Revitalizing the Quest for Professionalism in Business and Management: Purpose, Knowledge, Behavior, and Expectation

A. Georges L. Romme[1]

[1]School of Industrial Engineering, Eindhoven University of Technology, Eindhoven, Netherlands

Correspondence: A.G.L. Romme, Prof. Dr., School of Industrial Engineering, Eindhoven University of Technology, P.O. Box 513, 5600 MB Eindhoven, Netherlands.

Abstract

One of the biggest challenges of our time is to develop the management discipline into a true profession. In this respect, business schools have been accused for failing to promote better policies and management practices as well as failing to educate students, as prospective managers, about their moral and social responsibilities. This essay outlines a multi-dimensional framework for professionalization, involving the dimensions of purpose, knowledge, behavior, and expectation. Subsequently, this framework is used to define and explore various paths out of the current intellectual stasis of the field of management and business. A key pathway is creating a shared sense of professional purpose and responsibility; another important route involves developing a professional body of knowledge informed by both discovery and validation; third, so-called 'trading zones' need to be developed, to offer opportunities for (professionals with) different voices and interests to meet; and the expectations that societal stakeholders have of professional conduct and performance by managers should be raised. Finally, the implications arising from these four pathways for business schools are explored. One of the most challenging implications is the need to improve the alignment between what management professors say they do and what they actually do – as researchers and educators.

Keywords: professionalism, management education, business education, mismanagement, professional purpose, trading zones

1. Introduction[1]

Developing the management discipline into a true profession may be one of the biggest challenges of our time. Top managers of many multinational firms and other big companies such as Enron, Volkswagen, WorldCom and Deutsche Bank have been publically derided for acting unethically and irresponsibly (e.g. Birnik & Billsberry, 2007; Crawford & Karnitschnig, 2009; Parloff, 2018; Swartz & Watkins, 2004). This type of mismanagement does not only appear to be rather common in big companies; for example, Bloom and Van Reenen (2007) observed that the vast majority of small and medium-sized companies in all countries and continents are also extremely badly managed.

In the context of these and many other cases of mismanagement, business schools have been accused for failing to promote better policies and management practices (CRRBM, 2017) as well as failing to educate students, as prospective managers, about their moral and social responsibilities (e.g. Learmonth, 2007; Roglio & Light, 2009). Khurana and Nohria (2008) therefore proposed that the management discipline needs to be professionalized. Professionalization would give management a greater sense of responsibility and duty because, Khurana and Nohria argue, they would be sanctioned or expelled if they did not live up to the standards of the profession (like a doctor losing his medical license). Others have criticized efforts to professionalize management, mainly arguing that management fundamentally differs from medicine and other established professions, for example regarding the codified body of knowledge that the management discipline appears to lack (Barker, 2010; Spender, 2007).

---

[1] This article partly draws on a similar argument in *The Quest for Professionalism: The Case of Management and Entrepreneurship,* Oxford, 2016 (http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780198737735.do); this material is re-used and reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press.

One-dimensional solutions such as the one proposed by Khurana and Nohria are not likely to be effective, if not useless, in addressing the need to professionalize management. The remainder of this essay starts by outlining a multi-dimensional framework (described in more detail in: Romme, 2016), involving the dimensions of purpose, knowledge, behavior, and expectation. Subsequently, this framework is used to define and explore various paths out of the current intellectual stasis of the field of management and business.

A key pathway appears to be creating a shared sense of professional purpose and responsibility, embedded in a culture of dialogical encounter. Another important route that I will outline involves developing a professional body of knowledge informed by both discovery and validation, which also enables the dialogical encounters between management professionals previously mentioned. Third, management as a nascent profession is, arguably, in need of more so-called 'trading zones' that offer opportunities for (professionals with) different voices and interests to meet. Effective trading zones provide attractive platforms for participants with highly different backgrounds and interests to meet and collaborate. Fourth, the expectations that societal stakeholders have of professional conduct and performance can and should be raised; this can be done in several ways, for example by creating conditions that enable employees and other internal stakeholders in organizations to freely speak up as well as by motivating journalists, investors and other external stakeholders to raise the bar with regard to the management discipline.

Finally, I discuss the implications arising from these four pathways for business schools. One major implication is that business schools should initiate a discourse with their students about the purpose of management as early as possible in the curriculum, at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Another implication is the imperative to engage and immerse students in alternative management approaches and systems, especially those that reflect hope and promise regarding management as a true profession. The final implication may be the most challenging one: the strong need to improve the alignment between espoused and actual behavior, that is, between what management professors (as role models) say they do and what they actually do – as researchers *and* educators.

The argument in this article responds to calls for more responsible research (e.g. CRRBM, 2017) and more responsible education (e.g. Rousseau, 2012) in the field of business and management, but also goes beyond these earlier calls by connecting the research (knowledge) dimension systematically to the educational challenges arising from the quest for a more professional management discipline. The framework presented in this article also extends earlier work in this area, by detailing some of the more fundamental challenges that will inevitably arise in this quest−including the need to align espoused and actual behavior of management professionals.

2. Generative Mechanisms of Professionalization

The notions of profession and professionalism involve vocational and knowledge dimensions but also refer to societal expectations of professional behavior. This section outlines a multi-dimensional professionalization framework (described in more detail by: Romme, 2016), involving the dimensions of purpose, cognition, behavior, and expectation. These dimensions can be conceived as the generative or social mechanisms (Hedström & Swedberg, 1996; Pawson, 2006) driving professionalization: purpose, knowledge, behavior, and expectation.

At the heart of any profession is a vocational dimension that arises from a shared sense of *purpose*, that is, a "commitment to a good broader than self-interest" (Despotidou & Prastacos, 2012, p. 437), or what Khurana and Nohria (2008) call a professional code. This shared purpose provides a collective identity to the profession, also by forging an implicit social contract with society: societal stakeholders (e.g. investors and employees) let management professionals perform a particular set of tasks, and in return the profession ensures these stakeholders that these professionals are worthy of being trusted. Frankel (1989) identifies three kinds of professional codes in the face of morally ambiguous situations: aspirational, educational and regulatory. Also in view of the early professionalization stage of the management discipline, I focus here on the aspirational dimensions of a shared purpose.

A second professionalization mechanism is the search for, and contestation of, a *knowledge* base that the profession can claim (Abbott, 1988). This body of knowledge has two key interdependent elements. For one, professionals draw upon expertise (Collins & Evans, 2007), the insights and tools required to perform professional work; this expertise draws on a 'vocabulary' that is instrumental in defining problems and challenges as well as a 'language' in the form of conceptual frameworks, theories and models (March & Smith, 1995). All this expertise, including the scholarship involved, is inherently ethical in nature (Myers & Thompson, 2006). Therefore, the values that guide professional conduct and work are explicit elements of the body of knowledge. These values constitute the normative dimension of any professional activity and are a key mechanism for ensuring its capacity to guide professional work (Adler et al., 2008). Consequently, when

managers misrepresent and neglect their professional values in highly complex and turbulent situations, they also compromise their professional conduct and performance (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Together, professional values and expertise constitute the body of knowledge claimed by a profession.

The *behavioral* dimension, broadly defined, refers to how professionals divide and coordinate work, organize the work flow, monitor the quality of work, perform on key outcome measures, account for their performance, and so forth. The actual behavior of practitioners and scholars in the profession may raise tensions between their espoused purpose and values and those actually being used (Argyris et al., 1985), particularly when these diverge. For example, the engagement of management scholars with practice and practitioners is generally poor (Gulati, 2007; Hughes et al., 2011; Starbuck, 2006; Starkey & Madan, 2001), even though the objectives and values expressed by various academic associations like Academy of Management, BAM and EURAM suggest otherwise.

Finally, the dimension of *expectation* primarily involves the expectations of a variety of stakeholders of the profession. True professions raise high expectations of external stakeholders, and in turn, the latter expectations inspire the professionals to perform and deliver their best. This virtuous cycle is what, in the long term, makes for a highly credible profession (cf. CRRBM, 2017). Whereas professionalization is often equated with conditions and regulations for entry to the profession as well as sanctions and penalties regarding unprofessional conduct, these regulations and sanctions tend to have perverse effects on professional conduct. In fact, management education has become overly regulated by accreditation bodies such as AACSB and EQUIS, without any positive impact on professionalizing management practice and scholarship (Spender, 2007).

Notably, mechanisms to control and regulate entry to the profession as well as behavior by its members are not considered as being fundamental to 'professionalism'. Rather, these regulatory and institutional mechanisms appear to be outcomes of 'successful' professionalization trajectories (Abbott, 1988); 'successful' in terms of contesting and winning the battle for claims on a body of knowledge and professional work conducted on the basis of that knowledge (Khurana, 2007). The history of professions such as law and medicine demonstrates that certain groups within these occupations first had to contest and claim a unique body of knowledge in competition with other groups, typically with a major role of university education and research, before regulatory mechanisms could be developed and implemented (Abbott, 1988).

The professionalization mechanisms of purpose, knowledge, behavior and expectation are obviously interdependent and complementary. For example, the better the members of the profession have together defined and communicated their shared purpose, the easier it will be to meet the expectations that societal stakeholders have of the profession. Moreover, a body of knowledge serves to inform professional conduct and performance, and in turn, researching the latter helps to extend the body of knowledge (Rousseau, 2012). But it is also evident that the actual behavior of individual members of the profession need to be consistent with the shared purpose as well as the specialized knowledge that individual professionals draw on and espouse (cf. Despotidou & Prastacos, 2012).

Drawing on Romme (2016), *professionalism* can now be defined as the alignment between the shared purpose (P) of management as a profession; the body of knowledge (K) these professionals have access to; the actual behavior (B) of managers in terms of actions and decisions; and the expectation (E) of a variety of internal and external stakeholders. One can thus define the overall level of professionalism of any given discipline in terms of $P \times K \times B \times E$ (see also Figure 1). Assuming that each variable can be assessed on a scale from 0 to 1, this definition implies each of the four factors directly affects the level of professionalism. It also means that even when most of these dimensions are relatively high, a low score on one dimension will dramatically affect the level of professionalism. The latter case may be an entirely theoretical one, because in practice the four dimensions are likely to co-evolve (cf. Abbott, 1988). For example, if the purpose and knowledge dimensions are underdeveloped, it's highly unlikely that stakeholders will have high expectations that professionals can live up to, and vice versa.
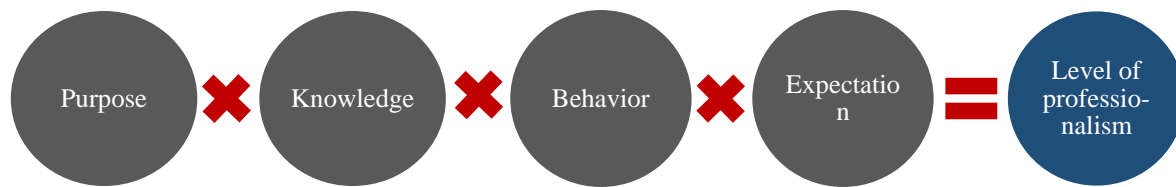
Figure 1. The level of professionalism defined as the alignment between (levels of) purpose, knowledge, behavior and expectation

Using the equation in Figure 1, the level of professionalism of the management discipline can be assessed as follows. First, there appears to be hardly any shared sense of purpose (e.g. Rolin, 2010; Romme et al., 2015); the level of P is therefore low. Moreover, the academic body of knowledge is highly fragmented (e.g. Walsh et al., 2006) and only loosely connected to practical knowledge (e.g. Hughes et al., 2011); K is therefore low. And finally, our ignorance about organizations and managing them "is so great that forms of malfunctioning and the suffering which results from it are ubiquitous and are widely accepted as normal and unavoidable" (Elias & Scotson, 1994, p. 181); that is, both B and E are therefore also rather low. In sum, the overall professionalism of the management field appears to be rather low, since each of its determinants (P, K, B and E) are relatively low.

Any attempt to professionalize management should therefore needs to aim at raising all four dimensions as well as their alignment. The latter alignment can possibly be accomplished by way of economic or legal incentives, regulations and sanctions (Abbott, 1988; Flood, 2019). A key assumption in this article is, however, that the aspirational and vocational alignment between purpose, knowledge, conduct and expectation should be at the heart of the professionalization quest in management, because a strong intrinsic commitment to professionalism is the strongest mechanism guiding professional work. This implies we need to develop a vision of management as a collaborative profession that thrives on a viable and productive discourse on what managers do and should do.

3. Pathways for Revitalizing the Quest

Thus far, I have argued that the level of professionalism of the management discipline is rather low, due to the absence of a shared sense of purpose and responsibility toward society, a highly fragmented body of academic knowledge on management which is loosely connected to practice and practical knowledge, actual behavior by managers that is often not in line with what they say they do, and public opinion leaders and other observers accepting the widespread lack of professionalism among managers as normal and unavoidable. This initial analysis suggests that the professionalization quest needs to aim at each of the generative mechanisms (purpose, knowledge, behavior and expectation). In this respect, the remainder of this section serves to outline several complementary pathways for revitalizing this quest. Each path starts at with either purpose, knowledge, behavior, or expectation, but then goes beyond it to enhance the alignment across different mechanisms.

3.1 Developing a Shared Sense of Purpose and Responsibility

As also argued earlier, at the heart of any (emerging) profession is a shared sense of purpose and responsibility toward society (e.g. Miles, 2004). For example, the shared purpose of civil engineers involves the user convenience, reliability and robustness of the roads, bridges, tunnels and other artifacts designed (Muller & Gewirtzman, 2004). Civil engineering and many other professions also demonstrate that a shared purpose does not reduce diversity, but rather serves to cultivate diversity and pluralism. This may, at first sight, seem somewhat paradoxical. As such, the need for a shared sense of purpose and responsibility is similar to a basic agreement on the values and rules of any game—for example, in competitive sports such as soccer or basketball and in design competitions—in which individuals or teams compete against another (Lampel & Meyer, 2008). Without a shared set of values and rules, the game is not likely to come about. Only if all participants share some basic understanding of purpose and responsibility, they can cultivate diversity and dissent.

Because this shared understanding is currently absent in the management discipline, various proposals for a shared purpose have been made. For example, two MBA graduates of Harvard Business School developed the

so-called MBA Oath to help restore professional standards and ethics (Anderson & Escher, 2010), also in response to Khurana and Nohria's (2008) call. This MBA Oath is also available on the website *mbaoath.org* where it can be signed by any (graduated) MBA student.

Another proposal for a shared purpose is part of the vision on the future of business and management research, developed by a group of scholars and business leaders known as the Community for Responsible Research in Business and Management (CRRBM). The first principle proposed by the CRRBM (2017, p. 2) is: "Service to society: Business research aims to develop knowledge that benefits business and the broader society, locally and globally, for the ultimate purpose of creating a better world."

A third example of a recent proposal for a statement of shared purpose, by Romme et al. (2015), is somewhat broader, as it involves an envisioned statement of the shared purpose and responsibility of management practitioners *and* scholars, together constituting the population of 'management professionals' who have to carry the management discipline forward. This proposal implies management professionals would need to share the following purpose and responsibility:

- *Management should be(come) a profession* that serves the greater good by connecting and coordinating people and resources to create value that no single individual can create alone.

- *Practicing and knowing inform and reinforce each other.* Practicing and knowing are so-called co-constitutive dialogic processes.

- *Shared interest in outcomes and implications.* A shared interest in outcomes and implications serves to facilitate productive exchange and dialogue across maps based on distinctions such as qualitative-quantitative, positivism-constructivism and description-prescription.

- *Learning to see from different perspectives.* Practitioners and scholars learn to see themselves, their personal background, their organizational settings, and their own presuppositions from a range of different perspectives.

- *Pluralism is essential.* Pluralism in philosophical, theoretical and methodical positions is a great asset to the profession, which implies 'real doubt' is central in management and management scholarship.

- *Dialogical encounter.* In dialogical encounters, researchers and other professionals regularly expose themselves to fundamentally different views, as an opportunity to reconsider their central presuppositions (Romme et al., 2015).

Of course, these and other proposals for a shared purpose and responsibility are, at this stage, no more than wishful thinking. Given the embryonic stage of the debate on professionalizing the management discipline, we first to engage in a broad dialogue on the (future) purpose of our discipline. This may involve the development of various alternative statements of shared purpose and responsibility, which can be debated and tested. Over time, this process may converge in a statement that can be broadly accepted. This dialogue should also tackle fundamental questions as: what is the 'greater good' (see first bullet above) in management? What do pluralism and real doubt actually imply? And so forth. Addressing these challenging questions will help shape management as a nascent profession, although it will not be easy to develop answers that are broadly agreed upon. But, as argued before, the societal costs and risks arising from mismanagement and other forms of unprofessional management are so high that we cannot simply ignore these questions.

3.2 Toward a Professional Body of Knowledge

The first business schools were established to train professional managers (Khurana, 2007). However, subsequent efforts to avoid "wastelands of vocationalism" (Simon, 1991, p. 139) and build academic respectability have led most management scholars and business schools to retreat from that goal. Therefore, any attempt to revitalize the quest for professionalism also requires efforts to build a specialized body of knowledge, in which creative discovery and scientific validation inform a productive discourse on established as well as emerging management practices—in terms of their underlying values, constructs, models and principles (Romme, 2016).

Interestingly, many elements of this body of knowledge are already present in the literature, albeit in a scattered and fragmented manner (e.g. Khurana & Nohria, 2008; Romme & Reymen, 2018; Rousseau, 2012). We therefore need to develop a map of the future professional body of knowledge that would facilitate dialogical encounters, enhance professional behavior, and raise societal expectations of managers and management scholars. A key requirement of this map is that it has to systematically connect the acts of creative discovery and enactment by practitioners to scientific validation efforts by scholars.

A broad discourse on professional values such as rigor and relevance is also critical. Rather than merely comparing and discussing these key values (e.g. Gulati, 2007; Hamet & Michel, 2018; Tsui, 2016), we need to address academic rigor and practical relevance on its own terms, that is, in the context of validation or discovery as professional activities. This implies management scholars need to invest more time and resources in discovering and validating constructs and models which help practitioners respond to challenges such as those in the area of organizational resilience, employee participation, and innovation management. Discovery-oriented work serves to identify empirical problems and anomalies, and tends to mobilize creativity and ingenuity. As such, it thrives on the generative role of doubt (Locke et al., 2008).

In the early days of management scholarship, directly engaging in experimentation and prototyping was central to all scholarly work, but the act of 'instantiation' is nowadays typically left to management practitioners, possibly with the help of management consultants. The quest for professionalism implies that any effort to create and evaluate management practices and systems needs to become as academically respectable as other forms of research needed for a professional body of knowledge. Discovering new management practices and transforming extant ones are core activities in both management practice and scholarship. Without creative discovery by management pioneers, the vitality and adaptability of the management profession to new challenges would (further) decrease.

3.3 Creating Trading Zones

A key barrier for professionalizing management arises from the tribal nature of the behavior of management scholars as well as practitioners (Gulati, 2007). The engagement of management scholars with practice is generally poor, and most scholars only talk to and write for their own tribes (Hughes et al., 2011). In Romme et al. (2015), we thus adopted the notion of 'trading zones' (Gorman, 2002) to explore how dialogical encounters can be practically facilitated and sustained. Examples of such trading zones are new business incubators, management labs and professional degree (e.g. DBA) programs that in some business schools are already enabling more meaningful dialogues between highly different voices and interests. In many ways, the trading zone perspective is a highly pragmatist one, because it avoids the need for major institutional changes that would be rather difficult to realize.

Romme et al. (2015) observed that some trading zones appear to be more promising than others, in terms of their characteristics (e.g. the durability and psychological safety of the trading zone). For example, many professional degree programs offered by business schools appear to offer favorable conditions for dialogical encounters between management practitioners and scholars—particularly in professionalizing management in established companies and organizations. Such favorable conditions especially arise when those in charge of a professional degree (DBA) program can motivate their school's best scholars to actively work with students enrolled in the program, and these individual DBA projects are part of a long-term collaborative program between the business school and the companies employing the DBA students (Romme et al., 2015).

Another example is the rise of incubators for new business creation, which many universities and business schools have established. Some of these incubators are positioned as relatively autonomous units or companies, others have been embedded in so-called Technology Transfer Offices. Collaborative work between practitioners and scholars in these incubation environments has already led to a coherent and actionable body of knowledge on for example technology entrepreneurship, technology transfer and university spinoff creation (e.g. Shane, 2004; Van Burg et al., 2008). Incubators are also very interesting as trading zones, because they enable and promote collaboration between scholars and (nascent) entrepreneurs and their stakeholders. Indeed, major management innovations are more likely to arise in settings where a single entrepreneur, or a small group of entrepreneurs, has the ultimate authority to initiate such an innovation—in view of what we know about the long-term effects of so-called 'founder blueprints' (Baron et al., 1999; Hannan et al., 2006).

3.4 Raising Expectations of Management

If investors, employees, journalists and many others raise their expectations of (would-be) management professionals, the latter will increasingly internalize these expectations, which in turn will inspire and guide them to perform and deliver their best. This virtuous cycle has been often observed in other, more mature professions (e.g. Flood, 2019; Muller & Gewirtzman, 2004). This raises the question as to how one can trigger such a virtuous circle. Established professions such as law typically have strict regulations for entry to the profession as well as sanctions and penalties regarding unprofessional performance (Barker, 2010). However, these regulations and sanctions tend to have counterproductive effects on professional conduct—especially by transforming the (initially) intrinsic commitment to professional standards into an extrinsic one.

There are several ways to initiate the self-reinforcing effect of higher expectations. First, the transformation of

rather silent employees into assertive co-workers is fundamental to raising the expectations of the internal stakeholders that managers work with on a daily basis. An experimental study by Oc et al. (2015) demonstrated that candid (rather than compliant) feedback from subordinates to managers leads to a less self-interested allocation of resources by these managers, and thus enhances the likelihood that they allocate resources in ways that contribute to the 'greater good'. As a result, organizational conditions that enable employees and other internal stakeholders to freely speak up and signal problems will raise the expectations of professionalism at all management levels almost immediately. Key conditions are psychological safety in informal and formal meetings (also attended by superiors), so that employees and others will freely speak up and address sensitive issues (cf. Edmondson, 1999).

Another way to raise expectations involves broadening internal and external accountability to include a variety of non-financial performance measures. This serves to redirect the attention of many managers, who otherwise would continue to focus on financial performance, supported by accounting and control systems that report costs, expenditures and financial results (e.g. Birnik & Billsberry, 2007; Williams, 2010). Regarding the 'non-financial' dimension, directors and external auditors often are too easily satisfied with general statements about employee turnover and absence rates, mandatory meetings with work councils, and so forth. The non-financial dimension can be specified in measurable constructs—such as the number of times per year all members of a work unit meet, the quality of meeting minutes, the psychology safety perceived by participants, whether there is a linking pin with the next higher level, and so forth. Using these measurements, auditors and directors (or supervisory board members) can effectively monitor whether the expectations and standards set for these non-financials are met.

Finally, the ultimate test of professionalism is whether one's actual behavior is consistent with what one says about it (Argyris, 2004; Argyris & Schön, 1978). By covering up our actual behavior, or those of others, for example by talking about how much we appreciate and endorse 'transparency', 'empowerment' and 'employee voice', we tend to sustain the low level of expectations others have of our level of professionalism. In this respect, most employees and managers have become so accustomed to malfunctioning managerial practices that they (implicitly) consider it to be normal and unavoidable (Elias & Scotson, 1994). Here, the level of expectations can be significantly raised by paying much more attention to the tensions and gaps between actual and espoused behavior, be it one's own behavior or that of others. The next section explores these challenges in more detail.

4. Implications for Management Education

Attempts to professionalize management by regulating and certifying management education have largely failed (Khurana, 2007; Somers et al., 2014; Spender, 2007). These efforts to professionalize management have been largely shaped by national and international bodies that accredit business schools and their educational programs. By contrast, this essay serves to describe an alternative perspective on professionalization, one that assumes the aspirational and vocational alignment between purpose, knowledge, behavior, and expectation is at the heart of management as a nascent profession. This perspective implies management is a collaborative profession that thrives on a productive discourse about newly discovered as well as established ways of engaging in management work. In this section, I flesh out some of the implications for management education.

Interestingly, management education has been developing a life of its own, largely decoupled from management scholarship. The regulatory mechanisms developed by national accreditation bodies and international ones such as EQUIS and AACSB have, to some extent, 'professionalized' management education by defining and implementing a specialized body of knowledge as well as accreditation procedures, even as management itself has yet to become a profession (Spender, 2007). Notably, all accreditation bodies for management education advocate standards that (implicitly) reflect a vision of management as a profession. For example, EQUIS (2019) espouses that it "ensures a rigorous quality control, benchmarking your school against international standards in terms of governance, programmes, students, faculty, research, internationalisation, ethics, responsibility and sustainability, as well as corporate engagement."

But, despite the image created by its accreditation bodies, management education as actually practiced in most business schools has been widely criticized. Seeking academic respectability, almost all management professors tend to treat students as consumers of course contents, rather than as apprentices in management as a professional activity (Khurana, 2007; Mintzberg, 2004; Rousseau, 2012). Moreover, these course contents tend to overemphasize the role of analysis and science, at the cost of critical reflection, entrepreneurial imagination and professional development (e.g. Gray, 2007; Grey, 2004; Khurana & Spender, 2012; Learmonth, 2007; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002; Roglio & Light, 2009). As a result, most business schools are producing graduates

with underdeveloped skills in reflection, imagination and self-criticism (Learmonth, 2007; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002; Roglio & Light, 2009). While some management educators have been pioneering with course contents and formats that enhance the professional development of students (e.g. Gray, 2007; Randolph, 2011; Romme, 2003), most of these efforts have had a small impact, if any at all, because the vast majority of management students never gets exposed to such educational innovations (Learmonth, 2007).

In the remainder of this section, I make a number of recommendations for several changes in the course contents and formats of programs offered by business and management schools. Each of these changes does not require systemic changes in the entire curriculum, but involves targeted changes that enable and motivate a dialogue between students, professors and practitioners on the purpose, nature and praxis of the management profession.

4.1 Start Discussing the Purpose of Management As Early As Possible

One very obvious way to create awareness of the professionalization idea is to start as early as possible in the (undergraduate or graduate) management curriculum. In this respect, the moral core of any profession arises from its 'social contract' with society (Khurana & Nohria, 2008), but the management discipline does not yet have such a social contract with the broader public. A good place to help shape this (emerging) social contract is to discuss the notions of purpose and responsibility that management students and their educators bring to the table, preferably in an Introduction course that provides a broad perspective on management as an emering profession.

Notably, a single 'business ethics' course tends to be the only place in the curriculum where professors address moral issues. However, the discourse about professional purpose and responsibility is better initiated in introductory courses in the first semester, possibly later expanded in courses such as strategic management, accounting, organizational behavior, and other core subjects.

For any introductory course, excellent reading materials are Khurana and Nohria's (2008) call for a professional code and Anderson and Escher's (2010) MBA Oath, which can be combined with in-depth accounts of examples of corporate failure and mismanagement (e.g. Swartz & Watkins, 2004; Williams, 2010). These readings are likely to generate lively discussions between professors and students.

4.2 Engage and Immerse Students in Management Practices and Tools

Obviously, a new generation of management practices and tools is required to fuel the professionalization process. Usually, professors in business and management assume it is primarily up to practitioners and consultants to experiment and pioneer with new practices and tools. But the example of other professions such as health care, software engineering and civil engineering demonstrates that scholars in the incumbent schools (e.g. of medicine, information systems, or civil engineering) do make substantial contributions to developing new tools and practices (e.g. Muller & Gewirtzman, 2004; Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2013). Thus, it is remarkable that the so-called Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010), which now is one of the most widely used management tools among both management practitioners and scholars, was initially designed in a doctoral dissertation written at a school of information systems (Osterwalder, 2004).

Moreover, in a variety of teaching roles I personally observed that students learn a lot from getting directly engaged in exploring how various new organizational forms and management tools are actually practiced—both at the undergraduate and graduate levels (Romme, 2003; Romme & Putzel, 2003). Whereas for example Mintzberg (2004) believes it makes no sense to teach management to undergraduates without any managerial experience, my own experiences as well as those of others suggest undergraduate students can be directly immersed in organizational and managerial settings, which generates an immediate experiences they can reflect on (e.g. Jones & Iredale, 2010; Neck & Greene, 2011; Romme & Putzel, 2003). At both the undergraduate and graduate level, this type of management and entrepreneurship education enables students to self-manage their learning process and also serves to develop skills in critical reflection (Jones & Iredale, 2010; Romme, 2003; Van Seggelen-Damen & Romme, 2014).

In this respect, many educational formats for engaging students in management can be implemented in a single course, without much interference with the rest of the curriculum (Neck & Greene, 2011). Professors and program managers can therefore decide to adopt the management method (they prefer) in managing the entire curriculum or program. For example, we have used a new organizational method called 'circular organizing' to manage an undergraduate program with up to 700 students and 40 faculty members (e.g. Romme & Eltink, 2002). Similarly, others have been drawing on other approaches to design and manage graduate programs for students with management experience. An interesting example is the International Masters in Practicing Management (IMPM, 2019) which has been arising from Mintzberg's (2004) vision of management

development as a reflective, practical and hands-on process. Another example is the Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA, 2019), initiated by Bent Flyvbjerg and funded by the UK government, draws on multi-stakeholder management to train senior managers of UK government departments in the skills and knowledge required to deliver major (e.g. big infrastructure) projects on time and on budget.

4.3 Reduce the Gap Between What We Do and Say What We Do

The final implication for management education involves the gap between actual and espoused behaviour (Argyris & Schön, 1978), that is, the lack of consistency between what we do and what we say we're doing. This is perhaps the most challenging dimension of any attempt to professionalize management and its scholarship. In the previous subsection, I suggested several ways to engage and immerse students in management practice, but both students and professors are not likely to exploit these opportunities when their skills in critically reflecting on their own experiences as well as those of others are absent or underdeveloped.

Therefore, any undergraduate or graduate program in management and business education should include advanced skills in questioning inconsistencies between what we do and what we say we do, to better align the two. Chris Argyris, Donald Schön and others have done pioneering work in this area (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Argyris et al., 1985). They have codified and validated the core values (e.g. 'suppress negative feelings') that sustain and mask inconsistencies between actual and espoused behavior, as well as the values (e.g. 'free and informed choice') that enhance an open discussion about such inconsistencies. Moreover, constructs such as dispositional and causal attributions have been developed, to inform models of 'limited' versus 'effective' learning systems that explain whether and how learning about these inconsistencies occurs. In addition, a portfolio of tools (e.g. ladder of inference), intervention strategies (e.g. puzzle intervention and left-hand/right-hand column writing) and other instantiations have been created, evaluated and validated in detailed case studies (e.g. Argyris et al., 1985; Argyris & Schön, 1978; Schwarz, 2002).

Whereas some of these training tools and strategies are used by trainers and consultants, the vast majority of business and management schools do not offer any (e.g. MBA) courses that explicitly draw on these tools and strategies. The IMPM (2019) program, mentioned earlier, is one of the exceptions. Leading business schools as well as accreditation bodies such as AACSB and EQUIS may want to take action in this area, because learning to 'walk your talk' is pivotal to any future progress in the quest for professionalism.

5. Concluding Remarks

This article serves to explore ways to revitalize the quest for management as an emerging profession. While this quest is contested and has a highly uncertain outcome, it is a moral responsibility of business and management scholars to revitalize it (cf. CRRBM, 2017). Accreditation bodies and other stakeholders often pay lip-service to the idea of professionalizing management education and scholarship, but the argument in this essay suggests it is a major challenge for which there are no quick fixes.

The latter challenge is often underestimated, for example by decoupling the educational and research dimensions (e.g. CRRBM, 2017; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002), but also by largely ignoring the gap between espoused and actual behavior (e.g. Brown, 2013). As such, the argument in this article responds to calls for more responsible research (e.g. CRRBM, 2017) and more responsible education (e.g. Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002) in the field of business and management. But it also goes beyond earlier work by connecting the research (knowledge) dimension systematically to the educational challenges arising from the quest for a more professional management discipline. In this respect, I defined the level of professionalism of the management field in terms of the alignment between the shared sense of purpose and responsibility, the body of knowledge that management practitioners and scholars have access to, the actual behavior of these professionals in terms of actions and decisions, and the expectations that various societal stakeholders have of the management profession.

This professionalization lens extends earlier work by detailing some of the more fundamental challenges inevitably arising from the quest for more responsible research and education—including the need to better align what we say we do and what we actually do. Overall, the pathways explored in this essay may help us get out of the existing stalemate, to renew the professionalization quest for more responsible education and scholarship in the field of business and management. Together, these paths and their implications constitute a roadmap that may promote a lively and productive discourse on professionalizing the work of managers and those studying them.

References

Abbott, A. (1988). *The system of professions. An essay on the division of expert labor*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226189666.001.0001

Adler, P. S., Kwon, S., & Heckscher, C. (2008). Professional work: The emergence of collaborative community.

Organization Science, *19*, 359-376. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1070.0293

Anderson, M., & Escher, P. (2010). *The MBA Oath: Setting a higher standard for business leaders*. New York: Portfolio.

Argyris, C. (2004). *Reasons and rationalizations: The limits to organizational knowledge*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199268078.001.0001

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978). *Organization learning: A theory of action approach*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Argyris, C., Putnam, R., & McLain Smith, D. (1985). *Action science: Concepts, methods, and skills for research and intervention*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Barker, R. (2010). No, management is *not* a profession. *Harvard Business Review*, *88* (July-August), 52-60.

Baron, J. N., Hannan, M. T., & Burton, M. D. (1999). Building the iron cage: Determinants of managerial intensity in the early years of organizations. *American Sociological Review*, *64*, 527-547. https://doi.org/10.2307/2657254

Birnik, A., & Billsberry, J. (2007). Reorienting the business school agenda: The case for relevance, rigor, and righteousness. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *82*, 985-999. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-007-9607-x

Bloom, N., & Van Reenen, J. (2007). Measuring and explaining management practices across firms and countries. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *122*, 1351-1408. https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.2007.122.4.1351

Brown, M. J. (2013). The source and status of values for socially responsible science. *Philosophical Studies*, *163*, 67-76. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-012-0070-x

Collins, H. M., & Evans, R. (2007). *Rethinking expertise*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226113623.001.0001

Crawford, D., & Karnitschnig, M. (2009). Bank spy scandal widens. *The Wall Street Journal*, August 3, 2009. Retrieved from: https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB124925060899599929

CRRBM (2017). *A vision of responsible research in business and management: Striving for useful and credible knowledge* (position paper). Retrieved at December 10, 2018 from: https://rrbm.network/

Despotidou, L., & Prastacos, G. P. (2012). Professionalism in business: Insights from ancient philosophy. In: G.P. Prastacos, F. Wang & K. E. Soderquist (eds.), *Leadership through the classics*, pp. 437-455. Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-32445-1_29

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *44*, 350-383. https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999

Elias, N., & Scotson, J. L. (1994). *The established and the outsiders: A sociological enquiry into community problems* (second edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

EQUIS (2019). *EQUIS: EFMD quality improvement system*. Retrieved at February 6, 2019 from: https://efmdglobal.org/accreditations/business-schools/equis/

Flood, J. (2019). Legal professionals of the future: Their ethos, role and skills. In: M. DeStefano & G. Dobrauz (eds.), *New suits: Appetite for disruption in the legal world*. Berne: Stampfli Verlag, forthcoming. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3315855

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). From Nobel Prize to project management: Getting risks right. *Project Management Journal*, *37*(3), 5-15. https://doi.org/10.1177/875697280603700302

Frankel, M. S. (1989). Professional codes: Why, how, and with what impact? *Journal of Business Ethics*, *8*, 109-115. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00382575

Gorman, M. E. (2002). Levels of expertise and trading zones: A framework for multidisciplinary collaboration. *Social Studies of Science*, *32*, 933-938. https://doi.org/10.1177/030631270203200511

Gray, D. E. (2007). Facilitating management learning: Developing critical reflection through reflective tools. *Management Learning*, *38*, 495-517. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507607083204

Grey, C. (2004). Reinventing business schools: the contribution of critical management education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *3*, 178-186. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2004.13500519

Gulati, R. (2007). Tent poles, tribalism, and boundary spanning: The rigor-relevance debate in management

research. *Academy of Management Journal*, *50*, 775-782. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2007.26279170

Hamet J., & Michel, S. (2018). Rigor, relevance, and the knowledge "market". *European Business Review*, *30*, 183-201. https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-01-2017-0025

Hannan, M. T., Baron, J. N., Hsu, G. & Koçak, Ö. (2006). Organizational identities and the hazard of change. *Industrial and Corporate Change*, *15*, 755-784. https://doi.org/10.1093/icc/dtl020

Hedström, P., & Swedberg, R. (1996). Social mechanisms. *Acta Sociologica*, *39*, 281-308. https://doi.org/10.1177/000169939603900302

Hughes, T., Bence, D., Grisoni, L., O'Regan, N., & Wornham, D. (2011). Scholarship that matters: Academic-practitioner engagement in business and management. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *10*, 40-57.

IMPM (2019). *International Masters Program for Managers*. Website available at: http://www.impm.org/

Jones, B., & Iredale, N. (2010). Enterprise education as pedagogy. *Education + Training*, *52*, 7-19. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400911011017654

Khurana, R. (2007). *From higher aims to hired hands: The social transformation of American business schools and the unfulfilled promise of management as a profession*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Khurana, R., & Nohria, N. (2008). It's time to make management a true profession. *Harvard Business Review*, *86* (October), 70-77.

Khurana, R., & Spender, J. C. (2012). Herbert A. Simon on what ails business schools: More than 'A problem in organizational design.' *Journal of Management Studies*, *49*, 619-639. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2011.01040.x

Lampel, J., & Meyer, A. D. (2008). Field-configuring events as structuring mechanisms: How conferences, ceremonies, and trade shows constitute new technologies, industries, and markets. *Journal of Management Studies*, *45*, 1025-1035. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2008.00787.x

Learmonth, M. (2007). Critical management education in action: Personal tales of management unlearning. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *6*, 109-113. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2007.24401708

Locke, K., Golden-Biddle, K. & Feldman, M. S. (2008). Making doubt generative: Rethinking the role of doubt in the research process. *Organization Science*, *19*, 907-918. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1080.0398

March, S. T., & Smith, G. F. (1995). Design and natural science research on information technology. *Decision Support Systems*, *15*, 251-266. https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-9236(94)00041-2

Miles, S. H. (2004). *The Hippocratic Oath and the ethics of medicine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mintzberg, H. (2004). *Managers, not MBAs: A hard look at the soft practice of managing and management Development*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Mintzberg, H., & Gosling, J. (2002). Educating managers beyond borders. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *1*, 64-76. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2002.7373654

MPLA (2019). *Major projects leadership academy*. Retrieved at January 8, 2019 from: https://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/programmes/custom-executive-education/major-projects-leadership-academy

Muller, F., & Gewirtzman, J. (2004). Section 2: Design management. In: J.T. Ricketts, M.K. Loftin & F.S. Merritt (eds.), *Standard handbook for civil engineers* (fifth edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Myers, J. W., & Thompson, F. (2006). Ethical reasoning, epistemology, and administrative inquiry. *Research in Public Policy Analysis and Management*, *14*, 261-287. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0732-1317(05)14014-7

Neck, H. M., & Greene, P. G. (2011). Entrepreneurship education: Known worlds and new frontiers. *Journal of Small Business Management*, *49*, 55-70. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-627X.2010.00314.x

Oc, B., Bashshur, M. R., & Moore, C. (2015). Speaking truth to power: The effect of candid feedback on how individuals with power allocate resources. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 100*, 450-463. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038138

Osterwalder, A. (2004). *The business model ontology: A proposition in a design science approach* (doctoral dissertation). Lausanne, Switzerland: University of Lausanne.

Osterwalder, A., & Pigneur, Y. (2010). *Business model generation*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Osterwalder, A., & Pigneur, Y. (2013). Designing business models and similar strategic objects: The contribution of IS. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, *14,* 237-244. https://doi.org/10.17705/1jais.00333

Parloff, R. (2018). How VW Paid $25 Billion for 'Dieselgate' – and Got Off Easy. *Fortune*, 6 February 2018. Retrieved from: http://fortune.com/2018/02/06/volkswagen-vw-emissions-scandal-penalties/

Pawson, R. (2006). *Evidence-based policy: A realist perspective*. London: Sage Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209120

Randolph, W. A. (2011). Developing global business capabilities in MBA students. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *20*, 223-240. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492611401027

Roglio, K. D., & Light, G. (2009). Executive MBA programs: The development of the reflective executive. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *8*, 156-173. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2009.41788840

Rolin, K. (2010). Diversity and dissent in the social sciences: The case of organization studies. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, *41*, 470-494. https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393110381212

Romme, A. G. L. (2003). Organizing education by drawing on organization studies. *Organization Studies*, *24*, 697-720. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840603024005002

Romme, A. G. L., & Eltink, S. (2002). Naar integraal onderwijs op basis van kringorganisatie. *Tijdschrift voor Arbeid en Participatie*, *24*, 193-204.

Romme, A. G. L., & Putzel, R. (2003). Designing management education: Practice what you teach. *Simulation & Gaming*, *34*, 512-530. https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878103258202

Romme, A. G. L., & Reymen, I. M. M. J. (2018). Entrepreneurship at the interface of design and science: Toward an inclusive framework. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights 10*, e00094. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvi.2018.e00094

Romme, A. G. L., Avenier, M. J., Denyer, D., Hodgkinson, G. P., Pandza, K., Starkey, K., & Worren, N. (2015). Towards common ground and trading zones in management research and practice. *British Journal of Management*, *26*, 544-559. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12110

Romme, G. (2016). *The quest for professionalism: The case of management and entrepreneurship*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198737735.001.0001

Rousseau, D. M. (2012). Designing a better business school: Channelling Herbert Simon, addressing the critics, and developing actionable knowledge for professionalizing managers. *Journal of Management Studies, 49,* 600-618. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2011.01041.x

Schwarz, R. (2002). *The skilled facilitator*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shane, S. (2004). *Academic entrepreneurship: University spinoffs and wealth creation*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781843769828

Simon, H. A. (1991). *Models of my life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Somers, M., Passerini, K., Parhankangas, A., & Casal, J. (2014). Management education and the professions. *Organization Management Journal, 11*, 47-56. https://doi.org/10.1080/15416518.2014.903092

Spender, J. C. (2007). Management as a regulated profession: An essay. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *16*, 32-42. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492606297542

Starbuck, W. H. (2006). *The production of knowledge: The challenge of social science research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199288533.001.0001

Starkey, K., & Madan, P. (2001). Bridging the relevance gap: Aligning stakeholders in the future of management research. *British Journal of Management*, *12* (special issue), S3–S26. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12.s1.2

Swartz, M., & Watkins, S. (2004). *Power failure: The inside story of the collapse of Enron*. New York: Doubleday / Random House.

Tsui, A. S. (2016). Reflections on the so-called value-free model: A call for responsible science in the business schools. *Cross Cultural and Strategic Management Journal*, *23*, 4-28. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCSM-08-2015-0101

Van Burg, E., Romme, A. G. L., Gilsing, V. A., & Reymen, I. M. M. J. (2008). Creating university spin-offs: A science-based design perspective. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *25*, 114-128.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5885.2008.00291.x

Van Seggelen-Damen, I. C. M., & Romme, A. G. L., (2014). Reflective questioning in management education: Lessons from supervising thesis projects. *SAGE Open*, *4*(2), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014539167

Walsh, J. P., Meyer, A. D., & Schoonhoven, C. B. (2006). A future for organization theory: Living in and living with changing organizations. *Organization Science, 17*, 657-671. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1060.0215

Williams, M. T. (2010). *Uncontrolled risk: The lessons of Lehman Brothers and how systemic risk can bring down the world financial system*. New York: McGraw-Hill.