The Future of Research careers in Business Schools: Should we be more “relevant”? 

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The case for (1) 
Engagement leads to better research (1)

- Myth of high expatriate failure rates (Harzing, 1995, 2002 [Thanks to Denise Rousseau!])
- Created by massive mis-citations and lack of contact with practice
- Would HR managers continue to allow a practice that causes nearly half of their managers to fail?
- If managers had believed our “research” they might have drawn very wrong conclusions

The case for (1)
Engagement leads to better research (2)

- The impact of cultural distance on entry mode choice (Harzing, 2003, Harzing & Pudelko, 2016)
  - Hundreds of studies looking at this since the 1980s
  - Nearly all use secondary data with proxy variables and have never talked to managers about what influences their decisions
  - Cultural distance is measured at the country-level as if this is valid for every company and manager
  - “Most studies in this field have succeeded in completely removing the manager(s) who make(s) the entry-mode decision from the equation.”

The case for (2)

- Single-minded focus on publications in a narrow set of journals is severely detrimental to our scholarship
  - “Has university scholarship gone astray? Do our academic assessment systems reward scholarship that addresses the questions that matter most to society?”
  - “[…] this article highlights the problematic nature of academic ranking systems and questions if such assessments are drawing scholarship away from its fundamental purpose.”

- Societal relevance is our responsibility as publicly funded scholars
The case for (3)  
Engagement through new media is easy

• Whereas in the past engagement with practice was time-consuming and cumbersome  
  • New media have made engagement easy and immediate  
• I am a bit of a luddite in terms of social media, but I started blogging and tweeting this year and enjoyed it far more than I expected  
  • [http://www.harzing.com/blog/toc.cy](http://www.harzing.com/blog/toc.cy)  
  • [https://twitter.com/awharzing](https://twitter.com/awharzing)  
• Several of my Middlesex colleagues are blogging about highly topical issues (e.g. [Teaching Ethics](#))

The case against (1)  
Has the quest for relevance gone too far?

• Funding opportunities for B&M in both Australia and the UK seem to be declining (success rates below 5%)  
  • Is the assumption that we acquire funding from industry with all the ties that this implies?  
• Funding opportunities for “blue-sky” research in B&M seem to be drying up completely  
  • Do we need to leave fundamental research to the mother disciplines?  
  • No, in my view there is a strong case for fundamental research in a more applied setting  
  • As “integrative” scholars we can do research that is meaningful, yet rigorous
Does language influence the way in which people feel (positive or negative) about certain concepts?

Small pilot study in Taiwan in 2013 asking for positive and negative feelings about business-related concepts in English and Mandarin.

Concepts clustered into two groups:
- Cooperation, leadership, trust, and team (human)
- Risk, time, competition, shareholders (hard-core business)

The former were evaluated more positively in Mandarin, the latter in English, suggesting cultural accommodation.

So is the spread of English as a lingua franca associated with a more positive assessment of Anglophone business values?

Choice between collaboration and competition:
- Setting: two businesses in a prisoner's dilemma setting
- Setting high or low price
- Dutch students behave less cooperatively playing in English
  - But only if they had lived in an Anglophone country for at least three months, suggesting cultural accommodation

Will business become increasingly competitive if companies adopt English as a lingua franca?

The case against (2)
Are we asking too much of (junior) academics?

• Not every academic can do everything
  • Yes, universities need a portfolio of activities for the entire department/school, but not for every academic
  • Even within the research sphere, not all should be forced to engage with:
    • practice, the ability to combine rigorous research with practical relevance often requires experience
    • traditional media, public appearances can be very time-consuming and can completely displace other work
    • social media, privacy, techno-phobe, online abuse
  • Let’s not forget most researchers are strong introverts whose creative energy can be seriously drained by too much interaction

The case against (3)
Let’s not create opposing “camps”

• Yes, Europe has a unique advantage in being diverse and having a tolerance for different research approaches
• But do not forget that many North American scholars feel exactly the same
  • Many of the prominent scholars in evidence-based/engaged scholarship are North American
  • The vast majority Academy of Management themes emphasise engagement
    • 2016: “Making organizations meaningful”
    • “Dare to care”, “Capitalism in question”, “The Questions we ask”, “What matters most”, “Doing well by doing good”
On balance?
There is more than one way

• Yes, let’s be a “European-based community of engaged management scholars” [EURAM’s tagline]
• However,
  • Do recognise the power of fundamental research in Management
  • Do not force every academic in the same mold, respect individual preferences
  • Do not create “opposing” camps, we can all learn from each other