Organisational resilience of business schools: exploring the possibilities of adaptation

The organisational landscape of business schools in some countries is in a state of fragility, plagued by an ongoing relevance critique, increasing competition from non-traditional private providers, demographics which intensify the competition for typical undergraduate students, increasing pressure for greater economic and environmental responsibility, a need to respond to technological advances, and a different political posture to the financial support of universities (Stokes et al 2018). As such, within this morphing landscape, the organisational resilience of business schools has perhaps become more pertinent in modern times than in recent history. Indeed, the UK is said to be experiencing an unprecedented market shake out of business schools with at least three facing imminent closure.

Within this practice setting, organisational resilience has been conceptualised as (1) the capacity of an organisation to 'bounce back' (to survive) after an adverse or traumatic event, (2) the capacity of an organisation to adapt to circumstances and events before they are experienced as adverse, as traumatic or as a crisis, and (3) the aggregated capacities of people to absorb crises and operationally adapt to new situations (Koronis and Ponis, 2018; Evans, Cregan, & Wall, 2019 forthcoming). With this in mind, the first part of this QIC therefore explores how we might re-organise university-based business schools in ways which develop the adaptive capacities which are seemingly pertinent to contemporary circumstances.

At the same time, organisational re-configurations are likely to, whether intended or unintended, shape the pedagogic practices of business schools (Akrivou & Bradbury-Huang, 2015) as well as have the potential for wider consequential tensions in a neo-liberal marketplace which emphasises individualism (Wall and Jarvis 2015). For example, a business school that develops strong employer involvement in curricula design, delivery and assessment may have a wider network of positive ties to sustain itself during difficult times, but adopting team based assessment practices (which can inculcate the wider social impact awareness of students) can create student experience challenges. So the second part of this QIC is to explore how the changes which are created for organisational resilience might shape pedagogic practices, and in turn, the possible consequences of organising in such ways.

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