frame the perspectives of aspiring managers through our teaching. They then extend the Olympic analogy to argue that relatively narrow lists ranking institutions or journals are appropriate because such lists function to focus the attention of scholars and encourage excellence in our work. Extending these ideas specifically to issues of learning and education, Peng and Dess contend that pursuing such excellence in our own work also may make us more likely to spur our students toward excellence in theirs.

When concluding their article, Peng and Dess challenge a tendency for business and management scholars to be apologetic regarding their work or position within the university. They note that students, emerging scholars, and even other disciplines often are attracted to us and want to be involved in what we do. Therefore, perhaps “business school envy” rather than perceptions of inferiority may more accurately describe our position in the academy. Although those positions likely will draw strong reactions from those both within and outside business schools, such sentiments certainly reflect a more positive orientation to our endeavor than many of us often encounter. So regardless of whether you are a “medalist” in our corner of the world, Peng and Dess applaud your

efforts to pursue excellence in your research and encourage you to take pride in your work.

By no means does this Exemplary Contribution signal an end to *AMLE's* role as a venue for us to examine ourselves and our practices. In fact, it would be surprising if this article doesn't inspire others to write such pieces. However, what it does indicate is that thoughtful, well-reasoned essays, conceptually oriented manuscripts, and well-grounded and conducted studies that happen to argue or find that business schools and its members may serve good purposes or do at least some things particularly well also are welcome here. Although not all may agree with their conclusions, we hope that Peng and Dess's ideas will leave you stimulated, provoked, and more motivated to pursue excellence in your own research.

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