Management and Organization Review

Management and Organization Review 14:1, March 2018, 223
doi: 10.1017/mor.2018.2

Dialogue, Debate, and Discussion

Introduction to 'A Scholar's Quest'

Liisa Välikangas
Aalto University, Finland, and Hanken School of Economics, Finland

This edition of Dialogue, Debate, and Discussion features two very different perspectives. Each speaks to the core of being an academic.

Jim March reminds us that a scholar's obligation is to fulfil the ethos of great human institutions. This tradition demands self-conception rather than calculation. Know who you are rather than calculate what the payoff is. A reward calculation is typical of the marketplace. It does not befit a university. Even though some market realities are perhaps unavoidable, universities sacrifice their core mission, their 'educational soul', when they institutionalize consequentalist logic as the dominant driver of academic work. An organization that justifies its existence solely on performance cannot be respected beyond its measurement. The numbers may look good yet the role of universities as pillars constitutive of civilization may be denuded. More may soon be demanded of universities as the institutional foundations of many societies throughout the world are eroding.

Do academic articles matter? Deborah Dougherty questions the ability of academics to write to practitioners. Unless they do, in fast changing environments much organizational potential for continuous innovation and larger profit streams will remain unrealized. She blames academics for concentrating on what-to-do rather than how-to-do. The latter is more interesting to managers but perhaps harder for academics to answer as they navigate complex and messy managerial realities. By shifting publication norms along with evoking abductive learning routines and discovery scholarship, Dougherty sees a way forward for an impactful understanding between researchers and managers.

Beyond soul searching, where do these two perspectives lead? Counting research output is often seen as a cure for academic malaise. While it may have made academic life more demanding, eliminated slack and raised aspiration levels, it has not helped academics connect with practitioners. Will it build the temple for scholarship Jim March is calling for? How will universities respond to a calling that does not measure but honors scholarship, and engages in discovery as Deborah Dougherty suggests?

© 2018 The International Association for Chinese Management Research

https://doi.org/10.1017/mor.2018.2 Published online by Cambridge University Press