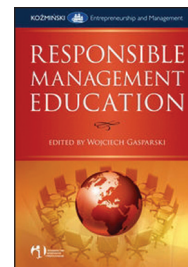


Book Review

Responsible Management Education



Wojciech Gasparski (Editor)
Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne
(Academic and Professional Press) Warsaw, Poland, 2008, 144 pages,
softcover Review by Geoff A Goldman*

How apt, I thought, reading this book whilst visiting Poland. After all, it is a work by Polish academics on management ethics and management education. So whether it was sitting on a bench by the banks of the Vistula river, at a jazz club in the Kazimierz district, or at a café on the main town square in Cracow reading this book; the milieu formed the perfect backdrop for writing this review.

The book is an extract of the most prominent papers of the eighth Responsible Management Conference hosted by the Kozminski University. It opens with an Introduction by the editor, Wojciech Gasparski, where after the main addresses to the Conference – five in total are included. The addresses incorporated are by:

- Manuel Escudero (Head: Global Compact. Special Projects and Academic Initiatives. New York; USA)
- Anna Darska (Head: UNDP, Poland)
- Simon Piccard (Executive Director: European Academy of Business in Society. Brussels; Belgium)
- Tadeuz Krezekewski (President of the Caux Round Table, Poland)
- Andrej K. Kozminski (Rector: Kozminski University. Warsaw: Poland)

Although I found this a bit much and rather tedious to peruse, it serves a purpose in setting the tone for the main part of the book; the scholarly papers.

The scholarly papers – 13 in total – are all by Polish academics. Six of these papers are authored by academics affiliated to Kozminski University. One is not sure which criteria were used for basis of inclusion of these papers. A CR-ROM accompanies the book and on this CR-ROM appears all the papers presented at the Conference – 19 in total. Unfortunately, they are all in Polish,

so the six papers that are not translated into English and published in the book are lost to those not proficient in Polish.

What is immediately apparent is the strong emphasis on meaningful scholarly work; something I find quite prevalent in Eastern Europe and a factor that is quite refreshing in an era of an abundance of so-called scholarly work that is rather 'willy-nilly'. Above all else, one is left with a sense of pondering after reading this book; and specifically on issues surrounding sound ethical behaviour of organizations, and the gap that exists in managerial practice and managerial teaching on the subject of business ethics, corporate citizenship and corporate governance. The authors do not propose – at any stage – to find solutions to these issues, but they do prompt one to think about the issues with more urgency. The points of view reflected are meant to encourage debate and view these issues from more salient angles.

Their premise is actually a simple one; as the editor, Gasparski, purports in the Introduction of the book; there is a symbiotic relationship between academia (theory) and industry (practice). They influence each other and one cannot ignore the fact. Hence, we need to establish how academia can harness industry (and vice-versa) for future benefit. As scholars, academics' laboratories are organisations. The lessons that can be learnt from these field laboratories do not only have benefit for organisations currently, but have long-term societal benefit as they shape the frame of reference of our students who are the business leaders and managers of the future. Gasparski is quite correct in stating from the onset that we all search for the holy grail of management, but that it somehow eludes us all. What this book

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instils in us is a realization (or grounding of the suspicion) that there is no such holy grail as far as management is concerned. Rather, we should focus on the nature of management as a scholarly discipline to show it for what it is and deal with the realities we are faced with on a daily basis.

Personally, I was thrilled to find that 10 of the 13 papers were conceptual papers; with the other 3 being empirical, and exclusively qualitative. I found the level of engagement to be quite thorough and the syntheses are all quite sound. The arguments presented are sound, well considered and not biased in any fashion

Those that ascribe to the dominant paradigm in business and management research might question the validity of these papers and what they purport. There are no hypotheses; no descriptive or inferential statistics; no t-tests, factor analyses, chi-squared tests, correlation analyses or Cronbach-alpha tests. As a result, many academics will struggle to find value in this book. However, those with a more pragmatic disposition will find great value in the arguments and points of view reflected here. Personally, this book excites me as I have realized that

the art of debate and argumentation is not dead in the scholarly field of management.

This book is a must for any scholar with an interest in organization theory, general management, business ethics, corporate governance, CSR, strategy or management education. It is not a book that would suite an undergraduate market, but could slot in quite nicely in post-graduate business ethics/corporate governance courses as an additional source to a conventional textbook.

Finally, if nothing else, this book presents us with a refreshing perspective on the issue of business ethics, corporate governance and management education. We should not underestimate the scholarly contributions of our Eastern European colleagues. It is a slightly different tradition to the American one we are all so used to; it is one that prompts our thinking and lets us rediscover the philosophical tenets upon which our discipline is based, something that seems to lacking amongst scholars today.

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