**Rediscovering Paideia and the Meaning of a Scholarly Career:**

**Rejoinder to Identifying Research Topic Development in Business and Management Education Research Using Legitimation Code Theory**

I very much welcome the opportunity to offer a rejoinder to Arbaugh et al. (2016) as I would like to frame the challenge they set - in relation to scholarly contributions and their overall impact in advancing the Business and Management Education field - as more than one of legitimation. Although I very much understand and admire their analysis and insights in an area where our impact as scholars is being questioned, our response matters even more. Our ‘action takeaway’ should not be simply how we choose to focus our research based on the characteristics of contributions that are deemed ‘successful’ merely in terms of citation. I feel strongly, as I have argued elsewhere (Antonacopoulou, 2009; 2010a; 2010b; Aguinis et al., 2014) that this invitation (not challenge, as I choose to see it) to account for our impact is an opportunity to realize impact both individually and collectively. I use the word *realize* in its double meaning; this invitation is a *golden moment* to realize – *recognise* - our impact, and also to realize – *deliver* - our impact. What would this mean, then, *if impact is what we construct our careers around as scholars and educators?*

*Paideia* (education) in the Ancient Greek Polis was concerned with cultivating each individual’s natural, in-born potential in every domain of social activity (Jaeger, 1945, Antonacopoulou, 2008). In this rejoinder to Arbaugh et al (2016), I propose what impact could be understood as, what the meaning of career may fundamentally be, and why rediscovering *paideia* is more likely to restore both meaningfulness and purposefulness in both than a focus on legitimacy.

**Impact is as Impact Does?**

When major political scandals, economic crises, and the overall lack of balance in society are being presented as evidence of a negative impact because the education business schools provide, in terms of content or methods of delivery, not only contributes to but is seen as having caused these grand challenges (Ghoshal, 2005; Holland, 2009; Alajoutsijarvi et al, 2015; Mintzberg, 2015), any response requires a systematic reassessment of the fundamental *principles* (axies)[[1]](#footnote-1) that govern management as a professional and scholarly practice.

These criticisms cannot be averted through further insular debate within the management scholarly profession that explicates the discourse’s conceptualisation of the meanings attributed to ‘rigour’, ‘relevance’ and ‘impact’, invaluable as these may be. In what Khurana and Spender (2012) have called the “intellectual stasis” of management scholarship, that is, its over-emphasis on academic values and ideals at the expense of professional ones, lies an opportunity - through an *impact agenda* - to (re)build the discipline’s ethos in ways consistent with more civic forms of professionalism (Adler et al., 2008; Suddaby et al., 2009).

The opportunity to revitalize the idea of scholarship as a professional career and future-oriented endeavour calls for a return to reflexivity, the capacity to critique one’s judgments and choices beyond intended and unintended consequences (Antonacopoulou, 2010a). This is a critical priority in articulating more clearly our response to an *impact agenda* that calls into question the legitimacy of management scholarship. Impact in relation to scholarship is, in fact, a means of accounting for *a multiplicity of ways of making a difference* (Chandler, 2014). Making a difference has been framed as reflecting scholarly practices that are: “***I***nfluential, ***M***emorable, ***P***ractical, ***A***ctionable, ***C***o-created, ***T***ransformational”, which holistically when combined stand for a commitment to ”IMProving ACTion”, both that of those that scholarship serves (through teaching, research, and service) and the commitment of scholars to improve their actions, as well (Antonacopoulou, 2009: 428; Antonacopoulou, 2010b: 225).

Referring to impact in the plural – impacts – suggests a relational nature where impact can be both formal and informal, specific to people and circumstances and at the same time broad and encompassing of different social arrangements (Antonacopoulou et al., 2011). This reflects an understanding that it is often difficult to attribute impact to a single source and equally difficult to measure when impact is low or high in volume or significance. There is, therefore, a strong perceptual dimension to impact as well. Hence, impact could be a cause, consequence, and context of scholarship and it may be an outcome, output, and process at the same time. In this respect, it needs to be acknowledged that there are a variety of impacts from scholarship that can be identified and summed up as: scholarly and policy impact, instrumental impact (tangible products or services), conceptual impact (new understanding), capacity building impact (developing collaborative activities), cultural change impact, enduring connectivity impact (willingness to engage in knowledge exchange) (Pettigrew, 2011).

An example of this lies in the growing focus on capturing impact through altmetrics[[2]](#footnote-2) (Aguinis et al., 2014), wherein the legitimacy of impactful scholarship is evidenced and corroborated through testimonies by different stakeholders that demonstrate how the scholarship made a tangible (and intangible) difference.

Imagine the argument made by Arbaugh et al. (2016) - based on the richness of knowledge ideas, the reputation of scholars, and how topical areas of inquiry and future research questions may be identified – was one where impact was not ‘measured’ on the basis of citation but on evidence of the difference made in the experiences of the users of the knowledge and ideas developed. These indicators of impact bring forth a number of other aspects of scholarship, reflecting the *character* of academia and not least propound the need for consistency between what is preached and what is practiced; something that may introduce a whole range of possibilities for the way legitimation or its associated codes might be deployed to account for impact.

**Scholarship Reconsidered: Rediscovering Paideia**

If this is management scholarship’s ‘golden moment’ to celebrate both its rigor and relevance as an engaged, relational (Van de Ven, 2007; Bartunek, 2007) and impactful professional practice, then it is critical that as management scholars ***we take a position on what we and our scholarship stand for.*** This implies at the most basic level, building *confidence* in the community of management scholars globally that who we are and what we do is important in a variety of ways scholarship finds expression; that is, fundamentally in the *ideas* we generate and share through our teaching, research and service activities are all integral to what scholarship is (Boyer, 1996; Antonacopoulou, 2010c). Taking a stand and reflecting not only the varieties of scholarship but its underlying principles (*axies*) takes us back to the scholarship of Plato’s *‘Academy’* and Aristotle’s *‘Lyceum’*.

A revival of the idea of scholarship calls for an explication of the *axiology* central to the ‘idea of the University’ (Newman, 1852). By implication, this includes the business school as a key institution and site where knowledge, culture and society foster the enlargement of human growth. This focus on contributing to the growth of humanity seems to have been forgotten as a principle of scholarship in the Arbaugh et al (2016) approach and elsewhere, yet this remains the central foundation of scholarship when we take scholarship to encompass education – *paideia* – expressed through its inseparable practices of research, teaching, learning and citizenship (service to society).

*Paideia* in the education of the Greek citizen was firmly embedded in social and political life. The common denominator of *paideia* is the Socratic method of *dialectic*– an approach that cultivates reflection on interpersonal connections and their impact on society. Paideia is central to education and seeks to realize human potential (Fotopoulos, 2005). This mode of education (*Maieutic*) nurtures learning by experiencing the struggle of learning. In the Greek language, paideia (pedevo - παιδεύω) also means struggling, exerting great effort to achieve something. The struggle that paideia implies is when one strives for something with passion – it is *a labour of love* (Antonacopoulou, 2008). These principles of paideia had a major impact on the teaching and learning practices within universities until the Renaissance and subsequently the Humboldtian university of the 19th century, where dialectics were part of the liberal art and central to the idea of education as *Bildung* (Lindberg, 2007; Ruegg, 2004).

The concept of paideia can help transform the ethos of management education from one focused on identifying the ‘hot’ topics that can enhance reputational impact, to one that links the ideas central to management education and associated research with a focus on cultivating *character* and *conscience* and not only *competence* in managing. Repurposing management education to growing humanity through cultivating character and conscience also implies that the orientation of dialectics is on practising reflexivity to enhance practical judgments (phronesis). Beyond restating the centrality of practical reasoning – phronesis – central to the notion of liberal education (Colby et al., 2011; Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014), is critical reassessment of commonsense reality akin to what Freire (1973) called *conscientization*.

Rediscovering paideia as central to management education scholarship upholds scholars’ social contract of supporting the cultivation of ‘educated’ citizens in society. By implication, a future impact agenda founded on the ethos of paideia restores trust in scholarship as a professional practice at large, one in which universities and their business schools are the space where collective productivity, innovation and competitiveness can grow across other professions (Blond et al., 2015). Repurposing scholarship along these lines promotes professional conduct not only defined by ethical codes but by clear conscience of our responsibility as citizens of the societies we co-create. This position introduces as part of the future impact agenda a *code of chivalry* that can redefine the meaning of a scholarly career.

**The Meaning of Career: Cultivating Competence, Character and Conscience**

Rediscovering paideia liberates human development by cultivating competence, character and conscience in scholarship as a professional practice. These three key principles of paideia not only reflect the underlying ethos of scholarship, they also collectively point to the meaning of career. As such, our choices as management scholars - of where and what to publish, how and what to teach, and how what we do in the ways we do it makes a difference - is not a careerist response (Clarke & Knights, 2015). Instead, it is a means of preserving the ideals – axies (principles) that form our stance and what we stand for, such that for example our research is not merely an act of ‘gap-spotting’ (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2012) but a reflection of our dedication in (ful)filling the identified ‘gap’ by connecting afresh theory and practice, knowledge and action, in ways that informs ongoing critique of the connections we make. It is these connections that merit revisiting if we are to promote through critique the stimulating of *curiosity* and building of *confidence* to *command* the unknown.

This means that the career of a scholar is one of acting as a conduit for learning by instigating modes of learning, not merely being concerned with accumulating a body of knowledge that exemplifies expertise and establishes reputation as being influential. It promotes instead an approach to becoming and remaining a scholar that invites *attentiveness, alertness, awareness* and *appreciation* of the complexities of everyday practice expressed in the tensions that call for judgment (*phronesis*). It is phronesis that will stimulate the *curiosity* to *review* one’s scholarly practices to become more *attentive* to potential inconsistencies and *competence* gaps. It is phronesis that will build *confidence* to *reflect* and reassess professional conduct such that becoming more *alert* of tensions that can threaten scholarship, the enhanced *awareness* prompts the choices made about the right way to act under the circumstances thus, expressing one’s character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Wright & Lauer, 2013). And, it is phronesis that will fuel the *reflexivity* to appreciate that tensions and dilemmas can become extensions, that create new possibilities. This would be feasible when *critique* affords making a difference by being different. Reflexivity fosters the capacity to see above and beyond to command the unknown *appreciating* the complexity of given situations and incidents guided by the *voice of conscience* not by a set of rules one follows blindly.

This mode of ‘learning-in-crisis’ embraces emergence and emergency, and fosters scholarship founded on humanistic principles as fundamental to advancing a relational approach to engagement in a scholarly career. This reveals one of the missing linchpins in the way scholarship cultivates and sustains personal and professional identity, itself a critical aspect of pursuing a scholarly career. It is impossible to separate the person one is from the scholar one seeks to become, or indeed the scholar one is and the person one seeks to become. This entwinement of personal and professional identity in becoming and remaining professional reflects another major struggle shaping the person as a person or the person as a professional (Ibarra & Barbulescu 2010; Slay & Smith, 2011). Scholarly career in this respect is the space of action in which virtues emerge and become habits that reflect the consistency in a person’s character to strike that ‘ideal’ golden mean (Rorty, 2000). By extension, virtues are a sign of phronesis as they ‘measure’ right/wrong or good/bad as a matter of degree, which explains why the Aristotelian *phronimos* does the right thing for the right reasons (Antonacopoulou, 2012).

The virtues of management scholarship are rarely discussed (for exceptions see Antonacopoulou, 2004) and the debate on the professionalism that underpins management scholarship is equally absent from much of the hitherto discourse on impact, despite professing (thought) ‘leadership’ as a distinctive character quality and a characteristic of those considered as leaders (Gandz et al., 2010; Crossan et al., 2013). As a minimum the opportunity to rediscover *paideia* provides the scope to show with greater consistency that management scholars practise what they profess. If this were one of the indicators of our impact, then it would be possible, too, to recast the meaning of scholarly career as being a ***care-er*** of ideas, who makes important sacrifices to set them free, not to limit their growth by playing citation games.

In short, my response to the ways we identify and develop research topics in business and management education would be less a matter of legitimation, and more a sign of our *axies* – our care to serve the common good – and advancing ideas with a *code of chivalry*. A chivalric code, proposed as a moral compass for navigating our scholarly careers, extends the proposed manifesto of leadership development as founded on good judgment (Gandz et al., 2010), and includes *altruism* as a fundamental virtue in management scholarship to emphasize the centrality of individual and collective growth as founded on *‘giving’ -* the desire to do good for others without seeking return as integral to human nature (Kurzhban et al., 2015). This orientation brings us back to the essence of paideia, and fostering learning as the labour of love (hence, care-er). A code of chivalry is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 here

If a code of chivalry is deployed as a moral compass to navigate through the professional dilemmas integral to the ways management scholarship is conducted, then management scholarship’s impact could add value by promoting curiosity, confidence, and commanding the complexity of judgment calls that reflect the competence, character and conscience with which managing is performed. Such impact emerges from the manner in which management scholars reflect these axies, in the ways they conduct their own scholarship as a professional practice, and in leading careers that support human flourishing through paideia. This is this career I signed up to when I committed to a life of scholarship.

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Figure 1



**Figure 1: Code of Chivalry in Management as Professional and Scholarly practice**

1. My reference to axies (core values and principles) is to reinforce the significance of *axiology* (what is deemed as valuable), which seems to be often neglected in its centrality in thought and action and ‘an important part of who we are’ (Rothe, 2000: 11) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Almetrics include activities other than citations e.g. presentations and workshops for external audiences, invitations to serve as experts on policy-formulation panels, witnesses at legislative hearings, special interest groups, and roundtables [↑](#footnote-ref-2)