The university has an important position in society as a source of social criticism, a positioning that contributes to the healthy functioning of a democratic political system. Although there are pressures on business schools that make it difficult for them to affirm this civic mission, there are also conditions of possibility.

This paper draws on Laclau and Mouffe’s concept of a radical and plural democracy to construct a positive role for management academics as critics who extend the boundaries of public debate. Laclau and Mouffe’s project of a radical and plural democracy attempts to bridge the divide between modernism and postmodernism, by defending the political content of the Enlightenment, whilst abandoning its epistemological foundations of the sovereign individual and reason.

Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe’s preoccupation with articulating a new political direction for left politics, I locate a position for the critically-inclined business school academic between the modernist positions of Weber and Mills and the postmodern positions of Bauman and Foucault. The insights of postmodernism are useful for deconstructing the modern conception of the intellectual, but they go too far by abandoning the notion of a politicised role for university faculty connected to a coherent political project. Business school academics can appeal to concepts such as justice, fairness and rights, but in the knowledge that these concepts are the product of political struggle, rather than essential, natural entities whose meaning is secure for all time. They can continue to ‘legislate’ but without the claims to universality inherent in modernist conceptions of the intellectual. The concept of ‘radical and plural democracy’ is a ‘horizon’ that can guide political activity by academics without an appeal to foundations. Far from breeding nihilism and ‘anti-politics’, the insights of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory demonstrate the primacy of politics and the vital role that business school faculty can play as a force for social change.
Universities in the West have long sustained the ideal that their most talented students should act as critical commentators on the societies in which they live. That the graduates of universities should ‘attempt to understand the world, to contemplate and to analyse its values’ (Robbins, 1966, p.5) has underpinned the rationale for higher education as much as the need to produce skilled administrators, bureaucrats and technicians. The authors of this paper note that this critical function within universities and society is in danger of losing its edge in an increasingly commoditised system of higher education unless it can be ‘embedded’ in some way within an established, yet dynamic, discipline or set of disciplines.

The authors propose that marketing education may well be in a position to perform this critical role both within and outside the university for several reasons. Firstly, the pervasiveness of ‘marketing’ and marketing professionals in virtually every sector of society today opens up a space for social critique which should begin in our universities. Secondly, the decline in popularity and prestige of the traditional disciplines such as literature, philosophy and sociology in Western universities has coincided with the rise in the fortunes of ‘marketing’ in management and business schools in the U.S. and Europe since the 1950s and 60s. Related to this development is the emergence of a situation where researchers and scholars from these established disciplines are increasingly attracted to, and work in, marketing education, bringing with them a broad humanist background, expertise in law, accounting and economics and specialist training in multidisciplinary critique.

To develop our argument, we explore the paradigmatic and institutional changes in the field of marketing education in the U.K. and Sweden. Finally, the implications for a radical rethinking of research and practice are discussed.
This paper examines the idea of the civic university as a crucial institution within contemporary understandings of democracy. Ralf Dahrendorf (1990) argues that democracy is guaranteed by strong independent public institutions, which by their very autonomy act as a brake upon the powers of centralist governments. With the growing emphasis upon instrumental reason and business models, however, has come the diminution of the civic university’s independence and its role as the institutional space for critical reason per se. Universities and academics are now criticised by governments, research funding agencies and business when they produce work that is imagined to have little immediate practical usefulness and which is not expressed in what is seen as clear accessible language. Drawing upon an in-depth qualitative case study of a management research programme, this paper examines the micro-practices of the ‘research utilisation’, and the ‘what works’ agenda. In particular, it focuses on the discourse of intelligibility that underpinned these practices, and the ways in which this discourse was mobilised by different actors within the programme: funding bodies, university management, practitioners, researchers, and administrative staff across several critical incidents. Circling around the notion of the ‘overly-theoretical,’ these practices created what the call for papers calls ‘dividing practices’ - binaries of practical/theoretical; useful/political; quantitative/qualitative; real-world/biased; accessible/impenetrable; common sense/ivory tower and importantly, produced already decided upon imagined readers, uses and relevances. Drawing upon the work of cultural theorist Michael Warner, the paper explores what kinds of publics are brought ‘into being’ through such discourse and practices, and which publics are sidelined (2002: 129). The paper concludes that increasingly universities themselves are complicit with advocating these ‘measures of relevance, applicability…[and] accessibility’ (Brown 2001: 121) and that instead they should be promoting the importance of ‘useless knowledge’ (Strathern, 2006), ‘disengaged contemplation’ (Rabate, 2002) and ‘opaque writing’ (Warner, 2002). These, the
paper argues, are essential to critical thinking, which underpin the independence of the university as a civic institution and the creation of counter-publics e.g feminist, postcolonialist and queer publics; and alternative futures within civil society.

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Management knowledge as an academic pursuit is young in New Zealand relative to its primary origins in the United States. A brief consideration of developments in Australia, the UK, and the USA provide some context (Stablein & Frost, 2004). The New Zealand experience contrasts with all of these. In the United States the emergence of the modern business school was driven by the critiques and funding of the Ford Foundation (Gordon & Howell, 1959) and Carnegie Foundation (Pierson, 1959). In both Britain (Locke, 1989) and Australia (Byrt, 1989), the introduction of the American business school model was a central government initiative. In New Zealand, the introduction depended on local initiatives at each of the universities. I trace the shift in knowledge dissemination from workplace to professional associations in the 1930s to the university classroom in the 1960s relying on business school histories (Cowan, 1988) and professional association histories (Beaglehole, 2004).

Next, the genesis and development of management research is considered. In this section of the paper, I rely on university catalogues, literature reviews (K. Inkson, 1987; K. Inkson & Paterson, 1993; Sibbald, 1998) and histories (Pratt & Margaritis, 1999) to examine patterns in personnel decisions regarding hiring, training, promotion and retention. Particular attention is paid to job incumbent’s country of origin, institution where they were trained, and their publication records. The significance of the relative success of critical management studies in New Zealand is explored.

Throughout several issues receive attention. First, what happens to management knowledge in New Zealand? Is it simply reproduced as is? (Kerr Inkson, 1988); transferred with a Kiwi accent?; or is there a more substantive localisation? (Clegg, Linstead, & Sewell, 2000; Ibarra-Colado, 2006). Second, what happens to the university and the society with the growth of the business school? Third, can critical management studies make a difference?

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Laptops in the MBA Classroom: the Academy or the Market?

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Abstract

This study takes advantage of a hermeneutic rupture in the course of an otherwise smoothly running MBA program to understand the contradictions that arise in business schools between the priorities of the academy and the market. We use Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice to examine the responses of students, faculty, and staff to the introduction of a program in the late 1990s that required all MBA students to have their own laptop computers and the subsequent dispute between students and faculty about the use of these computers in class.

The program was a joint initiative of administration and IT staff. Faculty were consulted and accepted the reasoning that it would help the school look attractive to potential students, an appeal that was important in light of the recent increase in fees. However, once the program was in place, faculty members began to understand its pedagogical implications. The issue centred around the use of the laptops by students in the classroom for purposes other than the discussion at hand. As users of the case method of instruction, faculty expected high engagement from students in class, engagement that now appeared to them to be slipping dangerously. We took up our study at the point when faculty decided to ban the use of the Internet in the classroom and ran into unexpectedly militant resistance from students.

Using Bourdieu’s notion of restricted and widespread fields of cultural production, we examine the extent to which the need for faculty to establish their legitimacy in the restricted field of education came into conflict with the need for the school to establish legitimacy in the widespread economic field. We conclude that the situation in question reflects a deepening contradiction between objectives in the business school setting that threaten to destabilize its ongoing legitimacy within the academy.
GOING TO THE IDENTITY PARADE OR GOING FISHING?

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We who teach in the domain of business and management have a choice - to go to the identity parade or to go fishing. There is a continuing need to provoke more discussion on the curriculum in HEI’s in the UK1. The influence of bodies such as QAA and AMBA and the prevalence of ranking systems (such as the Times Top 100 Universities), results in intensive competition between business schools competitors, each hawking standardized ‘solutions’. 2

The content of business courses becomes a bland mix of the ‘usual suspects’: HRM, Strategy, Marketing, more Marketing, Finance and Operations where the emphasis is more on”… mastering facts and a body of technique in a series of discipline-based courses than on a process of inquiry and question asking.” 3 The reliance on this functional approach elbows out content that would enable a more process or concept based approach. A critical stance can be used as bait to fish for ideas – new contenders rather than usual suspects.

This paper presents a critical research project which seeks to uncover (in) consistencies between what is taught in business faculties and the expectations of industry. Initial data gathered from sixty-four companies indicate that the expectations regarding Business graduates’ competencies and knowledge may present serious challenges to HEI’s curricula and practices in their efforts to maintain the currency and relevance of their ‘products.'

AACSB and Global Business (Education) Hegemony

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I have argued in previous publications and conference presentations (including CMS 1999) that, in the American context, business schools lack objective distance from the object of their study (the business community) and that the AACSB accreditation process reinforces tight linkage, thus business schools become uncritical ‘cheerleaders’ of business practices. In the recent past, AACSB changed its original name, The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, to The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, and took as it’s logo ‘AACSB International’. Under its new identity, AACSB states as its mission “to advance quality management education worldwide through accreditation and thought leadership.” Does the global expansion of AACSB’s influence present a challenge (or risk) to the civic university?

This paper will examine the ‘new’ standards for both faculty qualifications and assessment of learning outcomes and will argue that these continue to function (as did the old standards) to ensure that business schools are institutions designed to reproduce the interests of management and capital and suppress dissent. The implementation of AACSB’s standards on a global scale represents a two pronged attack on the autonomy of non-US business schools. First, outcome assessment will require that accredited institutions both conform to the structure and content of a US-style business curriculum. Second, demands on faculty to maintain their status as ‘academically qualified’ will (implicitly) require (or pressure) those faculty to seek publication outlets in ‘mainstream’ acceptable journals.

I will conclude this paper by considering the impact that AACSB’s ‘thought leadership’ on the civic university. To the degree that ‘thought leadership’ might also be said to be ‘thought control’, that is, to the degree that there is no intellectual distance between the interests of management and capital, on the one hand, and perspectives of the faculty and the ideologies espoused in the classroom, other hand, the international spread of AACSB accreditation can be seen as a threat to the work of the civic university. This will be particularly true as the influence of the business school expands and holds sway in the university as a whole, as it has done in many American universities.
The rise of managerialism in higher education institutions: the role of business schools

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ABSTRACT

In the last two decades, there has been a change in the logic of control of the State over Higher Education institutions (HEIs), as well as a change in the logic of internal control of HEIs over their basic units and individual academics (Kogan et al, 2000; Reed, 2002). These changes have been strongly influenced by the market and private management mechanisms (Ferlie et al, 1996; Meek, 2002). As a result, the traditional internal regulation and control of academics and their work, based on the principles of autonomy, academic freedom, and peer colleagues’ assessment, is being questioned. In particular, the discourses surrounding the knowledge economy and knowledge society, together with human capital theories, have led to placing a stronger emphasis on the notion of operational and social efficiency, at the expenses of collegial decision making processes. Likewise, the practices and careers of academics are increasingly influenced by individual assessment mechanisms, which often demand them to become involved in administrative duties, and by their submitting to organizational and/or unit objectives. That scenario is complemented by the introduction of new organizational structures in HEIs, such as planning, quality control, and image departments, which often interfere with the traditional academic decision-making and hierarchies. Following Slaughter & Leslie (1997), it can be said that the ‘academic professor’ is gradually being replaced by the ‘entrepreneurial professor’, as the notion of competitiveness and the introduction of business activities in their ethos become more prominent. One can argue that the ‘academic autonomy / freedom’ principle, developed around the notion of self-regulation, is being replaced by a ‘regulated autonomy’ principle, which reflects the market and management values and strongly emphasises the need of disciplining the work and behaviour of academics. This paper analyses the specific role of business schools in fostering these changes as they contribute to the construction of management discourses.

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