

Information Literacy and its influence on the Scholarship, Practice and Leadership Model in
Business Education

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Information literacy is a vital trait of today's business managers. With the amount of information available today, managers must be able to recognize the need to constantly look for new, valuable information, put it to work on their organizations and create the knowledge that will enable the whole organization to move forward. The problem is that many new graduates and current college students are not capable of identifying the need for good information, nor they are being capable of discerning between valuable, sound information from useless data.

Turusheva (2009) indicates that 50% of the information acquired by the student is considered old after 5 years, plus another 50% of the information is forgotten by the student a few months later (Turusheva, 2009). These statistics make it imperative for any manager to keep his knowledge updated with good, valuable information; otherwise, he risks making his company less competitive, misguiding his team, and perhaps even losing his job. Business schools must form future leaders that not only understand the importance of continuous education, but also look for useful information in academic journals and peer reviewed articles, rather than just on an open search engine on the Internet.

The model of scholarship, practice and leadership (SPL) may guide business educators in the formation of a current student and future leader that is constantly learning. This is a difficult task because it attempts to change many established forms of education. The scholarship, practice and leadership model attempts to join the theory of the different business areas, with practice and to take that a new level of action that will have a positive and lasting impact on the direct recipients of the model.

The scholarship part of the model refers to having a profound understanding of the different theories in the area. For many years, the approach of the business education has remained here, at the scholastic level. The education has been a mere attempt of transferring knowledge through textbooks and examinations. It is important for the students must learn the theory, but the educational system must also provide a guide on how to apply that theory into an actual business situation.

The practice leg of the model focuses on applying the theory to everyday business situations. A clear gap between scholarship and practice occurs when the instructor has only been dedicated to the academia and research. On the other hand, on some technical institutions, the opposite gap may occur, although less obvious; that is when the instructor has professional experience, but has no formal preparation on teaching at college level. Business schools must strive to find instructors that have the combination of both worlds, and that is not always easy. Furthermore, the ideal candidate must show a blend of scholarship and practice and leadership skills, and the latter is perhaps the most difficult trait to identify.

Leadership, on the SPL model, refers to using all the available resources to lead the organization successfully, while keeping in mind that his actions will have a direct impact, positive or negative, on everybody in the organization and the community. Finding the leaders to guide the students in this quest is a very difficult task. Forming true leaders is also the area in which many business schools are failing. Daloz Parks (2005) points out that teaching leadership in a closed environment is very different from actually preparing someone to apply critical thinking on the everyday job. (Daloz Pakz, 2005), and yet most business schools insist that they have the capacity of forming leaders in a classroom. One of the most important actions a business school may take in order to fulfill the scholarship, practice and leadership model is to

form informational literate graduates. Many schools have invested significant resources on their libraries and in the purchase of electronic databases, just to find out that most of the students do not use them for their academic work. Most college students rely on the data that open web search engines, like Google, provide to them (Badke, 2009). What makes this situation worse is the fact that many professors accept those resources as valid resources.

Business schools must self assess in how leadership is being taught in the classroom. Leadership education must enhance the critical thinking abilities of the students, so that as managers, they are able to assess a situation, lay out possible solutions and consider all of the implications -internal, external and ethical- that their decision will have on the organization and the community (Tourish, Craig & Amernic, 2010). Business educators must work together with the students in order to extract the theory of the business concepts and together, in the classroom, the instructor must guide the student into the practice of the theory. As the students practice and see the relevance of the theory in a real exercise, they learn. Furthermore, these types of exercises will help the students develop the intuition that will be required in other business scenarios. This adaptability trait is one of extreme importance for any future leader; even when the person does not always lead, this is a very important trait for an efficient and effective follower in an organization.

Russell (2009) brings together the research of three different sources: Wolf, Gardner and Donald, whom through their different approaches suggest that in order to obtain information competence, the students must learn how to select the appropriate information, internalize it and then synthesize it. (Russel, 2009). In order to achieve this goal, business schools must shift the teaching style to one that: induces the students to search for information within the acceptable academic journals and databases, forces them to extrapolate on their own how the theory can be

applied to actual business contexts, and finally, makes them show to the classroom, the professor or other audience what the learning experience was about and how it has impacted their lives. In this area, it is particularly useful for the instructors to have the students keep a journal or at least write a weekly reflection every week of the course.

Changing the traditional model of business schools is a difficult journey, but as some schools lead the way, like the Harvard Business School and its participative learning model, others will follow. The resistance of the professors to the new model will most likely come up; however, at that instance, the best way to teach the professor of the benefits of the model will be through the practice of the model himself. Business schools must actively engage its professors on participative learning model workshops that are specific for their area.

Following the scholarship, practice and leadership model is the most assertive way to form information literate students that will have keen hunger for continuous education throughout their lifetime, and which naturally allow the business schools to assert that they truly form leaders for the business organizations and the community.

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