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BUSINESS SCHOOLS AT THE CROSSROADS? A TRIP BACK FROM SPARTA TO ATHENS

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Abstract:	Some business schools have come under considerable criticism for what observers see as their complicit involvement in the corporate scandals and financial crises of the last fifteen years. Much of the discussion about changes that schools might undertake has been focused on curriculum issues. However, revisiting the curriculum does not get at the root cause of the problem. Instead, it might create a new challenge: the risk of decoupling the discussion of the curriculum from broader issues of institutional purpose. In this article, we argue that the most pressing need facing business schools is not to teach new courses to be responsive to social demands and stay relevant. Instead, it is to revisit their basic mission -the principles and beliefs on which they were founded -and then to re-evaluate their curriculum design choices in this light. We contrast the Spartan and Athenian educational paradigms as a way of shedding light on the nature of a coherent response.
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Revised version "Business Schools at the crossroads? A trip back from Sparta to Athens"

Reviewer #1: The second revision of this paper is much improved, and would appear to have addressed my earlier concerns.

I remain unpersuaded of, not so much the specific details of the authors' argument, as the general optimism that there is a potential for change in the approach taken by most business schools, however this is not a comment on the quality of this paper so much as simply an indication of an intellectual difference.

More specifically, the authors have provided a sound critique of the agency-theoretic assumptions underpinning much that goes on in and around business schools, but they might want to consider - in further work, not in this paper - taking the institutional theoretic perspective, which in this paper they apply to the development of business schools to date, and extending this to consider how the schools might be open to the kinds of change which the authors suggest. However, this is further work, beyond the purpose of the current paper.

Thank you for your positive feedback and encouragement throughout the revision process. We will certainly take into account the institutional approach in a future work.

Reviewer #2: However, there is one area which requires further attention, your explanation of "Paideia" & "Agōgē" (pp. 8-10). You must explain the terms as soon as you introduce them. You introduce the terms with a reference to Jaeger, 1986 (p. 8, l 44-47). You go on to discuss how you intend to make use of the terms before explaining what they mean. You reintroduce the terms again (p. 9, l 8-10) with an almost identical reference to Jaeger, 1986. This appears 'messy'. Only at p. 9, l 34 do you start to explain "Agōgē". You start to explain the meaning of "Paideia" at the foot of p. 10, far too late.

Thank you for this opportunity to review and improve our paper based on your feedback. We hope you will be pleased with this new version of the manuscript.

We certainly appreciate this comment which has helped us to improve the clarity of the paper. We have included a definition for both Paideia and Agōgē on page 8, lines 21 to the end; and page 9 lines 1-4. Moreover, we enriched the text including additional references to Adler (1982), T. Roberts (1998) and J. Roberts (2005), avoiding duplication in the subsequent header (i.e.: 'Sparta & Athens' on page 9).

Title Page (containing all authors contact details)

Business Schools at the Crossroads?

A Trip Back From Sparta to Athens

JOURNAL SECTION: "Teaching business ethics"

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BUSINESS SCHOOLS AT THE CROSSROADS? A TRIP BACK FROM SPARTA TO ATHENS

ABSTRACT

Some business schools have come under considerable criticism for what observers see as their complicit involvement in the corporate scandals and financial crises of the last fifteen years. Much of the discussion about changes that schools might undertake has been focused on curriculum issues. However, revisiting the curriculum does not get at the root cause of the problem. Instead, it might create a new challenge: the risk of decoupling the discussion of the curriculum from broader issues of institutional purpose. In this article, we argue that the most pressing need facing business schools is not to teach new courses to be responsive to social demands and stay relevant. Instead, it is to revisit their basic mission –the principles and beliefs on which they were founded –and then to re-evaluate their curriculum design choices in this light. We contrast the Spartan and Athenian educational paradigms as a way of shedding light on the nature of a coherent response.

Keywords: Ancient Greece – Business Schools – Curriculum Issues – Mission – Scandals – Sparta and Athens

Introduction

Some business schools have come under considerable criticism for what many see as their complicit involvement in corporate scandals. Observers have questioned whether the education business schools imparts negatively affects students' values and behavior (Ghoshal 2005; Pfeffer 2005). An underlying argument in these studies is that an excessive emphasis on rigor and specialized knowledge has led business schools to adopt a value-free education model (Pfeffer and Fong 2004), and thereby produce managers that seek to serve their narrow self-interests, sometimes even at the expense of a broader societal well-being. It is thus timely to bring questions concerning the general purpose of education, and especially business education, back to center stage (Augier and March 2007; Roca 2008; Wright et al. 2013).

Much of the discussion about inculcating ethical managers through business education has focused on curriculum issues (Miles 1985; Ghoshal et al. 1992; Mintzberg 2004; Bennis and O'Toole 2005; Rubin and Dierdorff 2013). Partly as a result, the vast majority of business schools now have business ethics (or some variant thereof, such as corporate social responsibility or business sustainability) as part of their curriculum (Christensen et al. 2007; Roca 2008; Cavico and Mujtaba 2009). An assumption here is that including more content about ethics and social responsibility will align business education to broader social norms, which in turn will help prepare future mangers who are sensitive to broader societal goals than merely their own. A focus on curriculum has indeed contributed to mainstreaming business ethics and corporate social responsibility in business education; but — we contend — its effects go only so far. In particular, this approach is limited by the rather reductionist view it takes. Specifically, it tends to ignore the fact that the majority of popular management theories make rationality-oriented assumptions about human nature at work that are devoid of ethical considerations (Fontrodona and Sison, 2006; Ghoshal, 2005). In that sense, there remains a persistent misalignment between what is taught through ethical components of business

education on the one hand, and the broader purpose of business organizations professed through the same education, on the other.

It is with this backdrop that we argue for the need for holistic changes in management education in order to better train and to educate ethical managers. In particular, we assert that curriculum adjustments, while helpful, are not sufficient to make those changes happen. Instead, we propose an overhaul in business education which would enable us to revisit the basic mission of business schools, redefine the purpose of business education, re-examine the overarching philosophies of the role of business in society, and then re-analyze what curriculum and course content changes are required. Analysis by Rubin and Dierdorff (2013, p. 128) shows that management education scholars have devoted the majority of their energies over the last decade to address curriculum design issues (59%) while the mission of business schools has received very little attention (5%)[1]. We argue that the most pressing need facing business schools is not to teach new courses to be responsive to social demands, but rather to revisit their mission and re-examine their curriculum design choices in this light.

Our focus in this article is therefore on the connection between the mission and curriculum of business schools as the cornerstone of a coherent response. We deploy a framework drawing on educational systems in ancient Greece, where a distinction was made between *Paideia* and *Agōgē,* reflecting the different underlying educational paradigms in the Athenian and Spartan societies respectively. In this article, we focus exclusively on those facets of the Athenian and Spartan systems that provide insightful analogies to management education today, and we bypass those social, political and historical elements that are of less relevance. The defining philosophy of Athenian *Paideia* was the ceaseless striving for wisdom and knowledge, with higher education as a means to those ends (Jaeger 1961). In this sense, ethics is central to *Paideia*. In contrast, the *Agōgē* system in Sparta focused on developing its people as 'tough, self-disciplined and unquestioningly obedient military men' (Cartledge

1978), who ultimately helped the Spartan city-state to 'conquer almost the entire world' (Jaeger 1944). We use these contrasting systems to help make sense of the different philosophies that exist in contemporary management education, and how these philosophical views inform curricula, methods and teaching profiles. However, we also acknowledge the inherent limitations of analogical reasoning, and we caution against taking the insights from Athens and Sparta too literally.

The paper is organized as follows. We first elucidate the problems we see in the world of business education and the standard approaches offered to resolve these problems. Second, we present the classical notions of *Paideia* and *Agōgē*, as a way of framing the different belief systems that exist in the world of management education nowadays. Finally, we suggest a way forward by delineating the benefits of the Athenian model as more responsive to society's demands, by offering a coherent alignment between the mission of the business school, curriculum design, methods, and faculty profile.

Business Schools at the crossroads

Business Schools are at a crossroads between staying true to their original calling as professional schools or following political and market pressures.

Khurana (2007, p. 334) has argued that business schools were originally professional schools. University-based business schools emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century mirroring the values of the selected occupations of the time –namely, law and medicine – that qualified as professions. These disciplines were deemed to be capable of resolving social problems on a rational and, at the same time, disinterested basis. In this vein, Khurana (2007) referred to business education as 'a form of *paideia'* in the sense that its distinctive features back then were "expertise, autonomy, and an ethos of service to society" (2007, p.101).

In recent decades, however, we believe business schools have increasingly been influenced by political and market pressures, and have moved away from these principles[2].

Higher education as a whole is deeply immersed in the processes of 'global marketization' (Marginson and Wende 2007) which includes the formation of world-wide markets operating in real time with common financial systems, foreign direct investment and cross-border mobility of production. Pfeffer (2005) shows how these economic forces affect particular groups and organizations, based on a resource dependence paradigm. He states that "ideas follow money and power, and the growth of particular ideas about the economy and society was helped along by foundations and research institutes that received funding from conservative sources" (2005, p. 98). In addition, "pressures from students, from the rankings, and from the business community itself, accompanied by a shift from a professional to a market rhetoric, have caused professional values to fall by the wayside". Pfeffer concludes that, given the lack of research on the origin of concepts and language in management, more research is needed on the "sources of business school funding and the dynamics of the interaction between schools and those external groups and organizations on which they depend" (2005, p. 98).

Khurana (2007) acknowledges these market forces, and develops a view on the pressure faced by business schools that combines both the influence of economics and the pressure of external stakeholders. He argues that in the 1950s, business schools lost "control of their destinies in the face of interventions by outside actors including the federal government and foundations" (2007, p. 19) to move from the professional imperatives to market imperatives. Therefore, he concludes that:

"*[it] is hardly surprising that university business schools—despite early efforts to ground themselves in what were once held to be the transcendent values of science (that is, truth), the professions (service), and the nineteenth-century research university (knowledge and culture), and even despite a midcentury revival of something like this original vision—now willingly adopted the concept of higher education as a purely instrumental system of production and consumption*" (2007, p. 334).

Our focus on business schools as the unit of analysis in this study manifests not only how these are interwoven with global markets (Marginson and Wende 2007), but also the extent of the reach of schools whose influence trickles down into public, nonprofit and health care domains, leading to the 'businessification' of broader organizations in society (March 2007; Yanow 2007). In fact, some business schools have been a target for critics, on the basis that they were responsible for shaping the worldview and skillset of those very executives whose ethical lapses and poor judgments caused the corporate and financial scandals of the last fifteen years (Pfeffer and Fong 2004; Starkey et al. 2004; Khurana 2007).

Such a critique appears to be well-grounded if we consider the leading role business education has in society (Miles 1985). A recent Carnegie Foundation 2011 study concluded that for 2006 – 2007, the most recent academic year for which US data were available, 21 percent of all undergraduates were business majors, making business the most popular field of undergraduate study. Furthermore, when business is combined with other vocational majors such as engineering, nursing, education, agriculture, security studies, and others, the total rises to 68 percent of all undergraduates in the States (Colby et al. 2011).

In the aftermath of the global financial crisis, what is the main concern of academics writing about business education? In a recent review, Rubin and Dierdorff (2013) showed that the majority of papers focused on the MBA degree, as the 'flagship' offering of most business schools, and that within this set of papers the largest group, 59%, focused on curriculum issues, while only 5% of the contributions examined institutional purpose (Rubin and Dierdorff 2013). Given that the mission of an organization is its reason for being (Leuthesser and Kohli 1997), it is thus relevant to assess how the changing demands on business schools are coherently integrated into their institutional mission and curriculum. Following Ghoshal (2005), business school governance may either just ensure the 'external rhetoric' stays relevant for the target

audience or may dig deeper to revisit coherence in terms of the institutional mission: whether it is actually reflected in all internal choices and, in particular, in curriculum design.

Research suggests that exposure to the self-interest model embedded in the curriculum leads business school students to act in a more self-interested way, either in terms of dishonesty or narrow focus, than non-business school students (Frank et al. 1993; McCabe et al. 2006). In this regard, there could be a significant disconnect between how business schools frame their purpose – this is, as dedicated to pursue 'perceived legitimate outcomes', such as social awareness, responsibility, and developing students who can be team players (Palmer and Short 2008) –and the underlying world-view that is built into their curricula.

The current criticism of business schools for their negative impact on the behavior of their graduates poses a fundamental question about the desired outcome of a business education is at an individual level. Our view is that, in addition to gaining technical knowledge and growing their professional networks, students should experience *personal growth* which, following Aristotle, we define as growth in 'excellences, virtues or character strength' (Peterson and Park 2006; Rocha and Ghoshal 2006).

For Aristotle, the basic human tendency is toward good, and the pinnacle of all goods is Eudaimonia, happiness (Aristotle 1984b, Book I, 4) or human flourishing. Although both "the general run of men and people of superior refinements" say that happiness is the highest good, "with regard to what happiness is, they differ" (1984b, Book I, 4). Thus, Aristotle investigates how different goods (wealth, pleasure, honor and excellence) contribute to happiness. In his view, there was a clear hierarchy among these goods, with excellence - defined as a disposition to behave in the right manner gained through training and habituation -, at the top of the list (Aristotle 1984b, Book I, 5). He concludes asserting that "the happy life is thought to be one of excellence" (Aristotle 1984b, Book X, 6), because happiness is "activity

in accordance with excellence" (Aristotle 1984b, Book X, 7). Therefore, happiness occurs when the human being develops his excellences (1984b, Book I,13, Book X, 6-7)[3].

Given that we can trace back our dominant western educational system to the Greeks (Guisepi 2007; Nussbaum 2010), it is useful to analyze alternative educational paradigms in the old Greece. Jaeger (1986), when tracing the origins of educational theory in the first volume of his well-known work, points out that early ancient Greeks claimed that cultural education is the center of all human life, thus education was really aimed at *humanism* (Jaeger 1986, p. 300). While, generally speaking, humanistic culture was regarded as a higher aim versus technical efficiency, there was variance among the Greeks in terms of the degree of subordination of technical knowledge to culture. In this sense, there is a fundamental distinction between knowledge and power on the one hand and culture on the other. Furthermore, Greeks distinguished specialist knowledge such as the kind which an artisan or a soldier gets –which they called *techne*– from a more comprehensive concept which pertained to the ability and knowledge which the politician acquires with training and experience and they identified as 'universal culture'. This close connection between higher education and the idea of society and the state is an essential feature of classical Greece (Jaeger 1986).

For these reasons, our lenses of analysis are most effective when we consider educational outcomes in terms of societal goals. In this regard, our analysis of ancient Greece reveals that there was a clear distinction between *Paideia* and *Agōgē*, reflecting the different approaches used in the Athenian and Spartan societies respectively (Jaeger 1986). The aim of the Athenian *Paideia*, on the one hand, was 'human excellence': virtue, generosity and right action, both in the private and public realms were the ultimate goals of education (T. Roberts, 1998). Moreover, *Paideia* emphasized the acquisition of organized knowledge, the development of 'intellectual habits' (this is, learning skills) and the enlargement of general ideas and values; thus rejecting disciplinary training (Adler, 1982). On the other hand, Spartan

Agōgē emphasized training in austerity, obedience and battle techniques; it also inculcated conformity and the prioritization of collective interest. It thus promoted the emergence of an elite body of soldiers (Roberts, 2005).

The following section use the classical notions of *Paideia* and *Agōgē* to identify key variables underlying alternative educational paradigms within management education, in order to shed light on the connection between business school mission and curriculum design. We shall thus deploy this ancient Greek lens to lay out two contrasting paradigms, starting from the underlying mission in each case, and then looking at what its consequences are on curriculum design, learning methods, and faculty development.

Sparta and Athens

The Spartan and Athenian city-states represent paradigmatic worldviews of education in the ancient world. What is more, education in the old Greece was all about either *Agōgē* or *Paideia*. The Greek culture assumed its classical form in the *polis* or city-state, which is the first example of what we call state in modern times. Following Jaeger (1986), the 'spiritual leadership' of Greece was taken over by the culture of the cities in the sense that the polis is the focus of Greek history and historical inquiry, as it included and defined every form of social and intellectual activity (Jaeger 1986).

The great social problem of all Greek educators was to determine how individualism might be repressed, and how the character of every citizen might be developed around one communal model (Jaeger 1986). On this matter, Sparta and Athens conceived responses in quite different spirits.

The notion of *Agōgē* was typical of the Spartan *polis* and pertained to providing or receiving training in specific disciplines, always with the purpose of enhancing the students' maneuverability as soldiers. The cornerstones of this educational paradigm were the denial of a personal-purposeful and goal-directed training in favor of the militarization of both private

and collective life. In Plutarch's[4] words, the skills of reading and writing students were given 'just enough to serve' [the city-state] (Geiger 1981); training in music and literature, although also present, occupied a subordinate position. The tireless emphasis on physical training and on a specific skill set gave Spartans the reputation for being *laconic*, that is, economical with words, a word derived from the name of their homeland of Laconia (Boardman et al. 2001). The main concern was to teach them to endure pain and gain victory in battle. To this end, as the students matured, their discipline increased commensurately. The most celebrated virtue was bravery ahead of conduct (self-domain[5]). The lack of concern for self-domain was viewed by Plato as one of the most salient moral defects of Spartan education (Jaeger 1944).

The Athenian mode of education, on the other hand, was about endowing the person of a genuinely human character by means of holistic training, that is, the development of the mind, body, and imagination, aimed at preparing the individual to exercise citizenship. The idea of holistic training can best be illustrated by quoting Aristotle directly in the book of Politics, where he criticizes Sparta for lacking such a 'holistic' approach towards education:

> *"That legislation is directed to a single aspect of virtue -the military virtue, which is a source of power. So long as the Spartans were at war they continued to flourish; but as soon as they had won an empire they collapsed, for they knew not to employ their leisure, having never engaged in any employment higher than war. They are guilty, besides, of no less disastrous error in recognizing that the goods for which men strive are obtained by virtue rather by vice, and yet the same time imagining that these goods are preferable to the virtue whereby they have been acquired"* (Warrington, 1961:56)

For Aristotle, as an exemplary representative of the Athenian worldview, virtues are what enable a person to live well or successfully. These include knowing how to strike a balance between opposing vices of excess and defect (Blackburn 2005). In this regard, following Macintyre (1984), it is crucial for us to re-emphasize what he refers to as 'the

common Athenian assumption', that the virtues have their place within the social context of the *polis*. To be a good man here is closely allied to being a good citizen. In Athens it is the individual in his role but also representing his community and, again, remaining accountable precisely for the way s/he tackles conflicts: it is the self's existence that can save itself or 'go to moral destruction' (MacIntyre 1984).

Paideia implied the development or enhancement of the intellectual and moral faculties of the free young person by precept, exercises, and examples, and with a view to perfecting both intelligence and will. Socrates, the great Athenian educator, criticized the Sophists (ancient teachers of the *techne*) for their eagerness for money and their emphasis on technical disciplines; he believed young people should aspire to be prepared not just for a specific profession but rather for a political career. Thus, a political man need not only guide his own conduct but also guide others to conduct both domestic and public affairs administration (Jaeger 1944).

In this respect, Sparta was focused to a considerable degree on the well-being of the city-state. However, we re-emphasize that this *polis* lacked the personal-purposeful dimension of education (Jaeger 1986). Moreover, one of Aristotle's main critiques to the Spartan Constitution is that Spartans have never been 'happy people' (Sihler 1893). Their polis may have had harmony and symmetry in the subordination of the classes, in the sense that training was very much aimed at loyalty, but they neglected individual development.

The profiles of educators differed substantially between Athens and Sparta: the former were masters, those 'who had lived', while the latter were specialists, more akin to our modern PhD's. Moreover, Socrates' views of the educational ideal, as compiled by Plato, introduced the novelty of a 'spiritual' value around the educational experience (Jaeger 1944), hinting at its immanent nature. According to this view, education may either perfect the man being

educated, or when the training received is conceived with an instrumental value, it may fail to do so.

This comparison of the Spartan and Athenian models underlines that education cannot be properly understood without reference to its ethical dimension, that is, the particular way of being that each human develops by his or her free actions to strive for their own good and perfection (Roca 2008; Rocha and Ghoshal 2006). While this ethical dimension may not be fully understood by those in the system – for example the Spartan warriors—it shapes the curriculum and the entire way of working in important but often subtle ways. In this regard, given the self- fulfilling nature of social sciences theories (Ferraro et al. 2005), it is certainly worthwhile to consider the implicit hazards of a 'gloomy vision' of human nature promoted from the contents being delivered (Ghoshal 2005).

Granted, some might argue that Sparta was more oriented to service while Athens was more individualistic. For example, Sparta was focused to a considerable degree on the well-being of the city-state and, in this regard, Spartans could have claimed that they were teaching their citizens' devotion to 'something greater than themselves' (Cohen 2006). Also, Athenians relative focus on personal excellences as compared to community service appears as more self-serving as, by definition, the growth in virtues or character strength that they pursued is ultimately aimed at living successfully on an individual basis (Blackburn 2005).

Although we agree on these nuances, our argument is that Sparta was focused to a considerable degree on the well-being of the city-state thus neglecting the personal dimension of education (Jaeger 1986). Again, their polis' training was very much aimed at loyalty, but they have neglected individual development (Sihler 1893) because Sparta educational paradigm was intended to produce strong soldiers. *Agōgē* thus suffers from the absence of personalism: interactions are minimized to depersonalize relationships (Gharajedaghi and Ackoff 1984). As to Athens, the relative focus on the individual does not mean that community

is not important. The individual and social nature of human beings (Aristotle 1984, Book 7) means that excellence is beneficial to both the individuals who possess it and those who relate to them (Rocha and Ghoshal 2006).

Table 1 summarizes the key assumptions of the Spartan and Athenian models following the characterization provided in the works of Jaeger (1944; 1961; 1986), and how these assumptions apply to the world of management education.

Insert Table 1 about here

Application to the world of management education

What is the purpose of a business school, or indeed, any sort of educational institution? Educational philosophers have debated this question for centuries, and many answers have been offered, ranging from national prosperity, to managerial efficiency, to individual happiness (Cohen 2006). We suggest that the contrast between Sparta and Athens offers a useful way of addressing this question, and in a way that links directly to the discussions that are underway today in business schools.

The Spartan model responds to a logic of efficiency and to attaining the 'good of the nation' (or the Spartan city-state). Spartan education had an instrumental focus. The historian Paul Cartledge (2004) highlighted the 'devotion to competition in all its forms, almost for its own sake' as a salient feature of the Spartan paradigm that has been inherited by our modern western society (Cartledge 2004). Bringing this idea to our current context, Pfeffer (2005) argues how MBA programs shape students attitudes towards business and society, and how enhancing shareholder value is sometimes seen as more important than showing concern for employees and customers (Pfeffer 2005).

The Athenian educational model, on the other hand, looked for personal, intellectual as well as moral and physical refinement (Jaeger 1986). It was oriented towards the exercise of

citizenship; what we would nowadays think of as the activity of individuals in both business organizations and in the community (Solomon 1993). Plato's Academy was a school not only of philosophy but also of political science: he would never have been content to remain as a mere theorist (Marrou 1956), but he relied more on the students' ability to use their strengths and virtues to serve as politicians.

Contrasting the educational models of Sparta and Athens two thousand years ago offer a useful perspective on the ideological debate that exists today regarding the *raison d'être* of business schools. While many observers have argued that business schools should be seen as professional schools (Khurana 2007), there is little agreement about what exactly this means, or how it links to what some have viewed as the *de facto* activities of business schools, namely to 'improve peoples' economic standing and expansion of their social networks'(Rubin and Dierdorff 2013).

In fact, we suggest that management education today is closer in reality to the instrumental military model of Spartan society than the citizenship-based model of Athens. Along these lines, Gharajedaghi and Ackoff (1984) observed that the traditional school of management is characterized by applying mechanistic models to social systems (Gharajedaghi and Ackoff 1984). There is an emphasis on intelligence and the mastery of technical skills, with little concern for the development of character (Peterson and Park 2006). Competitiveness is encouraged through forced-curve grading schemes (i.e. hierarchical marking systems that place a few overachievers at the top, a majority in the middle and those failing at the bottom (Roth 2000)), the job-hunting process, and the celebration of those who have reached the top of the corporate ladder. There is an overall overemphasis on doing rather than being (Furman 1990).

We don't mean to be too critical: there are of course benefits to students in undertaking this form of education, such as obtaining stable and well remunerated jobs. However, we

believe there is a lot of scope for the world of management education to learn the lessons of history, and more specifically to adapt elements of the ancient Athenian model to present-day business schools.

Implications for Business Schools

From mission to curriculum

It has been shown that the introduction of specific content such as ethics, corporate social responsibility and sustainability into the classroom can often lead to improvement in moral reasoning, and even ethical behavior (Ritter 2006). Moreover, it seems clear that MBA programs are reasonably responsive to market pressures, and have increasingly included such topics in their curricula at least in part because of recent revelations of corporate malfeasance (Christensen et al. 2007). However, these values have not been substantively integrated into degree programs or into the training educators are given (Cohen 2006). With much of the pressure for instilling attention to ethics coming from external forces such as accrediting institutions, it is open to debate whether business schools have fully internalized their responsibilities in this regard (Evans et al. 2006; Rutherford et al. 2012). While measuring *a priori* all the factors that influence school's culture is a challenging task (Samuelson 2013), Russell (2006) suggests that integration of an ethical dimension into the ideology of business schools is the greatest challenge they face.

Systematic data on this issue is limited. A study by Christensen et al (2007) showed that the number of schools within the Financial Times Top 50 claiming to have 'an integrated offer' was relatively high (54.55%), but the understanding of 'integration' varied enormously, ranging from general statements to detailed lists of innovative activities and approaches. Moreover, such findings should be interpreted with caution because respondents understand that engagement towards societal issues is seen as desirable, and is often linked to broader measures of business school prestige (Moon and Orlitzky 2011). Indeed, Christensen et al

(2007, p. 358) themselves conclude that 'integration continues to be an elusive state' for many top schools.

It is also noteworthy that there are significant regional variations, with North American and European business schools addressing social responsibility and ethics in significantly different ways. Business education in the US is more reflective of economic/shareholder perspectives than curricula in Europe (Moon and Orlitzky 2011). Mahoney (1990) noted that the teaching of business ethics in the USA was more market driven than in the UK or Continental Europe, and he found American ethics teaching was more focused on virtue ethics and individual decision making than on entire business systems, in comparison to European universities. Similarly, Vogel (1993) observed that American business ethics in general was more individualistic, rule-oriented, and ethnocentric than its European counterpart. Preuss (1999) identified a relatively high degree of theory development of business ethics at the macro level of analysis in Germanic countries (Preuss 1999). Finally, Moon and Orlitzky (2011) claimed that Europe deploys more implicit Corporate Social Responsibility practices, referring to the corporation's role in wider formal and informal institutions which take responsibility for societal interests, whereas in North America those practices are more explicit.

In sum, there are important differences here, underlining the dangers of generalizing too much about the population of business schools around the world. Such variations can of course be a source of opportunity. For example, Pfeffer and Fong (2002) argued that non-American business schools should explicitly *avoid* adopting the 'US model' for social responsibility because of its strong market orientation and low professional ethos, and instead make their own choices in ways that fit better with their own institutional context.

In addition, beyond geographical boundaries, business school culture can be also influenced by religious affiliation. Walsh et al. (2003, p. 874) found that "religious values that orient Catholic universities might prompt their faculty to focus on a more expansive set of

business–society relationships than their peers at universities celebrated by the business community in the Business Week rankings" (Walsh et al. 2003).

As these points suggest, in the absence of a strong sense of purpose at the institutional level, the activities of business schools will inevitably be swayed by the demands placed on them by their proximate stakeholders (Evans et al. 2006; Palmer and Short 2008). These demands include: an instrumental focus on the skills and activities that help students with job placements; a tendency to focus on the criteria defined by external bodies such as accreditation agencies and newspapers producing ranking lists (Gioia and Corley 2002); and the demand for greater research time placed on them by tenure-track faculty. None of these pressures is necessarily negative; as stated on the self-assessment of the Aspen Institute's Business and Society Program in 2013, some schools have used them to support their plans to introduce new content to the curriculum, while others have used them to 'spark dialogue on campus' (Samuelson 2013). But it is nonetheless true that such external pressures make it harder for business schools to retain an overarching sense of purpose.

Again, the lessons from history are useful here. The development of a sophisticated education system in Sparta was achieved some time before it was developed in Athens (Marrou 1956). Nonetheless, the flourishing of Athens, together with the urgencies of war and the thirst of conquest, forced Spartans to the abandonment of the 'liberal arts' and to an exaggerated emphasis on the development of the military machine. Sparta emphasized physical training, even including women to give birth to the fittest and strongest warriors (something that would have been inconceivable to the Athenians), in order to serve its competitive purpose. The net result was a *de facto* shift in the city-state purpose of Sparta, and the emergence of an educational model, with its corresponding curriculum, that we characterized earlier as *Agōgē*.

How should these insights be applied to today's business schools? Articulating a shared purpose can certainly be beneficial. A mission statement has enormous potential as a

device for institutional decision-making since business school deliverables entail an underlying mission and understanding of who are its key constituents or stakeholders. A well-crafted mission statement helps organizational members distinguish between activities that conform to institutional imperatives and those that do not. It also has the capacity to inspire and motivate those within an institution and to communicate its characteristics, values, and history to key external constituents (Drucker 1974). What is more, missions can be seen as a tool to align the school's public image with a desirable group of peers or to define it as research or teaching focused. From this point of view, mission content should be seen as a deliberate exercise not just a 'matter of happenstance' (Palmer and Short 2008, p. 457).

Of course there are challenges here: some have argued that mission statements are 'pretty to look at' perhaps but of little structural consequence, and constitute a "collection of stock phrases that are either excessively vague or unrealistically aspirational or both" (Morphew and Hartley 2006, p. 457). In addition, Bisoux (2003), referring to business schools' mission statements in particular, argued that a quest for legitimacy has left schools in a 'sea of sameness'. To overcome these concerns, we propose a systematic approach to reviewing all the facets of a business school in the light of its mission. This means addressing four basic questions: what is our purpose as a business school? What are the worldviews (unstated assumptions) embedded in the content we currently impart? Are these coherent with our mission statement? And, finally, are there any necessary curriculum adjustments that need to be implemented to deliver coherently according to our mission?

What would be the consequences of going through such a process for business schools? In particular, what might the application of the Athenian model look like in practice? Using the same line of reasoning as Schoemaker (2008), and his call to build a 'more rounded' business approach, we reemphasize the need to organize schools to educate far-sighted, moral business leaders rather than mere career technocrats. This would require students to get a broader

perspective on the world of business: the changing role of business in society, the shifting center of gravity of world trade, the causes and consequences of recent financial and economic crises. This also means recognizing that business schools have a complex set of stakeholder relationships and, as mentioned before, surfacing a lot of the unstated assumptions underlying the contents taught at business school.

In this regard, following Purser et al (1995), we argue that key assumptions implicit in mainstream theories nowadays taught in business schools such as Agency Theory, Transaction Cost Economics and Game Theory (Ghoshal 2005; Rocha & Ghoshal 2006; Fontrodona & Sison 2006; Melé 2012) produce 'egocentric' enactments of organizational environments. Essentially, egocentrism in management practice implies understating the complexity of ecosystems on which organizations are embedded (Purser et al. 1995) and the intrinsic value of each stakeholder within a broader set rather than just stockholders. Following Ghoshal and Moran (1996) and their critique of Transaction Cost Economics theory, when these assumptions and the logic they are embedded in are applied normatively to business decisions, and especially those pertaining to the internal management of organizations, they can have an adverse effect on practice as "[a] self-fulfilling prophecy plays itself out, management perceptions that employees are opportunistic would become increasingly valid" (1996, p. 27).

Such unstated assumptions need now to become explicit to increase people's evolutionary consciousness toward a 'new mind' (Gladwin et al. 1995) appropriate for a healthier business environment. This involves bringing into classroom discussion questions such as: Is self-interest the only motivation of individuals? Is maximizing shareholder value the main purpose of business? Is the limited liability corporation really the best governance model for a large organization? Is a bureaucratic management model more effective than one built on self-organizing principles? Is the dominant management ideology taught in business

schools, with its strong roots in the United States, suited to the needs of the fast-growing Asian economies?

In this regard, we suggest three avenues to align the mission of business schools to a curriculum built on the Athenian tradition. First, content delivery should explicitly include discussion of the key assumptions of the theories being taught. By exposing such assumptions, Ghoshal (2005) argued, students would be better positioned to understand where social science theory comes from, and ultimately to make better choices as managers. A well-known example of this point is the way that agency theory (Jensen and Meckling 1976) was used to devise incentive schemes for executives in public companies. Students need to be exposed to the underlying logic for such schemes, and the assumptions about human behavior that they were built on, in order to properly understand how these schemes contributed to the risk-taking behavior that caused the financial crisis.

More generally, given that mainstream management theories are based on implicit assumptions on human nature and organizations rather than on explicit ethical principles, analyzing those assumptions and providing a richer set of principles allows both a more compelling understanding of management and an ethical analysis within each discipline (Fontrodona and Sison, 2006; Rocha and Ghoshal 2006).

Second, it is important to revisit the nature of management itself. As a number of scholars have argued (e.g. Jacques 1996; Hamel 2008; Birkinshaw et al 2008) 'management' is a social technology for enabling human coordination that can be traced back, in its current form, to the industrial revolution. Given all the technological and social changes of the last fifty years, there is no reason to assume that the bureaucratic approach to management that is dominant today could not be supplanted by other models (Adler and Borys 1996; Birkinshaw 2012). For example, the popular business press often features companies engaging in experimental new ways of working such as Zappos (Robertson 2015), Valve Software

(Denning 2012) and Morning Star (Hamel 2011), and it is important for business schools to open such cases up for critical examination, so that students can better understand the fundamental assumptions behind managing and organizing (Puranam et al. 2014), and whether these experimental ways of working will endure.

A related point is that schools need to re consider the balance between direct training in the *practice* of management (Gioia and Corley 2002; Mintzberg 2004) and advancing technical skills and analytic tools. Programs eventually need both, but schools need to be watchful not to overemphasize the latter just because they give a sense of science and practice (Grey 2004). A healthy balance should be sought, so that business students consider not only the outcomes of their actions - like Spartan warriors thirsty for conquest – but also the broader spectrum of stakeholders affected by their decision-making.

Third, students should be prepared in a more holistic fashion, as 'Athenian citizens'. In the old Athens, after the so called Socratic revolution when higher education really began, there was no question of going straight to philosophy. Athenian students went on with various sciences, but at a higher level so that they developed a wider viewpoint. By coordinating and combining the various branches of knowledge, the mind gradually developed the capacity to detect the unity behind mutual relationships, and to engage in the rewarding but still dangerous art of dialectic (Marrou 1956). There was a clear view in Athens that true philosophy was incompatible with Sophist imprudence, and thus it could never be instrumental.

To sum up, we strive for systemic coherence, which is attained when any specific content is reviewed in the light of the institutional purpose or mission. Applying an Athenian model of education, a clearer sense of mission could shed light on the design of curriculum by making explicit the assumptions embodied in the theories taught, emphasizing the practical nature of management, and providing the fundamentals to undertake a holistic model of training. Thus, a conscious exercise of revisiting the mission entails a huge opportunity to avoid

organizational decoupling (Meyer and Rowan 1977) and opens new horizons for laying solid foundations for a coherent alignment between institutional purpose and curriculum design.

On methods and faculty

Embracing a more Athenian educational model also means revisiting the support structures that are used in business schools and the type of faculty that are employed.

In terms of teaching, the Athenian model hints at the benefits of methods that help students to think for themselves, so that they take responsibility for drawing their own conclusions from a class. The Case Method was designed specifically with this purpose in mind, and its relative advantages over other methodologies in business education have already been analyzed elsewhere (Furman 1990; Christensen et al. 1991; Mintz 1996; Hartman 2008), although its implementation has been questioned (Mintzberg 2004). Interestingly, though, most business schools have gradually moved away from the Case Method in its 'pure form', that is, as a device to foster critical thinking and thus liberate individuals from 'unreflective conformity' and help them learn to think for themselves. Instead, case studies are often used as vehicles for deriving general principles (based on technical judgment) and using well-defined methods to achieve predetermined ends (Colby et al. 2011). We view this as a retrograde step – there is enormous value for students in understanding business issues from the shoes of the protagonist, and in getting them to induce the principles of good business practice for themselves (Roberts 2001).

This implies linking formal knowledge with the concrete and value-laden dimensions of professional practice, which goes beyond ethics as it is conventionally understood. Again, building upon Ghoshal (2005) and Colby et al. (2011), isolated ethics courses may offer rigorous thinking spaces in which management challenges can be debated, but they may also lead to a relatively narrow instrumental orientation if issues pertaining to the self-reflective aspect of learning are not addressed. These are questions such as: What difference does a

particular understanding or approach make to who the students are? How do they engage with the world? And what it is reasonable for them to imagine and hope? Such questions are the focal point of humanistic learning (Colby et al. 2011).

There is also enormous value in what has been called an action-learning approach to education, by which we mean the various methods that expose students to business problems in their real-life context. For part-time or executive MBA students, there are many opportunities to link classroom-based learning to day-to-day practice. For full-time MBA students, action learning is harder to implement, but many business schools are experimenting with field-based projects and consulting assignments to give them direct feedback about the impact of their ideas on the world of practice.

All these approaches avoid the notion that there are any 'easy answers' in the world of business. By exposing students to the consequences of their intended actions, they are forced to take a more holistic perspective. Such experiential learning and immersion techniques are seen as particularly enabling when aiming to teach values (Mintz 1996; Hartman 2008).

In terms of the profiles or career paths that facilitators in our classrooms should have, PhD training for faculty has paid off for business schools as a way of ensuring methodological rigor and academic excellence (Schoemaker 2008). However, this approach has also had its costs, most noticeably an acceptance of faculty who sometimes have little knowledge of or interest in the practical world of business (Bennis and O'Toole 2005; Clinebell and Clinebell 2008).

In terms of scholarly faculty training, some have criticized PhD programs for being purist or excessively academic (Clinebell and Clinebell 2008). Building on this argument, and following Roca (2008), we underline the importance of practical wisdom and of moral reasoning in management professional practice. Ph.D. training, we suggest, should include philosophy in the curriculum, not only because it provides the criteria for practical wisdom and

moral reasoning but also because the mission of such programs is to develop Philosophers and Doctors – i.e. PhD's.

There have been many calls for changes in how management research is done, for example towards "Mode 2" research (Starkey and Madan 2001) or Van de Ven and Johnson's (2006) advocacy of 'engaged scholarship'. Our comparison of the Athenian and Spartan models leads us to some similar conclusions. If MBA students are to be exposed to the range of issues described above, the faculty teaching at business schools should themselves represent a broader base of academic disciplines. Moreover, practical immersions such as sabbaticals outside academia – either in business or government – could bring valuable insights to foster innovation inside the school and thus would need to be rewarded (Schoemaker, 2008). This approach also puts a greater premium on the clinical or management practice track that many business schools have been urged to build over the years (Schoemaker 2008).

Notwithstanding these points, schools pursuing accreditations will need to weigh up the consequences of eventually bringing more practice-oriented faculty on board. Accrediting bodies bear some responsibility for the current state of affairs since higher education institutions need to comply with minimum quotas of scholarly academics (AACSB standards, for example, require that at least 40 percent of faculty resources to be scholarly academics[6]).

However, regardless of the ultimate composition of the faculty team, there is something more we can learn from the Athenians in this regard: masters developed deep and lifelong relationships with their students. A young Athenian would learn through the precept and the practice of an older man to whom he has been entrusted for his training (Marrou 1956). Good management theories are indeed critical to help restore the image of business as a 'force for good' (Ghoshal et al. 2005). However, this approach is not sufficient in itself if those who are to facilitate such learning are not attractive role models for those who are supposed to generate a positive impact within the corporate world.

As a final point, adopting a more Athenian educational model would also have important consequences for the type of personal growth expected of MBA students. As noted earlier, Aristotle's view of personal growth was "growth in excellences, virtues or character strength." In today's language, this means encouraging students to become more reflective, aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, and clear about their own priorities in life, such as the balance between work, family and outside interests.

Taking the boat back from Sparta to Athens

Our purpose with this article was to contribute to the debate about the purpose, content and outcomes of management education that has been taking place over the last years. Academics agree that there is something wrong with 'the business' of business schools, but the discussion is still ongoing as to how educational practices might be reinvented at these institutions.

Our contribution to this discussion is twofold. Firstly, we propose a framework to analyze the current state of management education in terms of the contrast between the Athenian and Spartan educational paradigms. By considering the differences between these two classic models of education, we provide a useful analogy to the tensions being faced by business schools today. Our analysis suggests the dominance of an instrumental, Spartan paradigm in management education, which has a number of short-term benefits but over the longer term leads to a gradual erosion of common good. Roca (2008) came to a similar conclusion when she referred to MBA programs becoming a growing social phenomenon 'with instrumental-technical rationality as one of its basic pillars' (p. 608) leading to the suppression of moral and intentionality considerations within the knowledge transmission process.

Secondly, we propose a shift in the focus of the debate about management education: rather than emphasizing curriculum issues, we suggest instead that it would be useful to turn

attention to the institutional purpose of business schools, as it is from a sense of mission that an associated curriculum and content derives. Our proposal counterbalances the current focus on rapid changes in the curriculum by considering its connection to the mission of business schools, thus favoring a more coherent alignment between mission statement, curriculum design, methods and faculty profile in order to be responsive to current societal demands.

We are aware that presenting the Athenian paradigm as a way of finding a solution to the current criticism to business schools has challenges. Its implementation requires both a huge commitment as well as a great deal of courage from scholars, since current incentive systems do not seem in place to house such approaches. There is a need to give careful thought to business school governance in order to foster research and work agendas that do not fit with the current academic or commercial demands on faculty, and to work on more inclusive agendas that help the periodic revisiting of the institutional purpose and its connection to incentive systems, faculty development and curriculum design. The adoption of this paradigm in business education also requires the research community as a whole to revisit the criteria by which knowledge is deemed as valuable. By moving in this direction, our hope is that business school graduates become not only skilled professionals, but also managers of integrity, akin to the 'citizens' of Athens, whose business activities do not present tensions with their personal values.

Therefore, our natural reluctance to change the status quo is at the end of the day our biggest challenge and, at the same time, our greatest opportunity to become authentic architects of a healthier business environment. Will we be brave enough to take the boat back from Sparta to Athens?

End Notes

i. Rubin & Dierdorff study is based on all the articles published in Academy of Management Learning and Education from 2002 to the January issue of 2012. They included only scholarly

contributions of knowledge creation that had direct or obvious implications for MBA programs by reviewing article abstracts and keywords using each article's citation record. Finally, they employed an article-coding scheme based on a recent MBA program quality model developed by Rubin, Dierdorff, and Morgeson (2011).

ii. We are grateful to an anonymous referee for helping us to include additional analyses on the political power structures that have great influence on business school policy and practice.

iii. Both the relationship between excellences and happiness and how different excellences lead to happiness is at the core not only of ancient Greek philosophers but also modern theorists on virtue ethics and is out of the scope of the present paper. For detailed surveys see Peterson and Seligman (2004) and Sison (forthcoming).

iv. Plutarch was a Greek biographer during the Hellenistic period, this is, between the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC and the emergence of the Roman Empire. His major contribution was the biography of Lycurgus, the legendary lawgiver of Sparta, who established the military-oriented reformation of Spartan society in accordance with the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi. According to folklore, Lycurgus introduced Agōgē training regime (Jaeger, 1986).

v. Self-domain, understood as moderation, belongs to the realm of the virtue of temperance. The purpose and goal of temperance is man's inner order, from which alone serenity of spirit can flow forth. Temperance signifies the realizing of this order within oneself. In Pieper, J., R. Winston, and T. Pieper, The four cardinal virtues. 1966: University of Notre Dame Press Notre Dame.

vi. AACSB International – The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (2013), Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation.

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Business Schools at the crossroads?

TABLE 1

Sparta and Athens Models

		Sparta	Athens
Key assumptions	Institutional Purpose (City-State)	Conquer and Expand	Order of the Polis and Good Citizenship
	Mission	Militarization of both private and collective life	Holistically train the entire person
	Ideal expected profile	Enhance maneuverability as soldiers	Leadership: Exercise citizenship. Perfection of both intelligence and will
	Main stakeholder	Nation	Person and polis
Application to Management Education	Mission	Maximize Shareholder Value	Harmony between all stakeholders; including organization, people and society
	Curriculum	'Scientific Model': Ethics as specific separated course	'Liberal Arts Model': both key assumptions made explicit – i.e.Ethics embedded within the courses- and philosophy as separated course
	Methods	Abstract financial and economic analysis, statistical multiple regressions, and laboratory psychology.	Precept, exercises, examples, case studies.
	Faculty profile	PhD as a Specialist (discipline and method's oriented)	PhD as Educator of leaders for society (Engaged Scholarship)