Management development: a new role in social change?

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Abstract
Traditional approaches to organizational change are of little use in the bid for increased innovation as they reinforce top-down predictability. An alternative approach is through the creation of pockets of good practice which act as role models of change. These pockets need to be subversive of existing practices but simultaneously deliver organizational success criteria. The success of this approach is dependent upon managers developing a critical perspective about organizational control systems. Contrary to received wisdom the foundation for this critical perspective may be most usefully developed from the manager's own cynical experience of organizational life. In building this critical perspective management development may begin to fulfil a wider educational role in society.

The received wisdom for tackling organization change issues among many practitioners has generally been one of top-down, company-wide transformation, involving de-layering, re-engineering, empowering, etc. (Argyris, 1998; Hamel and Prahalad, 1994), attempting to move the organization from one monological state to another (De Cock and Rickards, 1996). Yet these approaches to change management are coming under increasing scrutiny and there is mounting evidence that one of the greatest obstacles to effecting real change is the idea that it comes about through company-wide change programmes (Beer *et al.*, 1996). "Despite all the rhetoric surrounding transformation and major change programmes, the reality is that today's managers have not yet encountered change programs that work" (Argyris, 1998, p. 104).

In the management of change, managers can find themselves faced with innumerable contradictions and double-binds (Dopson and Neumann, 1994) as they attempt to cope with increased accountability and empowerment, the need for creativity and efficiency, the need to act locally and think globally and so on. In an effort to resolve these difficulties, company sponsored management training and development has increasingly been seen as a central platform of "programmatic change" (Beer *et al.*, 1990). For example, management development is seen as critical to the cascading of culture change programmes that seek to embed new organizational attitudes and values (Willmott, 1993). But far from ensuring alignment between employee and employer aspirations, many managers have often "mimicked" the required behaviours (Denham *et al.*, 1996; Hope and Hendry, 1995) in an attempt to "ring fence" the degree of self which they are prepared to put into their work.

Management development has often been presented as a desirable, and sometimes even value-free activity for the individual and organization (Hopfl and Dawes, 1995); but such activities are also increasingly seen as opportunities for normative control (Coopey, 1995). Management development, sanctioned by senior management, will in its execution construct impressions of behaviours and attributes that are needed if those managers are to be perceived as successful by that senior management (Hopfl and Dawes, 1995).

Management development professionals themselves, are similarly under increasing scrutiny. Recent research from Atkinson and Meldrum (1998) into the quality of management development professionals, as perceived by line management, revealed an unflattering description. Line management were largely ambivalent or negative about this group's ability to take a strategic view or to act as good role models. This image of management development professionals, combined with the perception of management development as an agent of control, has helped to contribute to a description of management development "as a game of meaningless outcomes" (Clarke, 1999).

Nor is the impact of management development confined to issues of organization efficiency. The role of organizations in our society is pre-eminent. Therefore, the managerialism (the core values and beliefs) which underpin the control of organizations has significant impact on our lives (Bowles, 1997). Management development, when seen as a process of normative control, becomes the guardian of such managerialism. It therefore has an impact well beyond the classroom or action learning set.

Against this backdrop of dysfunctional approaches to change management, the increasing impact of organizations on society, and the potential perception of management development as the "spin doctor" of senior management, we need to be asking critical questions about the future role of

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management development. This paper will examine an emerging approach to change management in which the role of the individual is central to the starting point for such change. This approach potentially provides a platform for management development to enhance greater individual autonomy, facilitate better organizational adaptation to changing environments, and encourage a more healthy society through questioning the institutionalised status quo. The identification of these outcomes for management development is not new. What is different, however, is that this paper will describe how these goals may be best achieved by management development becoming an agent of subversion and critical questioning rather than "trust, truth, love and collaboration" (Buchanan and Boddy, 1993). The paper will first set the context for this by examining some of the drawbacks to traditional change management and its wider impact in exacerbating organizational cynicism. New approaches to change will be explored as a backdrop for considering the value of critical reflection which a cynical perspective can stimulate. The paper will conclude by considering how this critical and potentially subversive approach could form the basis for a future role for management development in stimulating not just organizational but ultimately, wider social change. The intention here is not to provide a detailed manifesto for change, but to widen the debate about the potential role of management development as a key feature on the education agenda of the next century.

OD at the organization level

The rate of change currently experienced by organizations is forcing a substantial shift in organizational form and must, therefore, force a change in the way we manage these organizations. In traditional hierarchical forms senior managers set direction through strategy and the control of resources etc. (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1997). But such approaches are so full of inner contradictions that they kill the innovation and motivation those organizations require to remain competitive (Argyris, 1998). Hierarchical organizations breed hierarchical behaviours (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1997). It has almost become almost an established organizational principle that such hierarchies are unlikely to be able to respond quickly or effectively enough to rapid change. A hierarchical organizational form is seen to be so riddled with conflicting layers of self-interest and differing agendas that issues are blurred and

decision making is slowed down and dissipated in the favour of those different competing interest groups. Accordingly, a template for more emergent and organic, even apparently chaotic structures, is coming to be seen as more appropriate in the future if organizations are to be able to respond to the demand for almost continuous innovation ((Tetenbaum, 1998; Miles *et al.*, 1997). Therefore, there will be an increasing need for senior managers to move their focus from one of control to one where their role is to foster entrepreneurial initiative and support radically decentralized operations (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1997) where people are capable of acting creatively and autonomously toward their specific markets opportunities.

But how far away is this future template for senior management from current practice? If hierarchical organizations breed hierarchical behaviours, then a culture of command and control which enabled those senior managers to reach their senior positions in the first place is likely to prevail and this can place a number of blockers on organizational and individual effectiveness. For example, contemporary managerial culture in Western capitalist society has been described as a combination of "social Darwinism" and "functional rationality" which can produce a competitive paradigm in which employees come to be manipulated, codified and catalogued, rather than freed to assume greater autonomy (Bowles, 1997). Furthermore, within this paradigm, the need for managers to be seen as successful and worthy of promotion, sometimes places them under pressure to bend to existing norms rather than innovate (Coopey, 1995, p. 66). It is also doubtful that these institutionalized power relations within organizations can easily be changed through traditional processes of corporate transformation. The point is clearly demonstrated in a recent survey by Worrall and Cooper (1997). Their findings gathered from members of the Institute of Management called into question "whether the objectives of change management programmes ... have actually been convincingly achieved" (1997, p. 30). But, more importantly, the survey revealed that junior managers were likely to view senior management style as being authoritative, bureaucratic, cautious, reactive, secretive, traditional and vacillating.

In many ways, a programme of change set at the organizational level, is predicated on the degree of certainty and control it appears to provide but is often unlikely to create autonomy and innovation precisely because of that degree of control and certainty.

"When employees actions are defined almost exclusively from the outside, the resulting behaviour cannot be empowering and liberating" (Argyris, 1998, p. 101). Far from empowering individuals, OD managed at the organizational level implicitly reinforces institutional control and often, through a process of "cultural doping" (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996), encourages dependency on existing organizational values rather than challenge them. Ironically therefore many change initiatives undermine the employee autonomy they purport to create. This creates considerable cynicism and demotivation as employees experience these inherent contradictions and paradoxes of organizational life. Such is the extent of this cynicism that it has attracted considerable academic concern in recent years (Andersson, 1996; Reichers *et al.*, 1997; Dean *et al.*, 1998). The pervasive nature of cynicism will now be briefly explored as an alternative starting point for management development.

Organizational cynicism

Most of the work in this area defines cynicism in negative terms, as an "attitude of contempt, frustration, and distrust toward an object or multiple objects, susceptible to change by exposure to factors in the environment" (Andersson, 1996, p. 1397). Therefore, as an attitude, cynicism comprises a combination of: *beliefs* that organizations betray a lack of fairness, honesty, and sincerity; *affect*, an emotional response toward their organization; and *behaviour* which may comprise critical observation, presenting pessimistic views etc. (Dean *et al.*, 1998).

Many of the antecedents of cynicism can be found in the shortcomings of top-down change management. Andersson (1996) has identified the roots of such cynicism in the increasing number of organizational "contract violations". These may include psychological, implied or formal contractual violations between individuals and their employer. Based on this analysis, Andersson identifies three potential predictors of workplace cynicism:

1 *Environmental* – higher executive pay, harsh layoffs, unjustified corporate profits, corporate irresponsibility.
2 *Organizational* – infrequent or inadequate communication, limited voice expression, discourteous interpersonal treatment, management incompetence, use of management techniques.
3 *Job/role characteristics* – role ambiguity, role conflict, work overload.

The changing nature of organizational forms toward more fluid and ambiguous structures would suggest that a great many characteristics of jobs and roles are likely to continue to become ambiguous and generate conflict in the future (Worrall and Cooper, 1997; Holbeche and Glynn, 1998). Similarly, if the prevailing approach to change management is continuing to fail, if managers have yet to experience change programmes that really work, we must also consider the extent to which Andersson's (1996) second category is also likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Lack of adequate information about change and experience of unsuccessful change programmes were also identified as determinants of cynicism by Reichers *et al.* (1997). Dean *et al.* (1998) are careful about determining whether organizational cynicism is justifiable in any given situation. This, being a matter of opinion, is no basis for theory (1998, p. 347). However, given the view that the determinants of organizational cynicism are likely to increase, perhaps a more relevant observation is whether cynicism is an inevitable condition of contemporary organizational life. Is it an aberration to be controlled, or a precondition for surviving in organizational life?

While for some this analysis to date may present a bleak picture of organizations, it can also actually provide a real point of departure for reframing approaches to organization development and the role of management development in facilitating this change. Rather than pursuing a naïvely optimistic approach to management development let us accept the manager's own starting point. The rationale for this is clear when you consider that "if motivation, control and leadership are problem areas in an organisation then the political reality underlying these issues must necessarily be one of struggle, conflict and lack of consensus" (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980). So rather than trying to stimulate change through open, collaborative relationships which only produce limited success (Buchanan and Boddy, 1993), it may be more practical to start with a manager's own cynically informed view of organizations. In order to appreciate the real value of this starting point, the next section will deal with some of the emerging trends in OD. These trends will be then related to how cynicism may form a useful starting place for management development to foster greater managerial autonomy and social responsibility.

OD at the individual level

In response to this need for ever-increasing change and innovation and the growing

disillusionment with traditional approaches to organization change, alternative approaches have been emerging with individuals and groups as the starting point for organization development interventions (Beer, 1990; Butcher *et al.*, 1997; Clarke and Meldrum, 1999; Frohman, 1997; Hendry, 1996). In this approach, change is seen as a "jointly, analytical, educational/learning, and political process" (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991), in which organization contexts are open to redefinition by powerful individual actors. These actors create pockets of good practice, groups of people and activities who "share tacit knowledge and through dialogue bring this to the surface; they exchange ideas about work practice and experiment with new methods and ideas; they engage in discussions which affirm or modify theories in use; they innovate new problem-solving routines and simultaneously manage and repair the social context" (Hendry, 1996, p. 628). Through linked pockets of good practice "knowledge, rules for action, and culture are spread" (Hendry, 1996, p. 628).

In this way organization change is an emergent, organic process created by individual action, somewhat akin to Morgan's (1993) "strategic termites". The role of senior management then becomes one of detecting and supporting these emergent pockets of good practice (Beer *et al.*, 1990). But as we have seen, this is unlikely within existing organizational power relations. Therefore, a necessary pre-condition for the successful creation of pockets of good practice, lies in the need for such strategic termites to be critical, to challenge and even subvert the status quo. In this context being critical focuses on "asking questions of purpose and of confronting the taken-for-granted, concealed interests and ideologies which inform managerial thought and action" (Reynolds, 1998, p. 184). The capacity to engage in critical reflection requires considerable self-awareness, cognitive capabilities, emotional resilience, political skill etc.

The need for these high order capabilities poses two important issues for the development of managers. First, why should managers wish to engage in such subversive activity in the first place and why would they then see this approach as more likely to be effective? Second, how can individuals be subversive and credible? How can managers learn to read organization context, power relations and political activity? Some of the answers to these questions can be found in the way we develop managers. The assertion here is that one way of developing a critical perspective may be most usefully found and nurtured within the domain of organizational cynicism, which on first sight, is contrary to much of the received wisdom in management development. Another part of the answer rests with the inescapable truism that new theories may be convincing because they work (Berger and Luckman, 1996, p. 137). Change initiated by pockets of good practice are essentially both real, and realistic for practising managers because it accords with their everyday experience of managerial life. Both of these potential answers will now be explored in more detail followed by an assessment of the impact of these ideas on the future role of management development.

The positive value of cynicism

As we have seen there is plenty of evidence to support the view that organizational life is increasingly experienced in a cynical way by actors (Dopson and Nuemann, 1994; Denham *et al.*, 1996; Hope and Hendry, 1995; Reichers *et al.*, 1997). But this cynical perspective does have other possibilities too. Cynicism can help make sense of puzzling events in the environment (Reichers *et al.*, 1997). It can prevent being taken advantage of and put a check on expediency over principle, should those seeking expediency believe that self-interest might go undetected (Dean *et al.*, 1998). But, above all, cynicism can help managers see the institutionalized power relationships at work in organizations. It recognises that choices of organizational direction are influenced by self-interest (Dean *et al.*, 1998) and that there are often hidden motives for actions..

At one level, therefore, cynicism can provide value because it explicitly surfaces the influence of management self-interest and of the repeated failure of management to introduce effective top-down organizational change. In other words it encourages a *critical* perspective which challenges the assumptions that foster the inevitability of such authoritarianism in organizations (Reynolds, 1998). Cynicism provides a good starting point for developing managers because it is so much part of their everyday reality and lived experience of organizations.

However, the idea of using cynicism as a starting point for management development clearly faces many difficulties as it is so embedded as a negative attitude. What makes cynicism so dysfunctional is the affective dimension recognised by Dean *et al.* (1998) and its tendency to promote entirely self-serving behaviour. The affective domain is revealed in the emotion, anger, shame, distress etc., caused by contract violations, when expectations are not met and

disillusionment prevails (Andersson, 1996). In an effort to protect the self from further harm the individual will pursue an entirely self-serving agenda. It therefore follows that if managers are able to rise above the emotional consequences of contract violations they will need to acquire greater emotional resilience. This resilience will enable them to see events without personalising them (Butcher *et al.*, 1997), and maintain a balanced view of events and motives without the temptation to blame or be judgmental. This balanced view should provide a starting point from which managers could engage in a more critical analysis, to develop perceptual acuity in interpersonal relationships and to see failures in communication etc., as an inevitable outcome of competing interest groups rather than attributing it to an unfair system. If the system is not seen as unfair, it provides an opportunity for managers to consider ways in which self-interest might become congruent with organizational interest. Accepting managerial cynicism as a basis for developing a *critical* perspective and as inevitable rather than an aberration, provides some challenges for management development but also potentially re-frames its role in organizations and society. These ideas will be discussed shortly. But why should starting with a cynical approach be any more valuable than traditional approaches to stimulating change? This brings us to the second part of our answer and may be most usefully explored by examining the ways individual actors perceive their change context.

The managers' experience of organizational life

We have examined traditional approaches to organizational change as being contradictory, paradoxical and often seen as de-humanizing by organizational actors because the underlying paradigm reflects rational, top-down control. Expecting planned outcomes from organization-wide change in a context open to multiple interpretations by those involved, seems remote. Using a critical perspective of organizations immediately surfaces issues of managerial power and control. Accepting the socially constructed realities of power, the manager then has choices whether to accept, bend or subvert the rules that are perceived as concomitant with that power. Whether the manager sees these choices as real will be dependent on a function of the individual's beliefs concerning the personal consequences of reinterpreting those rules. It will also be dependent

on the individual's perceptions of the need to comply with referent group expectations about the enactment of those rules (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). So decision-by-decision, meeting-by-meeting, managers are engaged in a process of negotiating the rules of the game. Not only will actors accept or bend the rules but can also subvert them in ways which can have a powerful impact on the formal and informal rules of organizational life. Research by Johnson *et al.* (1997) into institutional change demonstrates that initiating subversive behaviour from within established organizational power relations is common and achievable.

Change initiated from below, therefore, has much more resonance with managers' real experiences of organizational life; of daily conflicts, resistance, competitive positioning of causes, local needs versus organizational mandates etc. It is this type of experience which feeds managerial cynicism. Therefore, change which starts with individuals' own critical perceptions of self-interest, ambition, reward and interpretations of organizational power bases etc., is much more likely to be enacted because it is real and immediate for those involved. Managers working in this way can see that they can make a difference to their own circumstances and to the organization (however small). The key question is the extent to which those actors are able or willing to engage in behaviour which may be construed as subversive and how can this be closely aligned with organizational needs. This brings us to the role of management development in stimulating such change.

A future role for management development?

If organizations need new approaches to change and these approaches will need to be inherently critical of the status quo, management development might have a new role in developing managers to be subversive by building pockets of good practice. In this way, individual and organizational agendas can become congruent. If pockets of good practice are to flourish as a viable approach to organizational change then they will implicitly challenge the assumptions behind existing power relations because they question the primacy of corporate, top down control. In this respect they run the risk of being interpreted as evidence of organizational misbehaviour in that they will run counter to shared organizational norms and expectations (Vardi and Weiner, 1996). The ability of managers to undertake this type of

subversion requires considerable interpersonal, political and cognitive skills. Clarke and Meldrum (1999) have identified five key personal attributes needed for the development of such pockets in ways which reduce this possibility:

1. political astuteness, the ability to read organizational contexts;
2. ability to "position" intentions, the way individuals and departments represent themselves in order to gain credibility and act as a role model for change;
3. envisioning, creating a vision that is differentiated, yet meets key organizational success criteria;
4. subversive, being able to stand outside organizational rhetoric, questioning organizational norms whilst still meeting organizational success criteria; and
5. taking personal risk, understanding the personal and developmental implications for oneself in taking these actions.

Each of these attributes reflects a critical perspective. For example, in order to "position" a pocket to deliver its differentiated vision, a manager must be able to read the formal and informal organizational success criteria, in order to be credible to the dominant majority. In other words, managers must be able to read the unwritten rules of the game (Scott-Morgan, 1994) about "what it takes to get on around here". If a minority is to be seen as credible it may need to be flexible in its positioning depending whether it is on the inside or outside of the majority which provides the dominant definition of reality (Mugny, 1984). Political astuteness is, therefore, necessary in order to be able to determine the existing power relations within different organizational groups which may interpret the action of such pockets in different ways. A critical perspective is, therefore, a prerequisite for the execution of these attributes. All of this has considerable implications for the development of managers. While the need for such a critical perspective has been widely discussed in academic journals, so far little attention has been given to formulating an educational methodology which can foster such a critical perspective among practising managers (Reynolds, 1998). So, how might this critical perspective and its contingent cynical viewpoint be developed in managers to enable the deployment of these attributes?

In discussing cynicism, Andersson (1996) identifies a number of "dispositional moderators" which can predispose individuals to act negatively in situations which are seen to be unjust. These moderators are: self-esteem, locus of control, equity sensitivity, negative

affectivity, work ethic, machiavellianism and demographic characteristics. With the exception of the last item, the list provides a good indicator of those factors which directly influence the dysfunctional *affective* domain of cynicism discussed earlier. The development of managers so that they are able to increase or decrease the impact of these traits can enhance the emotional resilience needed to help move from cynicism to criticism. Many existing personal development activities attempt to influence the attitudes and behaviours which underpin these personality traits, but many are developed irrespective of the organizational context of the manager (Atkinson, forthcoming). In addition, much existing organizationally-motivated management development is based on a competency approach which reflects a reductionist template for development (Willmott, 1994). A process which helps to develop a critical perspective must take account of the manager as a whole complex being acting in a dynamic environment with other complex people (Burgoyne, 1998).

This can be achieved through the development of underlying "meta-abilities", those personal, acquired abilities which underpin and determine how, and when, knowledge and skills will be used (Brown, 1993). These include capabilities such as self-understanding, cognitive skills, personal drive and emotional resilience. These are most effectively surfaced through a development process which creates a disconnect or disjoint in previously held mindsets forcing a significant personal transition which allows managers to step aside from previous frames of reference and to see the world "afresh". In turn this facilitates an increase in the managers' cognitive complexity and thus their capacity for critical reflection. The exact detail of this approach is beyond our discussion here but the major building blocks for these ideas can be found in Butcher *et al.* (1997), Conger and Xin (1996), and Clarke (1998). Most importantly, this type of process can enable managers to glimpse moments of "micro-emancipation" (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996). Micro emancipation concerns those situations in which managers, through a process of critical reflection, are able to make partial, or even just temporary movements, in developing greater autonomy and responsibility for others (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996). In essence these moments of micro emancipation enable managers to see the political realities of organizational life. Enabling such glimpses helps identify the socially constructed nature of reality and, therefore, the opportunity for its re-definition. This results in managers

being able to see choices in what they do and this choice is central to the managers' motivation and ability to engage in subversive action.

This possibility of encouraging moments of micro-emancipation for individuals provides for a new and more impactful role for management development. In essence, in raising micro issues of control and autonomy for individuals, management development would be fulfilling a broader educative role, not merely providing skills training. Education cannot exist independently of its social context, and is rightly open to the influence of government, community and interest groups. However, despite this influence, one of the core values of education remains that of enabling people to explore alternative points of view, as free from bias as possible. This core value remains dominant in Western education despite the ongoing conflict with community control that this can create (see Worsley, 1970, p. 178 for example). The process of enabling critical reflection is a key ingredient in management development fulfilling a wider educative role as it provides a basis for exploring alternative views, challenging assumptions and identifying bias and covert interests. By enabling managers to critically explore issues of power and politics, managers will inevitably raise fundamental questions about themselves and their own role in organizations. By managers reflecting critically about careers, the division between work and non-work, and their responsibility to consider the wider social impact of managerial decisions, management development begins to assume a more substantial role in society.

If organizations are the dominant influence in society, then management development's educative role of challenge and critique is of paramount importance. This is especially so if one considers how secondary and higher education activities are necessarily focused on developing people who will enter their careers with little organizational influence. The power of managerial ideology that we have explored is too great for an employee's critical facilities to survive the early years of organizational life. Therefore, the greatest impact on the status quo may be best made (initially at least) from within organizations by management development. The role of management development, therefore, becomes one of challenging normative control rather than reinforcing it.

All this represents a sophisticated management development process, which is far removed from the competency approach which occupies much of the current resources in management development. It is,

therefore, necessary to ask some serious questions about whether this is remotely achievable or not. How might this new role for management development emerge? What are the forces which might encourage a change in the prevailing institutional template? What will happen if management development is unable to respond to these challenges? It is not the intention here to create a manifesto which is able to answer all these questions precisely, but to create a "glimpse" into the future of what might be and to encourage further debate and pockets of good practice. It is, therefore, useful to look forward to the emerging social, technological and economic conditions which might influence the role of management development in the next century to highlight some of the choices open to us.

Fortune telling

A brief examination of the considerable academic and popular literature available about the world of work and business in the "new millennium" reveals a time of potential upheaval. In a global marketplace, there can be no long-term competitive advantage (Drucker, 1997). The trend towards overcapacity will encourage the need for constant innovation in order to stay ahead. The continuing impact of technology will further reduce the size of both peripheral and core labour markets and increase the size of the disenfranchised underclass. The manager's job will become ever more complex and, as managers themselves will become a rarer species, the best managers will be in big demand. In turn, this cadre of "super managers" will be ever more demanding of the companies for whom they work. The power of these managers will, therefore, become even greater, not just within their organizations, but also in terms of their impact on society. In this context, what might happen to management development?

These market conditions could encourage two very different scenarios for the role of management development. On the one hand they could foster the destabilization of the forces that influence the current role of management development. Some organizations will simply be unable to respond to future market conditions if they continue to pursue a model of organizational change which is predicated on senior management control. In effect, the market will begin to create a crisis that will leave some organizations with no alternative if they are to continue create wealth for their shareholders. Some senior managers will have to

stop managing control processes and start leading by creating conditions in which pockets of change may occur. In these organizations there could, therefore, be a strong pull for management development to adopt more educative values of critique and challenge. But this in turn will create a tension, as the criticism challenges the primacy of those shareholders' demands. The only way to reform the existing power relations will be to implicitly question the assumptions upon which they are founded.

Alternatively, future market forces may work to reduce the potential influence of management development. We have discussed the dominance of existing power relations within organizations at some length already, but it is still pertinent to ask why, if the top-down approach still prevails, there is likely to be change now. Even given the context described above, it is not hard to predict an alternative viewpoint in which a smaller and influential group of managers becomes ever more focused on the relentless pursuit of profit, rationalized through the existing priorities of technical and instrumental reason. These managers would be increasingly seen as heroes who provide the key to a good society (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996). In this scenario of increasing technological sophistication there would be an even bigger rift between core and peripheral workers in which the periphery would be treated as an ever more instrumental source of temporary labour. Core employees would be entrapped through more sophisticated processes of "cultural doping", providing the illusion of autonomy and independence. Company-sponsored management development would continue as a process of normative control with little chance of breaking out of its own self-serving need for organizational credibility (Clarke, 1999).

From a critical theory standpoint, this scenario would produce even greater levels of consumerism, waste, alienation and social control. Whether the fabric of our present social values would be able to bear the tensions that this bleak scenario describes is, for the moment, unknown. So what factors might influence the realization of the first scenario at the expense of the second?

First, the work of social commentators and organizational "gurus" may play some part in encouraging the necessary destabilization by raising the profile of the value of education for organizational survival. For example, Handy (1997), Senge (1997) and Drucker (1997) all point to a different business paradigm in which the management of society's

knowledge resources will become of critical importance. For Drucker, education will become society's key resource for developing new concepts, methods and practices. While some of these ideas are maybe, merely, unwittingly recasting existing organizational control mechanisms, these ideas line the airport bookstands that are targeted at executives. Some could have a positive impact on the logic of the institutional forces that determine the current role of management development by at least raising valuable questions in the mind of the executive.

More important influences, however, could lie in the supply side of the equation. But through what processes might a more educative management development be delivered? If management development professionals within organizations have been largely unable to break out of the existing organizational control mechanisms, who will build subversive capabilities in management? While there are many restrictions in which much publicly funded management education is confined (Twomey and Twomey, 1998; Willmott, 1994), there are opportunities for those employed within business schools who also engage in company sponsored management development to be influential too. By pursuing management development approaches like those described by Clarke (1998), and Butcher *et al.* (1997) and to a certain extent Reynolds (1998), "micro emancipation" may be encouraged. These forms of management intervention can form their own pockets of good practice in creating organizational pockets of good practice. As in an organizational setting, these exemplar approaches to management development will need to be subversive, undermining the status quo whilst meeting the formal success criteria required by companies for such interventions. In other words organizations may get more than they bargained for from such development activities.

In the medium term, these subversive approaches to company-sponsored development may act as role models for other activities and link with other pockets of like-minded academics and practitioners through writing, listening and critical action learning approaches (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996). And, as with organization change, these micro processes of change may also influence the prevailing institutional template. As with organizational pockets of good practice these attempts to initiate change from below, against the dominant majority may be successful because they work (Berger and Luckman, 1996, p. 137). While the academic

community is far from being perceived as homogeneous and consistent, individual pockets of activity may be seen as credible because they work within the existing institutional template. This will be achieved by exploiting loopholes and contradictions within existing power relations to create some degree of increased autonomy and responsibility for those senior managers who can make an impact on competitive advantage and organizational democracy (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996).

However, such supply side, micro processes of change are unlikely to move institutional templates on their own without regulatory or governmental support/demand (Johnson *et al.*, 1997). There is a need for other, significant, institutional processes to facilitate the embedding of core educational values in management development. University business schools clearly have a role but so do industry and other government pressure groups. If subversive action can influence some senior manager role models, then perhaps this may in turn stimulate "think tanks" and industry pressure groups etc. to widen the debate. For example, environmental, gender and racial interest groups who already lobby for regulation in their area of interest may also see the need for lobbying for regulatory changes in the educational content of management development. This would allow their interests to be surfaced and explored at the point at which they are relevant for the managers who either implicitly or explicitly collude to maintain the status quo.

As the influence of pockets of micro emancipation grow, there will be a raised consciousness about wider issues of corporate social responsibility that moves beyond the role of public relations because it takes into account the true nature of the game in which managers find themselves. In turn this consciousness may force a renewed questioning about the fundamental assumptions behind the capitalist philosophy; profit for whom? competition to what end? growth for what purpose? As organizations become ever dominant there will be an increasing push to align primary and secondary education with business needs. If management development can assume a broader educative role in society then perhaps these questions may encourage business leaders to influence wider national curricula etc. However, all of this remains speculation. Whether this germ of change can be really built into such wider educational frameworks and thus effect a long term change in social values, remains to be seen.

Conclusion

What is clear is that management development does have an impact well beyond the classroom. As the guardian of managerialism and technical rationality, management development currently impacts all of our lives, inside and outside of organizations. Given this pivotal role it could also become an agent of social change and, therefore, warrants much closer attention by practitioners and academics. If organizations are to respond differently to the challenges of capitalism, then where will the impetus for innovation come from, if not from activities such as management development? Management development must be potentially the most effective form of intervention for influencing organizational norms because it can take place within the lived reality of those managers who need to acquire a wider education about the social impact of their actions.

If organizations continue to act as the dominant influence on society then it is vital that this influence is informed by a critical and reflective educational process which is as far as possible free of the influence of a disproportionate distribution of power in society. Conventional wisdom has cast management development in a role which has an emphasis on trust and collaboration. Yet this wisdom has often neutered management development's influence as this approach is not always seen as credible by hard bitten line managers. A more subversive approach which encourages pockets of good practice to challenge the status quo may be more appropriate. A cynical perspective may be a vital starting point in raising the necessary critical facilities for this because it is part of the managers' everyday reality of organizational life. Without the challenge that this critical view brings we risk the danger of totalitarianism. By encouraging moments of micro emancipation, management development can begin to fulfil a wider educative role of promoting challenge and alternative organizational viewpoints.

All of this is, of course, fraught with substantial dilemmas, barriers and assumptions. It is not my intention here to paint a picture of management development as some sort of white knight coming to the rescue of the alienated and downtrodden. Micro processes of change are not capable of overturning institutional templates on their own (Johnson *et al.*, 1997), they will need to be augmented by larger scale regulatory frameworks. But they can initiate a wind of change precisely because they "can have more direct relevance to the *lived experience* of people who are continually engaged in local

struggles" (Alvesson and Willmott, 1997, p. 176). The object here has been to provide a view of how management development might be able to play a very different role in organizational change by adopting more subversive and critical values, but in doing so it will implicitly raise difficult issues of power and control to the surface. This could provide an opportunity for management development to fulfil a more substantial educative role in social as well as organizational change. Whether this role is one which might facilitate increasing control of individual freedom or increasing democracy is a matter for personal critical reflection. This individual reflection will generate questions which deserve a full debate in organizations, in academia and in government.

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Application questions

1 What is the purpose of management development? Does it have a wider significance than simply increasing the efficiency or effectiveness of the people or organization directly involved in it?

2 Is management development more effective in the workplace or off-site in a university, or a combination of the two?