

## **Revisiting the Mission of the Business School Through Scholarship of Engagement**

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*The research imperative may be combining with accreditation standards, market forces, and with business schools' traditional employment practices for faculty members to drive schools generally to become less relevant to their local stakeholder real-worlds. We explore the concept of the Scholarship of Engagement and argue that it can help bridge the relevance gap between university business schools and their local stakeholder communities – as well as making faculty members and their research and teaching more relevant. Building local stakeholder connections through Scholarship of Engagement is described as a way forward for relevance and mission-related business school strategy.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the past fifty years, the business school management education industry has grown and globalized as the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree has become the credential for hiring into, and promotion within, the management structures of business corporations and public-sector organizations worldwide. Schools' industry competitive positions are indicated by a ranking published by the business press, e.g., *Business Week*, *Canadian Business*, and *The Financial Times*. Whatever their merits or demerits, everyone, including prospective students, graduate employers, alumni and possible donors, pays attention to these rankings (Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2008).

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business historically has been the representative and accreditation body for business schools in North America, aiming to promote continuous quality improvement in management education. More recently, as AACSB International (AACSB) it is aiming to extend this role worldwide. In 2001, the AACSB became concerned that the business management education market was becoming increasingly global and competitive, and that the unique role of university business schools in this marketplace was becoming threatened. These concerns led to the establishment of a Management Education Task Force whose report, *Management Education at Risk*, (2002) identified the relevance of program curricula to the global business world as one critical issue for business schools. The *AACSB Eligibility Procedures and Standards for Business Accreditation*, (A-EPBSA) were established in 2003 and have been revised since then (A-EPBSA, 2003-2010).

It is possible that the accreditation standards described in A-EPBSA, (2003-2010) also reflect a taken-for-granted cosmopolitan orientation towards education for management in large corporations that operate nationally and internationally. This may be appropriate for so-called top-ranked schools. In contrast, there

appears to be a very large number of business schools in regional universities that, realistically, are not competing in the global, big corporation management education marketplace. These schools have locally-based students and local stakeholder constituencies, but this local orientation may not be included in their mission and strategy. As regional schools seek accreditation, local stakeholder connections can be ignored in slavish compliance with AACSB standards that may be driving them to copy the activities of top-ranked national or international schools. Ironically, AACSB standards, and they may be operationalized in the very large number of lower- and non-ranked schools, may be driving them to become less relevant to their own local real-world stakeholder constituencies, as these schools try to become what they cannot be. Based on stakeholder theory, we argue that regional university business schools that are realistic in adopting a mission and vision that have local components or stakeholder connections are building an avenue towards relevance to their own particular real-worlds.

Media ranking measures include a school's intellectual contribution from research and scholarship, as measured by counts of articles published by faculty members in academic journals. Publication counts are also included in *A-EPSBA*, (2003-2010) and, presumably, the more the better for obtaining and maintaining accreditation. We argue for a broader recognition of scholarship, and of business school faculty members as scholars. Rice, (1996) views the scholar as having a distinct role in society, as one who engages in knowledge activities that address meaningful global and local issues by working in collaborative, interdisciplinary, democratic modes. O'Meara, (2008) observed that engaged scholars in research universities are uniquely positioned to contribute not only disciplinary expertise but the "*ability to engage (and often enhance others' capacity in) systematic inquiry, critical thinking, reflection, valuing of multiple perspectives, and communication of processes and products*". We therefore explore the concept of the Scholarship of Engagement as outlined by Sandmann (2008) and argue that it can help bridge the relevance gap between university business schools and their local stakeholder communities – as well as making faculty members and their research and teaching more relevant.

### **Continuing Concerns for Quality and Relevance in Management Education**

Although the value of a business school education has not been at issue, the quality and relevance of business school programs and their graduates to the real world of management in business corporations has been debated for decades. Classically, Livingston (1971) observed that "*One reason why highly educated men fail to build successful careers in management is that they do not learn from their formal education what they need to know to perform their jobs effectively (p82).*" This observation has continued to be valid. Critics of business school management education have continued to call for a shift away from a focus on specialized functional knowledge and abstract quantitative management techniques towards more emphasis on interpersonal or 'soft' skills, and on integrative, holistic management thinking such as situation analysis and opportunity/challenge finding, perhaps combined with real experiential learning. See also, for example, Leavitt, (1986); Pfeffer & Fong, (2002); Doria, Rozanski & Cohen, (2003); Mintzberg, (2004); and Bennis & O'Toole, (2005).

In an increasingly competitive market for prospective students, and as university budgets have become tighter, business schools generally have become more dependent on student fee income and on obtaining external funding. These realities, have led to increasing competition for students, for example as schools have established web-based distance education programs. As well, for-profit business schools have entered the market. It is not surprising, therefore, that university business schools have adopted market-based paradigm where students and recruiters are viewed as customers (Trank & Rynes, 2003). AACSB accreditation has become market-driven as schools see this as a means of advertising program quality to external stakeholders, especially, graduate employers and prospective students, and therefore increasing student enrolments and other forms of revenue and funding.

Historically, the AACSB has supported research aimed to improve the relevance of business school programming (Porter & McKibbin, 1988). Individual top-ranked business schools, perhaps concerned to maintain and improve their rankings, also have advertised their own program changes aimed at improving relevance. See, for example, *Business Week*, (1991, 1993, 2006, 2008) and *Fortune*, (1994). In 2003, the AACSB has introduced its accreditation standards (*A-EPSBA*, 2003-2010) to improve the quality and

relevance of business school programming (at least in accredited schools). Even so, Pfeffer and Fong (2004) noted that business schools' focus on increasing revenues and enrolments has been partly responsible for a decrease in educational quality and academic standards. As well, a study of 373 MBA programs by Rubin & Dierdorff (2008) concluded that the competencies indicated by managers to be most critical in real-world practice were the very competencies least represented in MBA curricula.

Business schools have been able to ignore concerns for relevance to corporate management so long as their graduates were being hired and promoted by the very business corporations whose executives were expressing these concerns. Business schools are, however, now facing more serious charges: that MBA graduates and schools themselves are partly or largely to blame for the increasingly reported self-interested, unethical, mercenary, and irresponsible actions and behaviours of executives and managers in business corporations to make themselves rich at everyone else's expense. For example, *Business Week*, (2009) posed the question: "MBAs: Public Enemy No.1?" Mintzberg (2009) wrote that, "*Now, a great deal of (American management) is just plain rotten – detached and hubristic...*" and he asserted that traditional business school classroom teaching has been promoting this detachment and hubris.

### **University Business Schools and the Research Imperative**

University business schools are university departments and, accordingly, are expected to demonstrate academic credibility and respectability through scholarship and, more important, research publications. Schools generally must follow the dictates of university organizational and administrative structures and processes, and of university academic tenure and promotion processes for faculty members. "...*The (functional) silo mentality that is a boon for liberal arts scholars and doctoral programs across the university is the bane of the business school.*" (Daghighi and Latham, 1996:65). As well as this "silo mentality", traditional, academic structures and cultures of university business schools have been perceived as important systematic factors underlying concerns for relevance (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005). Among other things that may have gone wrong in business schools (Khurana, 2007), the organization and administrative structures and processes peculiar to universities, and market forces, may have coupled with the research imperative in continuing to militate against business schools becoming more relevant to their cosmopolitan and local stakeholder constituencies.

The reports by Gordon & Howell, (sponsored by the Ford Foundation) (1959) and Pierson & Others (sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation) (1959) have continued to influence business schools and their activities. Business schools' intellectual capital or contribution of a school has become of prime importance for academic respectability. Unfortunately, on top of this driver, the market dynamics of media rankings and accreditation compliance appear to have determined that this capital or contribution is simply the count of faculty members' publications in academic journals, with greater weight being given to articles in so-called 'top-tier' i.e., more academic, journals. For these reasons, there is tremendous institutional pressure on faculty members to publish. This state of affairs has been persisting for some time. See, for example, Byrne, (1990); Sowell, (1990); Fielden and Gibbons, (1991); Dulek and Fielden, (1992); and Strait and Bull, (1992).

Pressure to publish means that research has to be publishable, and for academic respectability and reputational reasons research ideally should be publishable in high-level academic journals. Research need not be useful to management practice – and, indeed, if it were useful it may not be publishable in these journals! Not surprisingly, Behrman & Levin (1984) saw research in business administration as inapplicable and irrelevant to managerial policy issues and problems. Porter & McKibbin (1987) indicated that most business school research will have no real impact, and Byrne (1990) also expressed concerns over its lack of relevance. Muller, Porter & Rehder, (1991:84), asserted that much business faculty research is reductionist in nature, reflects the narrow academic interests and analytical empiricism of faculty members, and is of limited value to students, practising managers, or the larger society. Ghoshal, (2005) has argued that, from their research bias, business schools have sought to make the study of business and management a kind of science - which is not scientific – and this has been problematic.

Pressure to publish is brutally evident in tenure and promotion processes: The rule for university business school faculty academics is clear: publish or perish (i.e., lose your job and your career). Sensible

faculty members who want to have any chances of keeping their jobs and developing their careers, i.e., obtaining contract renewal, tenure or promotion, therefore must allocate their time according to the following rules. These are: (1) Spend maximum time on research publication efforts; (2) Spend minimum time on teaching that is taken for granted; and, (3) Spend no time on any activity that is categorized as academic or institutional service, including any community outreach activities – except where forced to do so for organizational political reasons. Business schools and faculty members single-mindedly (but necessarily) maximizing research publication counts appears to be to the detriment of a school's educational programming and building of community stakeholder relationships, and to the detriment of faculty members' teaching and service to the school and to its community.

It is in line with our argument that *The Economist*, (2004: 5) reported that Jone Pearce, in her presidential address to the Academy of Management in 1993, drew attention to the divide between the scholarly world of research and what she called “folk wisdom” – the insights conveyed in the classroom. *The Economist*, (2009) quoted Henry Mintzberg as saying that:

*“...Although the (Gordon-Howell) report helped schools to become more respectable in research terms...it had a fatal flaw in that its research bias did not place enough emphasis on the teaching of the skill of management itself...This meant that schools did not either – a situation that continues to this day, with schools turning out MBAs unprepared for the real-world of management.”*

## **BUSINESS SCHOOLS ARE NOT ALL THE SAME**

Media rankings of business schools and their MBA programs in North America, and internationally are published by the business press, e.g., *Business Week*, *Canadian Business*, and *The Financial Times*. Their market impact is significant (Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2008) (and it does not matter whether the rankings have anything to do with the relevance of ranked schools, their programs and their graduates to the real-world of business or management!) We suggest that precisely because they are ranked (whatever this may mean) business schools are not all the same. We perceive that business schools effectively, (even if rather crudely) can be separated into two kinds: (1) Top- and higher-ranked schools that have brand equity and are competing nationally and internationally in the corporate management education-and-recruitment market; and, (2) Lower- and Non-ranked schools in regional universities that offer education only, i.e., no graduate placement, and are competing, largely on price and delivery modes and formats, for students in their own and, where possible, other schools' geographic localities.

### **Top- and Higher-Ranked Schools**

These schools, supported by their networks of alumni in senior corporate management positions, are able to provide graduate placement in high-paying corporate jobs, and assistance with career progression. This is the value proposition for well-qualified prospective students who are willing to compete for places in such MBA programs and pay high fees in order to obtain this entrée to jobs that promise a substantial increase in income and social position. As indicated by a recent email message from the Dean of the Warwick Business School to alumni and other stakeholders (Taylor, 2010):

*“The Financial Times have published their annual Executive MBA rankings today and Warwick remains at 35th in the world. In the UK, we also defend our 5th place, with London, CASS, Imperial and Oxford above us. As you know, rankings are an unpredictable and often incongruous way to judge the quality of an MBA; this year's Executive MBA ranking is a good example of how we have improved in a large number of areas and yet our overall position remains the same...For example, this year we have taken significant steps to increase the range of careers services available to both our student and alumni communities...Around 50% of the Financial Times' Executive MBA ranking depends on career outcomes and salary...”*

Top- and higher-ranked schools have been able to develop a viable business model that is based on their high ranking, and uses reputational leverage to develop revenue opportunities, e.g., executive development programs, and to build influence with research funding bodies, and alumni and other possible donors of funds. For these schools, AACSB accreditation may be nice to have but it is their media ranking and reputational brand equity that is their competitive position and advantage.

Higher-ranked schools must maintain and improve their rankings because they have too much to lose in terms of reputation and revenue if they do not. They therefore can be presumed always to be working to score as high as possible on the measures that are used to determine the rankings. These include graduate placement numbers and starting salaries, and career outcomes; scores in experiential surveys of students and corporate recruiters; and counts of scholarly and research publications by the faculty. These schools can be expected to respond to the immediate demands of students and recruiters, as providing what these customers want must be an effective means to favourably influence the ranking scores that they will give to the school and its program. As well as job placement services, what students and recruiters perceive as a relevant program curriculum for entry into management-level jobs can be expected in top schools. (See (Rynes, & Trank, 1999; Gioia & Corley, 2002; Rynes, Trank, Lawson & Ilies, 2003; and, Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2008.)

Faculty members are required to obtain classroom teaching experiential scores from students that are as high as possible, so as to try to ensure that students completing any ranking surveys will give high scores to the school. Faculty members also are required to produce as many scholarly and research publications as possible, in as many high-ranked academic journals as possible, so as to maximize the school's publication counts for ranking purposes (and to keep their jobs.) The reputational revenue and other funding obtained by top- and higher-ranked schools provides resources to support teaching and research by faculty members, completing the virtuous circle of maintaining and improving the media ranking position of the school.

### **Lower- and Non-Ranked Schools**

A very large number of university business schools at reputable universities provide MBA and Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degrees but have little or no brand equity of their own. These schools are just one academic unit, and their programs are few, amongst the many at their parent institutions. Their funding and their student enrolment, both in terms of quantity and quality, largely are determined by the policies and politics of university budget allocation, and especially the extent to which operating funding allocations to academic units are dependent on the numbers of student registrations in each unit. These schools compete intensely for students in a market that is localized and highly fragmented, and includes many university-based and other public-sector providers as well as for-profit providers such as the University of Phoenix.

These schools do not provide graduate placement in high-paying corporate management jobs and so must offer to students a credential that is good value for their time and money spent. While prospective students collectively may constitute a large student demand it is a very localized and a very discriminating demand. For students who are in employment, program delivery must fit in with their specific work requirements and with their lifestyle, and they will demand part-time and block attendance, and web-based programming to accommodate their time scheduling and travel commitments. Indeed, if students cannot get what they require from their local business school they can easily register in another school's web-based distance program! Fees are likely to be set by the parent institution and, in any case, fee levels are limited by these schools' lack of graduate placement services, little, if any, brand equity or other means of differentiation, and by market competitive factors. Prospective students outside these schools' local areas are likely to move from where they are living to study on campus only for a substantial personal reason. For example, foreign students seeking a good quality, North American management degree, and English language experience, at a relatively low cost compared to top-ranked schools.

Students in these schools may care only that the curriculum content is credible and straightforward to learn. As well, budgets in these schools are usually tight. These factors can drive the maximizing of teacher productivity using standardized course packages for low cost delivery to large class sizes. (Simply

teaching-the-textbook and using the publishers learning support package for classroom presentations and for multiple-choice examinations can be an effective means of doing this.) Students also are free to make their own demands regarding curriculum content and learning activities, and concerns have been expressed that such customer demands couple with market competition are leading to a “watering-down” of the MBA degree (*Canadian Business*, 2006, p.94).

Faculty members are required to obtain high classroom teaching experiential scores from students, and these scores are taken into account for contract renewal, tenure and promotion purposes. This raises the possibility that, on top of any watering-down of courses for market competitive and internal cost and productivity reasons, course content and student learning can be further compromised as faculty members may seek to influence students to give them high scores, so that they may keep their employment.

These schools also demand that faculty members publish as many academic research publications as possible, in as many high-ranked academic journals as possible. These demands may be for reasons of academic respectability, and perhaps school administrators are aiming to build some competitive differentiation versus other schools, or simply to copy what top-ranked schools are doing. If faculty members do not publish they will surely perish as their employment will be terminated, i.e., they will be given contract renewal, tenure or promotion. Sensible faculty members must follow the rules of the research imperative described above. Perhaps even more time must be spent on academic research in these schools, because they usually do not have funding or assistance available to support research. This is a further driver towards minimizing their time spent on teaching and spending no time at all on service to the school, the university or its external community. It appears, therefore, that lower- and non-ranked business schools and especially their faculty members, perhaps driven by the research imperative and by administrators seeking to copy what top-ranked schools are doing, are working hard to be non-relevant to their students and to their stakeholder communities generally.

#### **AACSB ACCREDITATION: LEADING TO MORE OR LESS RELEVANCE?**

According to *A-EPSBA*, (2003-2010, Preamble, p3):

*“...management education must prepare students to contribute to their organizations and the larger society, and to grow personally and professionally throughout their careers. The objective of management education accreditation is to assist programs to meet these challenges...Accreditation focuses on the quality of education...”*

For market-competitive reasons it is advantageous for lower- and non-ranked schools to seek to obtain accreditation from the AACSB. This independent stamp of approval can satisfy prospective students that they are applying to a quality program, and prospective employers that they are hiring or promoting a graduate with a quality credential. We are concerned, however, that under this worthy surface accreditation standards coupled with top-down administrative and compliance processes in business schools are working in a manner that is anti-functional. Rather than improving the quality of business management education in these schools, including making it more real-world relevant, accreditation standards and compliance processes in practice may be making things worse for faculty members and for student learning.

As stated in the Introduction to this paper, we are concerned that in its task force report, *Management Education at Risk*, (2002) the AACSB may have adopted a taken-for-granted orientation towards the global business management education market, and a taken-for-granted top-ranked school perspective. We are concerned that the AACSB accreditation standards (*A-EPSBA*, 2003-2010) and compliance processes may be reflective of this ‘taken-for-grantedness’ and, as a result, anti-functional. Accreditation as conceived and implemented therefore can be seen as causing lower- and non-ranked schools to try to be the same as top- and higher-ranked schools – which they are not and cannot be.

Even though accreditation standards are said to be mission-driven for each school, *A-EPSBA*, (2003-2010) standards appear to specify what the AACSB is looking for in a business school’s mission, and

these have a top-school flavor. These standards are: Production of quality intellectual contributions (Standard 2); Specification of the student populations that the school intends to serve (Standard 3); High priority continuous improvement efforts (Standard 4); and, Financial strategies to provide resources (Standard 5). Academic publication counts appear to be most important for accreditation and *pro formas* for listing faculty publications according to their type and tier-ranking are included in Standard 2. We have not found in *A-EPSBA*, (2003-2010) explicit recognition of stakeholdings other than prospective students and other academics (i.e., journal reviewers and editors). If recognition of business schools' local stakeholder real-worlds of potential stakeholders, e.g, the business community, alumni, and provincial and local governments, is not being made explicit in accreditation standards they are unlikely to be included in any business school's mission or strategy in practice.

Realistically, it is business school administrators who apply for accreditation and who are in charge of top-down compliance processes and documentation. In practice, it does not matter what *A-EPSBA*, (2003-2010) may say about curriculum management and student learning goals and aims being driven by faculty members – “publish-or-perish” trumps these considerations every time. As well, *A-EPSBA*, (2003-2010) Standard 2 provides an additional imperative for maximizing publication counts.

### **SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDER COMMUNITIES AS A MEANS FOR BRIDGING THE RELEVANCE GAP**

Lower- and non-ranked business schools or, at least, more forward-thinking administrators can use AACSB accreditation in a much more effective manner – if, first, they have the courage to recognize that they are not the same as top-ranked schools and neither should they be trying to be. This would include reconsidering the taken-for-granted research imperative and its effects in practice. Second, in formulating the school's mission and strategy, administrators can recognize that the school really needs to be relevant in its own stakeholder environment. This will include recognizing and connecting with local and community stakeholders and providing some tangible benefits to them. Third, administrators can reconsider the employment processes for faculty members and especially the dysfunctional effects of the brutal publish-or-perish academic research imperative in causing faculty members to view as time-wasters their important responsibilities of teaching and student learning, and service in the school and towards community stakeholders.

We are suggesting that, as means of complying with AACSB accreditation standards school administrators can choose to encourage, support and reward Scholarship of Engagement. This would be an effective means for making their schools and their faculty members more relevant to their local and cosmopolitan real-world stakeholders, and leading faculty members to be more relevant teaching and student learning. Calls for multisided conversations between the scholarly and the practitioner communities to broaden horizons and improve lives have been made for some time, e.g., Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott, & Trow, (1994). Sandman (2008) has described Scholarship of Engagement as community-engaged scholarship that bridges the gap between scholarly and practitioner communities. This Scholarship of Engagement is heterogeneous, multidirectional, collaborative, highly participatory, and of service to multiple audiences. This notion of engagement appears to be inherently real-world and relevant, yet is not made explicit in *A-EPSBA*, (2003-2010) standards (perhaps because the business model of top-ranked schools does not include engagement with local stakeholders).

#### **Engaging Local Stakeholders for Superior Performance**

Stakeholder theory provides normative reasons for why scholarship of engagement can be accommodated within AACSB accreditation processes. Concern for the interests of other organizational constituents beyond shareholders is hardly new, and Freeman (1984) generally is recognized as being the first to fully articulate the stakeholder framework in a comprehensive manner. Central to stakeholder theory is the notion that organizations should be managed in the interests of all their constituents, as opposed to solely the interests of their stockholders. Freeman (1984: 46) defined stakeholders as “*any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives.*”

Freeman's (1984) assertion that organizations should achieve superior performance if their managers are able to balance the interests of stakeholders over time, has been a basis for ongoing research (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Laplume, Sonpar & Litz, 2008).

While recognizing that the challenges facing university business schools today cannot be solved simply by adopting some "magic" conceptual framework, it appears that a stakeholder perspective does have potential to frame these challenges in a useful manner and provide a means for addressing them. Stakeholder theory reminds us that focusing on the needs of one particular stakeholder or stakeholder group can be counter-productive. The pendulum-like swings between rigor and relevance described by Clinebell and Clinebell, (2008) appear to have led to unbalanced and even dysfunctional modes of educational operations in business schools, focused on satisfying a limited set of stakeholders: the media and their rankings, accreditation bodies, customers (i.e., employer recruiters and/or students) and the cosmopolitan academic community – especially journal editors and reviewers. In particular, business schools and their faculty members appear to be generally ignoring local stakeholder communities in their single-minded pursuit of primarily theoretical academic research so as to generate publication counts for maintaining academic respectability and accreditation, and for keeping their jobs. In contrast, recognizing the general set of stakeholders, including those in business schools' local communities is a more realistic and balanced approach that can enable business schools to become much more relevant and effective in their own real-worlds.

Stakeholders are most likely to support the organization such as a business school when they believe they have been fairly considered, fairly treated and fairly rewarded for doing so (Hosmer & Kiewitz, 2005). Heugens, Van Den Bosch & Van Riel (2002) demonstrated that building trust-based cooperative ties with stakeholders enhances organizational legitimacy, which produces stakeholder support and creates environmental stability, benefiting organizations over the long term. Organizations need to accommodate the interests of strategic stakeholders because of their ability to provide or withhold needed resources (Goodpaster, 1991). Adopting a transactions-based perspective emphasizing stakeholder contributions and inducements, Nickols (2005: 127) argued that stakeholders "*put something in and take something out*" and must see value in the exchange, and a stakeholder is "*a person or group with an interest in seeing the endeavour succeed and without whose support the endeavour would fail.*" This framing can be applied to business schools that are failing to recognize their more local stakeholders – to this extent their endeavours will fail.

While research studies show that stakeholder management does have a positive impact on firm performance, Laplume, Sonpar & Litz, (2008) caution that using short term financial performance as a benchmark may not be appropriate because it is likely that stakeholder management contributes more to organizational effectiveness than it does to efficiency. We suggest, therefore, that where university business schools are focusing on output of research publications in top-tier academic journals as a primary performance benchmark, then this also is short-term productivity and ignores considerations of longer-term strategic effectiveness that may accrue from community stakeholder engagement in scholarship.

Adopting a stakeholder approach within AACSB accreditation would mean that stakeholder community considerations explicitly could be incorporated into the design, development and delivery of courses and research. One important benefit of this would be increased strategic effectiveness for schools, and increased effectiveness of faculty members' scholarship – both stemming from the more congruent alignment with stakeholder needs and benefits. It is also likely that teaching and student learning in practice could be made more effective, or at least more relevant, by including dimensions and learning activities connected to and with local community stakeholders.

## **FRAMING SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT**

Studies of the practice of engaged scholarship in research universities have found that community-engaged scholarship that is so needed in local and regional universities is "boundary-crossing" – it crosses disciplinary and functional boundaries. It therefore can be manifest as engaged scholarship in teaching,

engaged scholarship in research, or engaged scholarship in professional service. Even more commonly, it is integrated *across* teaching, research, and service (Colbeck, 1998; Fear & Sandmann, 2001/2002; Moore, 2006; Ward, 2003). It is scholarship guided by an engagement ethos that results in work connected in coherent, thematic, and scholarly ways.

In a scholarship of engagement strategy, the key is engaging *with* community in defining the purpose of the scholarship, in arriving at the questions driving the scholarship, and in the design, analysis, and dissemination of scholarship. In this cooperative creation of knowledge and problem-solving, community stakeholders (such as local businesses, provincial and municipal governments, non-governmental organizations), faculty members, students, and staff are collaboratively involved in framing the “driving intellectual questions,” in generating and interpreting the evidence, and in using the evidence for diverse purposes. In this way, the scholarship takes the form of an engaged pedagogy that is contextual and social, problem-based and collaborative, drawing on local and cosmopolitan knowledge (Barker, 2004).

Community-engaged scholarship has significant structural parallels to traditional scholarship; however, because it is carried out in collaboration with the community, it reflects a differing epistemological basis and a wider set of values, goals, skills, and results. Although the complexity of engagement allows many avenues of approach, it is fundamental that faculty frame engagement as scholarship and that institutional leaders support faculty in this type of work (Sandman 2008). When scholarship, i.e., the distinctive and important contribution that faculty members can make, acts as the frame, it provides a stable architecture that enables faculty and students to collaborate with community partners in ways that produce credible scholarship for enhanced public good and academic – research and student learning - outcomes. We believe that this dimension is missing in accreditation standards and in schools’ compliance processes generally. Constructing the architecture of the “frame” involves coupling the standards of scholarship with the principles of engagement to form the foundation of community-engaged scholarship. Yet, as schools are building their academic journal counts as demonstrations of higher research profiles, community-engaged scholarship is ignored. Accreditation-driven publication counts can mean that business schools generally – in trying to be like top-ranked schools (which they cannot be) – are doing a disservice to their local communities, and they are not serving the wider society.

As outlined by Sandmann (2008), scholarship is *what* is being done, engaged scholarship is *how* it is done, and for the common or public good is *toward what end* it is done. Rather than simply responding to community or curricular needs, interests, problems, and requests in a just-in-time service-oriented mode, faculty become involved by framing their response as scholarship with the community constituents (Sandmann, Foster-Fishman, Lloyd, Rauhe, & Rosaen, 2000). This framing to simultaneously accomplish both school and community stakeholder objectives sets community-engaged research apart.

Valuable and inherently real-world relevant new knowledge can be obtained from community sources about community issues, problems, and processes. Scholarship of engagement also promotes a practical and interdisciplinary approach most conducive to innovation. Establishing scholarship teams to include graduate students, staff, and community partners means more participants, socializes them towards engagement, and brings new perspectives to research topics. Co-opting community partners before the work even starts can increase the likelihood that the research, the results, and the partnership itself will find acceptance (Sandmann, 2008). Unfortunately, however, the requirements for developing this type of engaged-research (such as time, resources, operational logistics) and the pressure for journal publications mean that this type of scholarship does not normally get done even though it is most real-world relevant.

In many situations traditional scholarship is an appropriate approach, but its procedures and findings are generally research-based and limited to the academy. While questions of interest, and information search considerations may be similar for academic and community-engaged scholarship, the answers are different because the two types of inquiry are constructed through different approaches (Sandmann, 2006). Moreover the outcomes are likely to be completely different. Success in traditional academic research is having your article published in a highly recognized journal with, ideally, this article being cited by authors of other journal articles. For community-engaged scholarship, success may be how local community stakeholders use your research to improve the local community, such as creating the business case for more employment or infrastructure. Engaged scholarship is the recognition that there are a

number of stakeholders that should be, and can be, involved in a university business school, not just students, journal editors and accreditation bodies.

Schön (1995) has indicated that “the new scholarship requires a new epistemology” observing that Boyer’s (1990) reconsideration of scholarship opened the door to a new look at what constitutes legitimate knowledge. Analyzing differences between traditional scholarship such as publication in journals and community-engaged scholarship can oversimplify and dichotomize diverse, complex, and often messy processes. For faculty members in health professions, Community-Campus Partnerships for Health has developed a set of tools to plan and document community-engaged scholarship and produce strong portfolios for promotion and tenure (Jordon, 2007). For those in the arts, humanities, and design, *Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life’s Tenure Team Initiative on Public Scholarship* provides guidance (Ellison & Eastman, 2008). The report *New Times Demand New Scholarship* (Stanton, 2007) explores community-engaged scholarship generally within research universities. As described by Sandmann (2008), a number of exemplary expositions exist regarding community engagement as scholarship, but under differing nomenclature: engaged scholarship, community-engaged scholarship, public scholarship, and the scholarship of engagement. Van de Ven (2007) has described a model for engaged scholarship with business practitioners. It is ironic that the variety and complexity of real-world community-engaged approaches to scholarship may be the very reasons why they appear not to be recognized in accreditation standards. Instead, academic publication counts have become an end in themselves.

## CONCLUSION

Scholars and school administrators supporting them must recognize that establishing and participating in authentically engaged stakeholder-community partnerships to produce mutually beneficial outcomes is not easy. Existing academic or community cultures such as those focused on only publishing in top-tier journals may inhibit participation. Specific projects must be developed, and obtaining funding can be a major concern. Real-life concerns such as logistics, academic calendars, and students’ workplace preparedness can present difficulties. While university and community partners may be committed, developing trans-organizational relationships and multidisciplinary teams takes time. Typically, leadership evolves as the partnership develops. The need to bridge organizational structures across partners requires boundary-spanning roles.

Another challenge is working with stakeholders to help them understand and appreciate scholarship as the scaffold of the collaboration. Local business stakeholders, in particular, are wary of being subjected to traditional scholarly research simply because they know that it is a non-relevant waste of time for them. In contrast, a scholarship of engagement approach allows for a collaborative, engaged partnership with stakeholders – and they can get something directly beneficial out of it. The promise that this type of collaboration holds, along with institutional support, will give scholars a stronger foundation for framing their work in ways that make community members *participants* rather than subjects. Disseminating useful application of the research to the community stakeholders involved can create a constructive feedback circle to support further collaboration with local stakeholders and strengthen connections.

Imaginative business school administrators can lead their schools and support their faculty towards scholarship of engagement – and build the real-world relevance of stakeholder connections into the school’s research efforts and into its educational programming and student learning activities and outcomes. First, business schools will need to plan and provide for the development of faculty members as architects and practitioners of scholarship of engagement. In addition to disciplinary expertise and foundational research skills, faculty members will need support to cultivate an understanding of the underlying epistemology and values of engagement, as well as necessary skills, such as:

- Having a fundamental belief system about the role of the university as a partner engaged with stakeholders in scholarly ways

- Seeing scholarship as the defining structure when beginning a collaborative project with the community
- Being open to interdisciplinary ways of thinking and framing scholarship
- Having skills necessary for partnership, collaboration, and facilitation, such as being a good listener, adaptable, and patient.

Second, there must be consolidation of institutional leadership and support for engaged scholarship. Without such top-level support, community-engaged scholarship may be driven only by the interests of particular faculty members and, if it is established at all, its focus and thus its effectiveness will become diffused and ineffective. Only if engaged scholarship is explicitly included in a business school's mission, strategic priorities, resource allocations, and faculty member employment considerations, so that it counts for contract renewal, tenure and promotion, can any effective scholarship of engagement with local community stakeholders be established (Sandmann, 2009).

It is up to business school administrators to decide whether they want to recognize their school's own local-real world and its community stakeholders, and become more engaged with them and therefore more relevant. In the meantime schools and faculty members will continue to publish *and* to perish through their lack of engagement with their real world.

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