

Managerial Education in Italy: Main Features and Recent Trends

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Abstract

Developing an effective and a integrity-centered management education system represents a priority. In fact, in an era of relentless change and increasing complexity, the importance of creating a fruitful context for the development of managerial education is increasingly being interpreted as crucial. Our contribution aims at analyzing the main trends and features that characterize the Italian management education system, interpreting them in the light of the prevailing theoretical dimensions debated in the international community and related to the concept of integrity and ethic.

In our contribution, firstly, we go back to the concept of managerial work in order to grasp its relationship with management education: our analysis stems from the consideration that analysis of the content of the managerial tasks and its relationship with management education are, undoubtedly, one of the most interesting and debated issues in the organization studies literature.

The second main section is focused on the analysis of the concept of management education practices between traditional and critical studies: by this way, we try to provide a wide perspective on the richness and heterogeneity of theoretical contributions that study the concept of management education.

Finally, we sketch out the Italian situation, identifying the main peculiarities of management education initiatives. It emerges an interesting and articulated landscape where different typologies of initiatives cohabit, adopting different perspectives (ranging from international and global to extremely country-specific). We conclude underlying the risk that also in Italy we face to a sort of com-modification of knowledge. In fact, there is an attempt made by firms to acquire some sort of control over the system of professional knowledge, transforming knowledge into a specialist commodity characterized by a defined price.

Keywords: management education, integrity, Italy

1. Introduction

1.1 Introducing the Quest for Integrity in the Management Education Debate

In an era of relentless change and increasing complexity, the importance of creating a fruitful context for the development of managerial education is increasingly being interpreted as crucial (Day, 2010; Wankel & Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2012). Such development is in fact more and more strictly related to future social and economic wellbeing of modern countries. At the same time, when the reasoning is focused on the implementation of management education programs, the international debate is centered on the issue of their real effectiveness upon successful careers and managerial performance (Armstrong, 2005; Pfeffer & Fong, 2004; Grey, 2004). To this extent, Pfeffer and Fong (2004: 78) argue: “neither possessing an MBA degree or grades earned in courses correlate with career success”. When approaching the topic of real effectiveness of MBAs, the content of these educational programs becomes a critical issue. Unfortunately, very often the different actors of the system pay more attention to the presence or to the need of an accreditation than to the kind and quality of knowledge to develop in the course. As we will show in the next sections the Italian management education system presents similar critical issues related to the influence and the role of certification procedures on the quality of management education programs in a turbulent environment, often characterized by a high degree of

stress and uncertainty (Camuffo & Gerli, 2004; Depperu, 2012; Mangia, 2008; Mercurio, 2008).

There is, in fact, “the risk” to agree with Grey (2004: 178) who argues that the prospects for the future are not so good, due to the fact that a “slavish adherence” to standards and formal procedures “substitutes crude and effective measures for real quality” Our contributions aims at analyzing this critical issues in the management education domain with a direct link to the Italian context. In particular, we try to present the main dimensions that characterize the Italian management education system, interpreting them in the light of the prevailing theoretical dimensions debated in the international community.

1.2 The Relevance of the Managerial Work and Its Relationship with Management Education

The analysis of the content of the managerial tasks and its relationship with management education are, undoubtedly, one of the most interesting issues in the organization studies literature (Stewart, 1967; Whitely, 1985). Porter and McKibbin analyzed in-depth the topic of managerial education, underlying the role that it plays in the general functioning of the economic and social system (Porter & McKibbin, 1988). They argue (1998: 3): How as a nation we can best educate and develop those individuals who have - and will have in the future – responsibility for leading, managing, and directing organizations....? – How, in short, can we make the best use of available / and clearly limited educational and development resources to enhance the quality of management?

The aim of this paragraph is to show how different perspectives bring us to diverse way of conceiving managerial work, with important consequences on the content and of the planning of any education program. Choosing an approach, a way of seeing the concept of management education is a political choice, not only a theoretical discussion. As in any education program it is very important to understand what is the knowledge gap to be filled and how it is possible to build up a clear course in management disciplines. Regarding to managerial needs, this goal become even more complicated, because the expression “managerial work” is a fluid concept difficult to define. As Hales (1999: 336) states: “Finally, understanding the nature of, and reasons for, the common, generic characteristics of managerial work is also central to management education, training and development...” (Hales, 1999). So the first attempt of this paper is to give some insights in order to clarify our context. Facing the concept of managerial work is not something really original in the managerial literature: in a classic paper by Gulick and Urwick (1937), they used the acronym POSDCORB1 to classify what a manager does. Their aim was just to indicate the managerial activities and their goals, according to a prescriptive approach. Even earlier Fayol (1916) divided the activities of organizations into six fundamental groups2 , and in particular referring to managerial activities he describes the activities of planning, organizing, and controlling.

A widely known contribution on the subject comes from Mintzberg (1973): he identified ten basic roles3 describing what managers do. In this sense Mintzberg contribution faces the topic of institutionalization, using some variables as elements of the context that influence manager’s behavior. This study could be classified within the contingent approach, where the aim is to focus on a relationship between managerial work and some variables such as function, level, environment (Hales, 1986; Mintzberg, 1971; Mintzberg, 1975).

Another mainstream work is by Kotter (1982), where managerial work is essentially conceived as a process of maintenance of a network of relationships. Kotter points out how the informal characteristics of the managerial work are essential in the everyday life, and in this sense he considers the political skills as a key competence, but just referring to the ability to build and to maintain social networks (Kotter, 1992). Even if these studies address specifically the “real” managerial activities and competences, it is possible to sustain how it is not simple to identify “a bounded and separable set of activities which may be called 'managerial work' - and not merely activities which managers have been shown to do” (Hales, 1986: 109).

But maybe a more important consideration supported also by other studies is the human and the informal attitude of the managers; as Hales states (1986: 97): the conclusion drawn by these researchers is that the notion of the manager as strategist, planner and thinker is a myth (Mintzberg, 1973) and that even senior managers allow themselves to be diverted from their 'real' work by constant interruption and capricious interpersonal contact. What emerges to say with Mintzberg words is: “if you ask a manager what he does, he will most likely tell you that he plans, organizes, co-ordinates and controls. Then watch what he does. Don't be surprised if you can't relate what you see to those four words (Mintzberg, 1975: 49 in Hales, 1986)”.

A recent tendency to the study of managerial work tries to focus on the concept of variety and change supporting the idea that in the post-industrial era managerial work is something difficult to fix, it is a vanish idea. For example according to Kanter the new role of the manager is to be a partner and facilitator to empowered employees who solve business problems by themselves through cross-functional networks and project-teams (Kanter, 1989).

All these studies could be classified as internal to a traditional debate in the managerial literature and they had as main goal to identify the characteristics and skills of a manager, and of course, the education needs associated. What has really changed is the object of analysis: in early contributions (e.g. Fayol and Gulick's ones) the aim was to classify in a clear way the features of the managerial work, regarding to the technical skills needed by managers to do their job; Mintzberg (1973) and Kotter (1982) realized how difficult was to define these competences in a prescriptive way so they introduced into the debate the theme of behavioural competences. Only in the last two decades (i.e. Kanter, 1989) the topic of the complexity of the managerial role emerged, underlining how the radical changes in society and in management styles have greatly contributed to make managerial work less structured and predictable. In this sense the concept of technical skills lose importance and is replaced by focusing on behavioural and organisational competences.

From a totally different perspective, Willmott adopts a critical approach assuming that the management practice is just a tool (in the hands of capitalists) to control workers, in the never ending conflict between capital and labor. In particular Willmott uses the labor process theory to interpret the managerial work as a way to preserve inequality, to fuel the conflict and to dominate (Contu, 2009; Willmott, 1984). The most important consequence of this approach is to consider education management "as a way to unraveling and challenging oppressive relations of power and forms of economic, social, cultural and sexual domination in management knowledge and practice including of the classroom." (Contu, 2009: 538).

1.3 The Concept of Management Education Practices between Traditional and Critical Studies

In coherence with the traditional management literature (Mintzberg, 1973; Kotter, 1982), the starting point in the analysis of the content and of the characteristics of the managerial work and roles can be traced back to the fact that the "manager archetype" is involved in the coping with facts, figures in order to control and coordinate, conduct logical analysis and to plan and decide about the future. The main consequence in terms of educational programs is establishing courses rigidly focused on the development of a prescriptive set of managerial competences.

For example, an interesting research carried out by Dane and Pratt (2005) (Dane & Pratt, 2007; Burke & Sadler-Smith, 2006; Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2007) shows how in front of highly structured tasks the ability in applying codified procedures and rules represent the core competence, implying an analytical decision making frame. The density and the relevance of the data available represent a crucial point: managers try to acquire more hard data to enforce their rational decision-making processes. On the contrary, intuitive decision-making seems to be more effective in presence of poorly structured problems and tasks (Klein, 1998). The above mentioned distinction of two main categories of problems helps us in understanding how, following a traditional approach, an effective management educational program should combine different typologies of competences. Another important aspect is represented by the degree of urgency. In fact, in some cases, managers have to be asked to act very quickly: typically, less the time available less the data available (Burke et al., 2006).

In these cases behavioral and organizational competences are considered as a possible solution to face problems. Within managerial educational programs modules and courses on teamwork, negotiation, including a specific focus on the issue of conflict management are increasingly being interpreted as crucial to the curriculum of a contemporary manager. In this sense, it is particularly interesting to underline how it would be positive to have data directly relating to constructive controversy to discipline enhancement and research student development. Tjosvold (2008:73) argues that the concept of controversy "is something to do as well as to understand" (Tjosvold, 2008).

We can argue that beyond the need of rationality, the development of a full set of managerial skills requires alternative ways of thinking that imply to go beyond available facts and figures and to recognize that feelings and emotions are an important source of data. It is interesting to underline how this field of study is covered also from the psychological perspective. In this vein, Nicholson states that the "the human species' ability to make intuitive leaps is so remarkable, that it allows us not only to interpret and to frame the external environment but also to deal with the main complexities and problems of the external reality. (Nicholson, 2000; Burke et al., 2006).

Another completely different trend uses critical lens and perspectives in order to clarify the concept of management education: as Boje and Al-Arkoubi argue the Critical Management Education (CME) was born in the mid 90's (Al-Arkoubi et al., 2012; Boje, 1996; Perriton & Reynolds, 2004) in opposition to the managerialist orientation that was (and is probably) a typical feature of the business schools perspective on management education.

A further characteristic of the CME approach is the critic to the concept of performativity (work until you drop),

efficiency (people defined as expendable resources), and commitment to short term, bottom line decision criteria (Boje, 1996; Al-Arkoubi et al., 2012). Adopting a critical approach it is possible to outline how a first consideration is related to the role of students treated as customers who are “always right” by definition. So, also due to the high number of new master courses and general teaching activities devoted to the development of managerial skills, a predominant theme is focused on the commercialization of management education system. The critical approach conceives the traditional one as too devoted to the liberalism principles, focused on the idea of developing codified knowledge and scientific skills. We face to a strong tendency towards standardization and homogenization in the managerial practices and procedures, defined by Simpson (2006) as masculinization of management education (Simpson, 2006), or by Hayes and Wynard (2002) with the expression “Mc-Donaldization of higher education.” (Hayes & Wynard, 200). In the same vein, we may transfer the analysis carried out by Aronowitz (2000) who put in evidence the market-orientation of the university system (and even more of the management education system). In particular, the relationship between the traditional university educational mission and the new pressures exerted by the new forces of capitalism represent a key-issue (Aronowitz, 2000). At the same time we are facing to what Gould (2003) define as “corporatization” of universities with the main consequence that knowledge is created primarily for its exchange value (Gould, 2003; Seers, 2007).

Another element is related to the relationship between management education system and global sustainability issue. There is a growing number of studies focused on this topic (Wankel et al., 2012; Stead & Stead, 2010; Auderbrand, 2010).. Departing from different perspective, these contributions rely on the assumption that management education programs have (or not) provided during the years tools, mindsets, ethical insights to support and justify managers to continue to destroy the capacity of the planet to support our species (Wankel et al., 2012).

2. The Landscape of Italian Managerial Education

Understanding the context in which management education is implemented plays a crucial role for interpreting the ways in which such courses are designed (Gagliardi & Czarniawaska, 2006). In fact, as Seers (2007: 559) argues, “the institutional context of management education is no less important than the context of ongoing events and trends”.

This paragraph unfolds as follows. Initially we refer to the peculiar institutional context of managerial education in Italy explaining the historical antecedents of the actual scenario. Then we relate the current fragmented picture to the academic legislation that has affected the courses provided by Italian universities in the business domain. We then refer to the accreditation bodies operating in Italy as a key actor in the landscape of managerial education, and provide an account of the increasing number of management education initiatives taking place in the country.

2.1 The Evolution of Managerial Education in Italy

Managerial education in Italy originates from the efforts of a few pioneer initiatives. In 1952 in Torino the Istituto Postuniversitario per lo Studio dell’Organizzazione Aziendale (IPSOA) was among the first institutions for management training in Europe: this school was set up by a few leading industrialists and obtained funding from the Ford Foundation and the Harvard Business School itself, with the aim of importing in Italy American theories and methods for management education. Other initiatives followed during the 1960s under the labels of private institutions outside the university system benefiting from private support and trying to introduce content and methods of instruction such as cases, business games, and role-playing. However, their goals were mainly related to those of the entities that had contributed to generate them and were, thus, not able to trigger a diffused demand for management education. These schools did not to manage to broaden their horizons towards a wider entrepreneurial circuit and tended to lose their innovative capacities and to decline. Indeed, IPSOA and some of the other pioneering institutions such as Istituto Superiore per Imprenditori e Dirigenti d’Azienda (ISIDA) and Scuola di Amministrazione Industriale (SAI) had to discontinue their activities in the 1960s and the 1970s.

It was from the mid-1960s onwards that American content penetrated into universities in the form of limited inroads into curricular structures. Changes in this direction were strengthened only after reforms in faculties of engineering and of economics in the 1970s, which enabled the creation of new undergraduate programs in commerce and business, though still as a hybrid of the Italian concept of *Economia Aziendale* tradition¹. A new initiative was the set up of Istituto Studi Direzionali (ISTUD) in 1968 to offer MBA and executive education programs, sponsored by large companies and with a strong American orientation in content and teaching methods. Most notable among the post-1960s changes was the reorientation in Bocconi, after resistance for more than two decades, toward American content and methods of instruction. It involved the creation, in 1971, of the

Scuola di Direzione Aziendale (SDA) within the university with a more generalist and international approach to graduate management education again based on the HBS model (Kipping, Üsdiken, & Puig, 2004; Draebye & Pennarola, 1997). The first MBA program began in 1975, its success leading to the launch of a large number of new programs and an international orientation. Thus, in addition to the earlier examples such as ISTUD, new ones emerged, involving in some cases cooperative arrangements between universities and business. Others replicated the example of Bocconi and its SDA, like the Rome-based LUISS Guido Carli (transformed into this form in the mid-1970s with the backing of Italian industrialists union) with the creation of business school. The archetypal MBA remains confined to Bocconi, LUISS, and rare cases such as Politecnico di Milano. The involvement of the public university system, though having expanded too after the 1970s, has been largely limited, apart from the consortia-type arrangements noted above, to the provision of undergraduate education.

Stoà was founded in 1988 by IRI. The partners who led the school through its first years were IRI, the Banco di Napoli and the Sloan School of Management of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), making Stoà an excellence center for management culture embedded in a wide circuit of international relationships. Over the years, Stoà has developed a network of sound relationships with businesses and public administration, this latter represented by the partners who took over from IRI in 1988, which has allowed the School to broaden its mission which includes, today, both Business Management and Public Management.

2.2 External Factors Affecting the Managerial Education Provision

The evolution of the external context has impacted significantly on the functioning of the management education system in Italy: there are in fact two channels through which managerial education is provided.

The first one is the university system, the second one is the private (non-university subjects).

Concerning the university level, a series of reforms have introduced significant changes in the provision of higher education in Italy.

After the laws 509/1999 and 207/2004 that disciplined the courses provided by Italian universities, system, the academic system has been allowed to implement new master courses. In fact, in accordance with the Bologna process (1999) of harmonization of higher education in Europe, Italian universities have articulated their degrees in:

- first cycle degrees (three years)
- second cycle degrees (two years)
- first level university masters (after first cycle degrees)
- second level university masters (after second cycle degrees)

In Italy there are 69 faculties of economics (private and public) distributed in all the different regions. Almost each of them organise at least 2 Master degrees (sometimes jointly with other faculties belonging to the same university). The general supply is so widespread and heterogeneous that it is not possible to depict it in an exhaustive manner. We may propose a few examples.

The first one is the Master degree in Italian Fashion, Design and Luxury Product Management and Communication organized at the IULM University in Milan. The master is devoted to the development of new highly specialised professionals focused on the fashion and design industries.

A second example, is the Master's Degree in Supply Chain Integrated Management organized at the University of Verona. The aim is at training managers in the logistic industry, providing an integrated vision of supply chain management.

The second level is the private one, whose offer is very heterogeneous and articulated in nature.

Within the broad horizon of all managerial education initiatives in Italy we will consider the categories related to ASFOR certificated courses as Masters.

The role played by the certification system in Italy is particularly crucial. In terms of accreditation bodies, the pivotal role is played by ASFOR that every year publishes a new report on the health and on the prospects for the future for the Italian education management systems. ASFOR1 (Italian Association for Managerial Education) was established in 1971 to foster the development of a life long management education system in Italy. Nowadays, ASFOR is composed of more than seventy members: including private and public institutions, all of them operating in the field of management training and/or supporting its development. The main aim of ASFOR is supporting and enforcing the crucial role played by management education for the competitiveness of the Italian economic system. One of the most important functions covered by the ASFOR attains at the improvement

of the quality among the different training programs activated in Italy. In this vein, we may quote the Master Programmes Accreditation: this program was started in 1989 with the specific aim at improving the quality and the standard of services provided by the management education programs certified.

The master courses organized under the umbrella of ASFOR are 28. The number of management education initiatives that do not match with the master scheme is very and it is virtually impossible to include all of them in analysis.

In this vein, ASFOR has identified three typologies of masters. The first typology identifies Master in General Management (n. 7 in 2010) (1200 hours). These masters are typically generalist since they aim at covering the most important functional areas and sectors of business. In terms of market served, this category of masters is devoted to young graduate students with no relevant previous working experience. The second typology identifies the Specialized Master programs (n. 12 in 2010) (1000 hours). On the contrary these masters and educational programs are devoted to the improvement of a specific knowledge focused on a particular function or industrial sector. Even in this case, according to ASFOR, this type of program does not require previous work experience. The last category identifies the traditional MBA (n. 9 in 2010, see the table below) (Master in Business Administration, 500 hours). Even in this case, the program presents a generalist soul and the main aim is at integrating knowledge/competencies in the different areas of business, from a strategic and managerial standpoint. The following table provides a picture of Italian MBAs.

The three tiers of ASFOR accreditation correspond to different levels in terms of quality of the courses and requisites needed in order to be certified.

The most qualified courses are the MBAs certified by ASFOR; they represent the top-notch managerial training in Italy and are inspired to the Anglo-Saxon standard of business tuition.

Observing the dynamics of the MBA courses the main business school organize every year in Italy, more attention is devoted to the study of the characteristics of the sector and analysis of the business functions, while less time and resources are devoted to teaching practices and management techniques (Phan, et al., 2009). Typically, the teaching of management practices involves the presentation of cases and practical decision problems that learners need to provide a solution to.

Table 1. The MBA courses organized in Italy accredited by ASFOR

MBA Type	Business School name	Admission Requirements	Class Size	Learning model
Full Time MBA	S.D.A. Bocconi	Degree, TOEFL or IELTS, GMAT or SDA test, 2 letters of reference, Application form, Interview	140 - 2 section 12 months	Company cases, Traditional lessons, Guided discussions, Practical exercises, Business games, Simulations, First-hand business experiences, Individual projects, Group work, Workshops and Seminars. International Exchange program
Full Time MBA	MIP Politecnico di Milano School of Management	Application form, Degree, Certificate of English Proficiency, GMAT or MIP test, 2 letters of reference, C.V., Interview.	80 14 months	Core fundamentals, then Concentration, Business Plan, Business Game, Organizational Check-up and Project Work. Career Service, Personal Development program. International Exchange program
Full Time MBA	LUISS Business School	Application form, Degree, English speaking, TOEFL (if available), GMAT (if available), letter of reference (if available), C.V., Interview.	60 12 months + 5 months stage for project work	Fundamentals courses, Elective courses, Seminars. Traditional lessons, Discussions, Practical exercises, Guest speakers. Final project work in a company for 5 months. International Exchange program
Executive MBA	MIP Politecnico di Milano School of Management	Application form, Degree, C.V., letter of reference (if available), Interview, Test paper.	50 20 months – part time + e-learning or Evening courses	Traditional lessons, Company cases, Team work, e-learning, Project work

Executive MBA	LUISS Business School	Application form, Degree, working experience, C.V., TOEFL or LUISS test, GMAT or LUISS test, Interview.	50 19 months – part time	Traditional lessons, Company cases, Team work, Individual coaching, 8 Fundamentals courses, 1 Elective course, Project work, Executive Leadership Program
Executive MBA	Fondazione CUOA	Application form, Degree, C.V., English speaking, Test paper, Interview	45 20 months – part time	Traditional lessons, Company cases, Team work, Project work, Business game, Business plan, Personal coaching, Study tour, Core courses and Deployment activities. E-learning.
Executive MBA	MIB School of Management	Application form, Degree, C.V., Test paper or GMAT and TOEFL, Interview	35 18 months + Individual project	Traditional lessons, Company cases, Team work, Project work, General themes courses, e-learning support, Individual projects, Elective abroad
MBA in International Business	MIB School of Management	Application form, Degree, C.V., Test paper, GMAT, TOEFL, 2 letters of reference, Interview.	35 11 months	Traditional lessons, Case studies, Project Work, Business games, Company Insights, International Study Tours, International exchanges, Leadership Development, Career Counseling
MBA	SAA Scuola di Amministrative Aziendale	Application form, Degree, C.V., Test paper, Interview.	140 15 months – part time + 800 hours Project work in a Company	Traditional lessons

The advanced management training programs still seem to focus mainly on the characteristics of functional areas, emphasizing the importance of technical skills and behavioral expertise.

The typical structure of these programs in Italy is characterized by an internal modular organization, where each single module is specifically focused on a management function (strategy, organization, production ...). Also in Italy, despite numerous and constant reflections on the content and ways of management training, the current state according to Mintzberg is still in a phase of "replica" of a product in 1908, adopting a strategy of the sixties (Chareanpunsirikul & Wood, 2002).

3. The Peculiarities of Management Education Initiatives in Italy: Some Remarkable Results

The aim of this paragraph is to debate and sum up the main evolutionary trends that characterize the Italian management education system. These considerations are based upon the results of a set of interviews that authors made with a panel of experts (professors, managers, business school managers, students in Italy).

Analyzing managerial education in Italy, a few trends may be identified.

The first trend is the adoption of an international global perspective, with a growing need to enhance the management training courses with international experiences. A typical feature is the decision to establish relations of exchange and collaboration with other educational institutions located in different situations and contexts. These courses boast a multinational faculty and recruit their students globally. These niche is in fact part of the international competition among the ranked MBAs worldwide. Rankings strongly influence such business schools, both in the recruitment of the faculty and selection of perspective participants.

The most important management education programs provider is Bocconi University in Milan.

Every year SDA Bocconi presents its MBA through events, meetings and presentations at the school, in Italy and worldwide. Such diversity of locations is meant to be a channel for interacting with various industries and creating a milieu for participants to gain tangible insights into how management theories and practices play out in different business settings.

Table 2. Bocconi MBA SDA Bocconi in the Financial Times Ranking FT.com

MBA SDA Bocconi	2010	2009	2008	3 Year Average Rank
Financial Times Global Rank	38	38	48	41
Financial Times European Rank	14	15	19	16
Financial Times Italian Rank	1	1	1	1

Table 3. The faculty of Bocconi MBA SDA FT.com

MBA SDA Bocconi	2010	2008	2006	2004	2002
International faculty	24 (%)	23 (%)	26 (%)	17 (%)	14 (%)
International students	60 (%)	55 (%)	50 (%)	44 (%)	41 (%)
International board	64 (%)	78 (%)	24 (%)	27 (%)	7 (%)

A second trend of managerial education in Italy is the attention of a few initiatives to the local issues. Two examples may be displayed.

The first example is represented by CUOA that is a business school located not far from Padua and Venice in one of the richest and entrepreneurial areas in the country.

The CUOA covers the following areas of activities:

CUOA Executive Education - Jobleader by CUOA

CUOA Finance

CUOA Innovation

CUOA Lean Enterprise Center

A significant initiative is the EMBA Entrepreneurs created by CUOA, in the Northeast of Italy, an area of outstanding business development, that has become European and international attention to the exceptional nature of its economic and social performance. Were born in the Northeast of Italy business phenomena became known throughout the world, alongside a broad and reticular medium and small businesses. The CUOA, interpreting this environment, offers a master's degree that meets the needs of business reality.

Table 4. The EMBA entrepreneurs at the CUOA: some relevant figures

Student typology of EMBA Entrepreneurs	
CEO	51 %
Area Manager	49 %
Owners	100 %

A third trend is the attention to the behavioral aspects of business education. A growing number of courses adopt innovative teaching methods and content, such as simulations, negotiations in order to improve personal bargaining skills

The relevance of new technologies in the development and in the consolidation of teaching methods is certainly very strong. A good example could be found in the rapid development of simulation software for the transfer and the training of managerial skills related to managerial decision making processes. Anyway, both the individual and the collective learning process must be evaluated: in terms of the process and procedures followed and of results obtained.

A fourth trend is represented by the creation of few corporate universities upon initiative of some Italian Corporations. Tailor made courses are more and more adopted in the wake of covering closely what businesses really need. Firms (including and especially the biggest ones) seem to look for advanced training to prepare staff to cover almost instantly specific positions perfectly identified in terms of contents and skills required. This means, in fact, conceiving of the whole system of management education in a logic of short-term.

The most important example of corporate university in Italy is the Eni Corporate University. Eni Corporate University is the ENI branch devoted to the orientation, recruitment, selection, training and Knowledge Management. The role played by Eni corporate university is to set up a point of contact with the Italian and international academic world for the development and spread of the company's corporate culture. The main reason why Eni organized an internal corporate university is that the creation of the specific skills required by an industrial reality as large as Eni cannot be left entirely to outside institutions. We can see a need of a balanced mix of training for the short term and training that prepares for future challenges, whose effectiveness can be assessed only in the medium and long term. Increasing motivation and sense of identity and belonging of management, including through training, is considered a strategic element to search for answers to the crisis, given the expectations of all stakeholder. A further trend is the attempt made by firms to acquire some sort of control over the system of professional knowledge, transforming knowledge into a specialist commodity characterized by a defined price. Knowledge looks like any other commodity, with its value and its usefulness for a certain set of possible buyers within a certain market. This view of the specialization of knowledge and managerial skills that clearly affects the relationship between firms and training institutions, business schools and universities seems absolutely not coherent with a conception of professional knowledge which can not be owned by firms, but can only be used by its holder.

The process of commodification of knowledge can also be interpreted as a tool for companies to "control" even the decision-making frame of its employees. A very clear example is offered by the development of information systems in which most of the knowledge underlying the general rules of operation are already entered and coded in the system itself, rather than in knowledge of the users. The big advantage for companies linked to a policy of commodification of knowledge is in much lower costs of transfer.

The pressure stemming from firms to specialize more and more the field of professional knowledge up to paradoxically reduction and simplification of the application of algorithms obviously has very strong repercussions on learners. In fact, when knowledge is commodified is more easily subject to phenomena of obsolescence.

Despite the clear risk of a de-professionalization of knowledge in many cases the business schools themselves are led to propose management training courses on the market characterized by very high degrees of specialization. This trend is very coherent with the premise that participants in the management educational programs typically want to improve their professional conditions in terms of earnings, opportunities, and prospects of higher earnings. It is interesting to underline how even within university students have less and less tolerance to the theoretical aspects. Finally, an emerging trend is also represented by the presence in managerial courses of ethics and sustainability modules (Wankel et al., 2012). Students are encouraged to demonstrate a systematic and critical understanding of current business problems in relation to business ethics and sustainability, understanding techniques associated with business ethics and sustainability. One of the most interesting examples is represented by the International MBA - Global Business and Sustainability organized by the Altis business school owned by Catholic University in Milan. ALTIS, the Postgraduate School Business & Society of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan, is an international research and education centre for the study and promotion of a responsible and competitive business culture. ALTIS embodies both an openness towards the international world of business and the willingness to effectively serve the interests of the students and enterprises with which it interacts.

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