Developing a critical appreciative process to review frameworks for social enterprise education

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Abstract

Objectives

The object of this paper is to design a process for the development of curricula to advance social enterprise education using the lens of critical management studies (CMS). It is motivated by ongoing work to develop a new award in *Cooperative Business and Responsible Management* at [University] as well as ongoing work to develop the use of *Understanding Social Enterprise: Theory and Practice* (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2011; 2016)*.

Prior Work

Five projects have influenced the authors' conceptualisations of social enterprise and responsible management. In this paper, we set out the rationale for taking a critical approach to curriculum development based on critiquing a framework developed by the ARIADNE project (Moreau and Mertens, 2013). We develop an argument for comparing it to four other frameworks that have competed to shape our thinking. Whilst acknowledging the potential danger of 'closure' through the development of curricula that converge on normative values and principles, our goal is the development and application of a critical appreciative process that ensures any normative consensus is destabilised to ensure that new curricula acknowledge where a dissensus exists.

Approach

Guided by new research on 'critical appreciation' that explores the interaction between social systems and personal lifeworlds, we frame 'competencies' as *system imperatives* in social enterprise education, and 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'attitudes' as proxies for the *lifeworlds* that it aims to create.

Results

The paper sets out how critical appreciation provides a process for comparing and contrasting selected frameworks to deconstruct the discourse that underpins the values and principles in each implied curriculum. This process is designed to encourage the authors to re-examine their assumptions as they co-construct a new curriculum.

Implications

By designing a process for deconstructing and comparing multiple frameworks for social enterprise education, we advance CMS by enabling institutions, academics and students to: 1) reclaim choice in how they shape and develop social enterprise courses; 2) develop a theory of social enterprise education that is reflexive regarding its impact on curriculum development and which encourages andragogy over pedagogy.

Value

The value of this paper lies is the process developed for the active construction of new courses on social enterprise that embed the perspective of critical management studies in their development. The paper also offers a new application of 'critical appreciative processes (CAPs) in the field of management education.

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Introduction

The ARIADNE Project (Moreau & Mertens, 2013) is the first Europe-wide international study of the educational needs of enterprise managers across the social economy. It recently reported findings in the form of a competencies framework to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes in strategy development, governance, stakeholder management, HRM, finance, social economy and member-ownership. In this paper, we examine the level of consensus implicit in the ARIADNE framework by examining four other frameworks that have influenced our development as social enterprise educators and researchers.

The premise of this paper is that by adopting a 'critical appreciative lens' (Grant, 2014) we will develop knowledge of the consensus and dissensus regarding *competencies* that inform the development of university degree programmes on social enterprise. This examination highlights how 'principled projects' designed to broaden the curriculum and conceptions of management through the introduction of critical management studies (CMS) are not free of the normative influence of managerialism when developed into a curriculum (Grey & Mitev, 1995; Adler, et al., 2007). We show the importance of focussing - as academics - not only on what and how we teach, but on the processes that inform curriculum choices in order to realise the transformative potential of CMS in the field of social enterprise education.

Following Grant (2014) we design a process to answer the following research question: "What system imperatives and lifeworlds do frameworks for social enterprise education intend to create?" Grant's recent work on examining social enterprise through the lens of critical appreciation draws on Habermas' work to define 'systems' and 'lifeworlds' (Habermas, 1987). Grant presents the development of new business models as social enterprise *systems*. The knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to create and sustain these systems shape the *lifeworlds* of the people who run (and are engaged by) each system. In the field of education, we can reapply these concepts to programmes of education. We take the competencies and behaviours defined in an educational framework as 'system imperatives' (i.e. the injunctions within the social system that guide the education of social entrepreneurs and social enterprise managers), and the knowledge, skills and attitudes that support these systems as 'imagined lifeworlds' of members of that educational system.

By designing a process for comparing five sets of system imperatives and imagined lifeworlds, we advance the goals of CMS by demonstrating how consensus and dissensus can be identified in the field of social enterprise management education. The resulting process enables institutional actors and students to apply critical appreciative processes so they can reclaim choices in curriculum design and develop more reflexive approaches to management learning.

The paper has four sections. In the first section, we outline the ARIADNE framework and briefly set out four alternatives we have chosen to pilot our design process. The four alternatives are: 1) *Blue Print for a Co-operative Decade* (Mills & Davies, 2013); 2) the UN's *Principles of Responsible Management Education* (UN Global Compact, 2007; Laasch & Conway, 2015), 3) *Social Enterprise Balance Diagnostics* (Bull & Compton, 2006; Bull, 2007), and; 4) the *FairShares Model* (Ridley-Duff & Southcombe, 2014; Ridley-Duff, 2015). In the second section, we provide a short overview of the assumptions of CMS with specific reference to debates about management learning and education. The third section sets out the activities that will help developers of a curriculum engage in 'critical appreciation' to identity system imperatives and imagined lifeworlds that are implicit with an educational framework or text. The fourth and final section sets out the value of the paper by identifying how this process represents a contribution to knowledge by developing a new application of critical appreciative processes.

Social Enterprise Development Frameworks

The starting point for our argument is that CMS developed as a field following Grey and Mitev's polemic about business school education. In the 20 years that followed, there have been many initiatives and projects that have sought to generate alternative approaches / assumptions in business studies (each framework we select is an example of this). Moreau and Mertens (2013) advanced a response for the field of social enterprise by generating a framework based on 'competencies', 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'attitudes'. The creation of such frameworks run the risk of creating 'alternatives' that adopt the philosophical paradigm of the business education system they originally intended to critique (by normalising an alternative within the 'frameworks' used in existing systems of management education). Whilst the content can change, the approach to devising / delivering management education does not. However, by devising, comparing and contrasting several alternative frameworks, we can destabilise the idea of a dominant consensus and clarify how values influence curriculum design choices. Therefore, whilst acknowledging the use of 'normalised' frameworks, we make a contribution by creating a plurality of them to show the range of values informing the development the field of social enterprise education.

Moreau and Mertens (2013) report on findings from a Transfer of Innovation project (ARIADNE) that involved six partners funded by an EU Leonardo da Vinci programme. They set out a short history of the way 'competences' have gradually supplanted 'qualifications' as the principle vehicle and evaluation framework in the field of Human Resource Management (HRM). The notion of a competence is contested but after examining various descriptions of practical know-how, they settle on a definition advanced by (Dessler, 2005, p. 412) that competences are "*demonstrable characteristics of a person, including knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable performance.*" However, they also argue that the notion of competence is job and context specific

so the competencies required for social economy management cannot be transplanted from other contexts. They can only be known by studying the competencies that experienced social economy managers have developed.

The competencies framework they set out was based on a leadership '*strataplex'* developed by Mumford et al. (2007) filled it through an iterative process of reading literature on social enterprise management, drawing on project partners expertise in social enterprise education, and conducting focus groups with practising social enterprise managers. Skills were divided into strategic, business, cognitive and interpersonal and operationalised through the following matrix:

Table 1 – Social enterprise competencies framework (example)

The main specific competence	Knowledge (to know..)	Skills (know-how) (to be able to…)	Behaviours (to behave with…)
A. To develop a strategy that can sustain the SE's multiple goals	The multiple goals nature of a social enterprise The tensions caused by multiple goals The field within which the organization operates.	To identify, analyse and understand (future) social needs by listening, interpreting, and anticipating the demands expressed by consumers, beneficiaries, the state etc.	Consistency Idealism Proactivity Innovation Adaptability

The ARIADNE project outlines the knowledgebase for seven competences, the skills (know-how) that are needed to apply this knowledge, and the behaviours required to put the skills into practice. For example, competence A (see Table 1) has three associated areas of knowledge development, eleven skills and five behaviours.

Critical appreciation requires a group of people to engage in dialogue (it is not something that can be done in isolation). Therefore, we convened a team of academics who had each undertaken (or were currently undertaking) doctoral-level studies linked to different types of social enterprise development. Each constructed a framework based on key publications in their sub-field and these were compared to the ARIADNE framework (see Table 2). In each case, the sub-field specialist was tasked with organising their findings using the strataplex (Mumford, et al., 2007).

ICA Blue Print for a Cooperative Decade

The first team member (Author 3, engaged in a doctoral study of the inter-section between sustainable development and worker co-operatives) studied the *Blue Print for a Co-operative Decade* (Mills & Davies, 2013). The ICA Blue Print was published in 2012 as part of the UN's International Year of Co-operatives. Whilst not designed specifically as an educational curriculum at the outset, two authors of this paper (1 and 3) found that members of the *International Cooperative Business Education Consortium* were using the ICA Blue Print to design and check the content of their co-operative business degree programmes. The *Blue Print* identifies five key competencies: 1) elevate participation in membership and governance; 2) position cooperatives as

builders of sustainability; 3) build and secure the cooperative identity; 4) ensure supportive legal frameworks for cooperative development; and 5) secure cooperative capital while maintaining member control.

UN's Principles of Responsible Management (PRME)

The second team member (Author 5) had recently completed a doctoral study in sustainable development within the voluntary sector. They focussed on curricula arising out of an initiative on principles of responsible management education (PRME), which – in turn – is derived from work by the United Nations (UN Global Compact, 2007). To date, over 600 business schools have signed commitments to follow PRME principles (including the universities that employ the authors). Support materials for university education on the Compact started to circulate in 2014 when an instructor's edition of *Principles of Responsible Management* was made available to academics (Laasch & Conway, 2015). PRME sets out six principles: 1) purpose, which commits educators to developing students as generators of social value; 2) values education, which encourages considerations of business ethics and social responsibility; 3) teaching methods that provide practical experiences of responsible leadership; 4) research, to encourage critical reflection; 5) partnerships, to experience working with multiple stakeholders and; 6) dialogue, to involve and benefit the wider community. Throughout Laasch and Conway's text, ethics, sustainable development and civic responsibility are integrated with public service, market and civil society goals in a search for new business models.

Social Enterprise Balance Diagnostics

The Balance Diagnostics emerged from a 3 year ESF-funded project that involved Author 2. This project sought to understand and develop social enterprise support programmes (Bull & Crompton, 2005). After an extensive round of interviews with social enterprise managers and boards in the North West of England, social enterprise coaching tools were designed (Bull & Compton, 2006; Bull, 2007). After using Balance, a detailed report provides guidance to enterprises/business coaches on seven thematic areas. These key 'competencies' are evaluated through continued use of the diagnostics tools: 1) Developing a stakeholder orientation; 2) Managing multiple bottom-lines; 3) Internal activity management; 4) Organisational learning; 5) Income generation; 6) Governing and governance; 7) Visioning.

FairShares Model

The last model is the most recently formalised. The *FairShares Model* grew out of a programme of action research (by Author 1) and has yielded education and support tools that facilitate the democratisation of cooperatives, charities and social enterprises (SHU, 2014). Between 2012 – 2015, this has been formalised as an approach to the design and development of "multi-stakeholder

social enterprises" after active discussion documents were circulated at co-operative and social enterprise summer schools (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2013; Ridley-Duff & Southcombe, 2014), and then collating into a series of learning activities that support an educational curriculum (Ridley-Duff, 2015). The *FairShares Model* is based on a definition developed by Social Enterprise Europe after consulting with partner organisations in 14 countries across 4 continents in 2014. From this six competencies appear in a draft curriculum for FairShares education: 1) defining social purpose(s); 2) creating (and assessing) the social impacts of trading; 3) designing ethical and sustainable production systems; 4) encouraging ethical and sustainable consumption; 5) socialising ownership, and; 6) socialising governance and management.

Table 2 – Summary of competencies in each educational framework

	ARIADNE	ICA Blue Print	PRME	Balance	FairShares
A	To develop a strategy that can sustain multiple goals	To elevate participation in membership and governance	To develop students as generators of (social, environmental and economic) sustainable value for business and society	To develop a stakeholder orientation	To define social purpose(s)
B	To know, understand and mobilize the internal governance system	To position cooperatives as builders of sustainability	To embed the concept of responsible business into all educational curricula	To manage multiple bottom lines	To create (and assess) social impact from trading activities
C	To manage the various external stakeholders	To build and secure the cooperative identity	To create educational experiences that develop responsible leadership	To improve internal activity management	To design ethical and sustainable production systems
D	To manage staff and volunteers	To ensure supportive legal frameworks for cooperative development	To underpin education programmes with research on responsible management	To improve organisational learning	To encourage ethical and sustainable consumption
E	To manage the financial aspects	To secure cooperative capital while maintaining member control	To create corporate / community partnerships to advance responsible business	To engage in income generation	To socialise ownership of enterprises (e.g. promote member-ownership).
F	To know, understand and be able to position the social economy		To facilitate critical debate on social responsibility amongst multiple stakeholders	To improve governing and governance	To socialise governance and management of enterprises (e.g. promote member-control).
G	To develop a feeling of membership and pride in belonging to the social economy			To improve visioning activities	

Having established that the content of these frameworks contain both similarities and differences, we now turn attention to the way they can inform CMS. In the next section, we argue that CMS requires an educational strategy that enables students to link values and ideologies to management principles and practices. By devising a strategy for the deconstruction and reconstruction of social enterprise education 'frameworks', the process can be shared in educational programmes to promote student (and management) learning. After making the case for a curriculum

based on CMS, we then outline a curriculum review strategy based on the application of critical appreciative processes (CAPs).

Critical Management Education

Writing in 1995, Grey and Mitev, made a case for *critical* management education. Theirs was not an instructional paper for the design of curricula but a provocative challenge to management academics that invited them to reconsider their understandings of management and management education. Management, they argued, is too often considered to be an apolitical, amoral, asocial activity. The result of this is to promote *managerialist* education, focused on the development of 'better' managers who contribute more effectively to corporate performance (Grey and Mitev, 1995; and Adler, Forbes and Willmott, 2007). The knowledge that students are required to develop within such a system is then functionalist/instrumental, focused on what helps/is useful to them as managers (Grey and Mitev, 1995) as opposed to '*critical and self-reflexive*' (Hagen, Miller and Johnson, 2003, p242).

Education in CMS positions itself as critical of managerialism by not accepting the primacy and legitimacy of hierarchical managerial control, nor the neutrality of management. Instead, it seeks to establish its political, social and moral aspects (Grey & Mitev, 1995). For Grey and Mitev (1995) like Adler, Forbes and Willmott (2007), the potential for CMS to influence management education has not yet been fully realised. This is not to suggest that there has been no change. In the UK in particular, there has been the development of critically oriented faculty, departments and courses, but this has not yet fulfilled its potential in securing the radical transformation of curricula based on the principles of CMS (Dehler, 2009).

CMS focuses not on the inadequacies of individuals but on critiquing the systems within which they operate in order to draw attention to the ways in which destructive/damaging conditions - for people and/or environments - are created, nurtured and sustained. It adopts a pedagogy of challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and untested theories. Such work is premised on an emancipatory agenda, designed to show that dominant discourse are not immutable, and that social transformation can be achieved in practice (Grey & Mitev, 1995; Adler, et al., 2007). It is far from being a unified body of work. Proponents have utilised it to draw attention to their particular concerns, be they social, environmental, or other. Yet they share a commonality, a desire to broaden and re-centre scholarship and teaching, to challenge the valorisation of profit as the guiding principle of organisation development (Adler, et al., 2007). As such CMS is open to a multitude of philosophically divergent ideologies, movements and methodologies, but each is underpinned by varying interpretations of the emancipatory principle (Kinchloe & McClaren, 1988; Darwin, et al., 2002; Johnson, et al., 2006).

CMS is hopeful; it understands that radical change is not only possible, but that it begins within current social, economic and historical conditions. What CMS seeks to do, is to challenge the taken-for-granted and illustrate how assumptions, such as the need for hierarchical relations within organisations, are neither natural nor immovable (Grey & Mitev, 1995; Adler, et al., 2007). The assembly of a team of social enterprise educators - and their initial development of a series of strataplexes - shows that social enterprise education is itself an example of the *movability* of the assumptions on which business education can be founded. Curricula focused primarily on member and management engagement with social purpose(s), values, ethics, sustainability, democracy and member-ownership are not organised around the *functions* of management.

Adler, Forbes and Willmott (2007) identify three approaches to management education adopted by CMS proponents. The first involves academics as advocates, raising awareness of the oppressive nature of managerial systems amongst the student body through their teachings. Reynolds (1999) refers to such academics as *content radicals*, who use traditional teaching methods to present their ideas to students, reinforcing a hierarchical conception of the student-academic relationship. The second approach focuses on developing the reflexivity of the student, helping them to think more broadly about the choices that they might make. Hagen, Miller and Johnson (2003) describe this as developing 'a critical consciousness' (p. 243), whilst Dehler (2009) refers to developing students 'into critical beings' (p. 33). The third approach focuses on the tensions and contradictory nature of the managerial role and helping students to consider themselves in relation to this. This emphasises the fluidity and indeterminacy of organisations (Hagen, et al., 2003).

Approaches two and three can be considered to be *strategy-based* (Reynolds, 1999) and are typically concerned with notions of student-centred learning (Dehler, et al., 2001; Dehler, 2009). Reynolds (1999) argues that a critical approach to management education 'should be reflected in both its content and its methodology' (p.540). In other words, it must be attentive to both the content *and* the processes of delivering a curriculum.

Therefore, a CMS inspired curriculum is focused not on how students might become more competent managers, but on encouraging a questioning, reflexive approach, which aims to pluralise understandings of business purposes, processes and organisational forms and their effects (Hagen, et al., 2003; Adler, et al., 2007). It is interested in exploring what is allowed, that which is presumed as natural and desirable, as well as that which is excluded and delegitimised. The processes of delivering that content are carefully considered through an examination of what is being rendered visible and invisible by our teaching (Sinclair, 2005).

As academics engaged in the development of such curricula, we wanted to subject the processes of our work to careful, reflexive scrutiny. In the next section, we tentatively set out a critical appreciative process that will enable and sustain CMS by reviewing variations in social

enterprise education frameworks. We proactively explore the processes of designing curricula and seek to contribute to debates regarding the transformative potential of CMS using the example of social enterprise management education.

Designing a Critical Appreciative Process

It follows that investigating attempts to create curricula that advance CMS will itself benefit from the adoption of a critical perspective (Alvesson & Willmott, 1996; Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Alvesson & Willmott, 2003). In the field of social enterprise, a 'critical stream' at the International Social Innovation Research Conference (ISIRC) has already been established. This has produced two editions of a textbook (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2011; 2016) and a series of journal special editions looking at social enterprise from a critical perspective. Firstly, there was the *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research* (Bull, 2008), followed by *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice* (Nicholls, 2010), and then the *Social Enterprise Journal* which ran two successive issues advancing critical perspectives (Dey & Steyaert, 2012; Teasdale, 2012). In 2014, Grant (2014) advanced the idea of using a 'critical appreciative lens' to improve understanding of the interactions between the systems needed for enterprise development and the lifeworlds of people that inform them (see Figure 1).

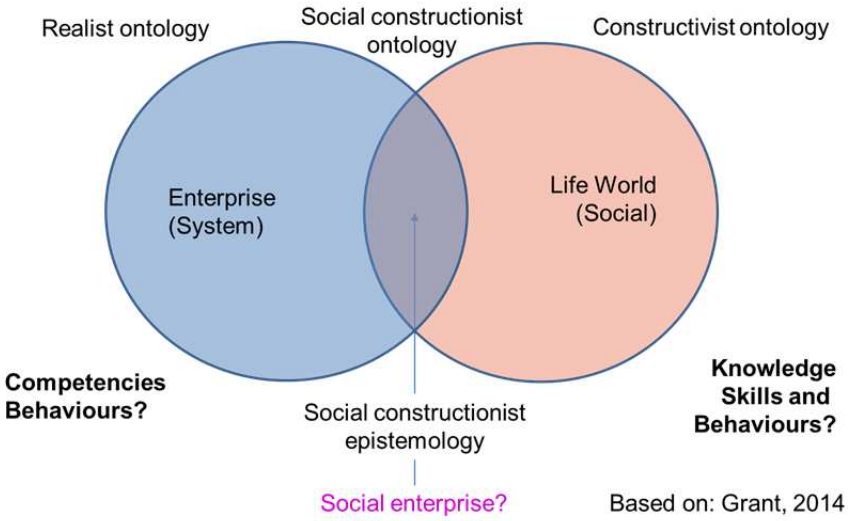


Figure 1 – Applying a Critical Appreciative Lens to Social Enterprise Education

The deployment of a critical appreciative lens involves deconstructing systems to establish their system imperatives, and how these influence the lifeworlds of system members. In educational frameworks we can identify the intersections (dialectical relationships) between the elements of curriculum that define the social learning system (competencies and behaviours), and those aspects that define the life worlds of system stakeholders (knowledge, skills and attitudes). Grant's theory, therefore, foregrounds a social constructionist perspective in both ontology and epistemology.

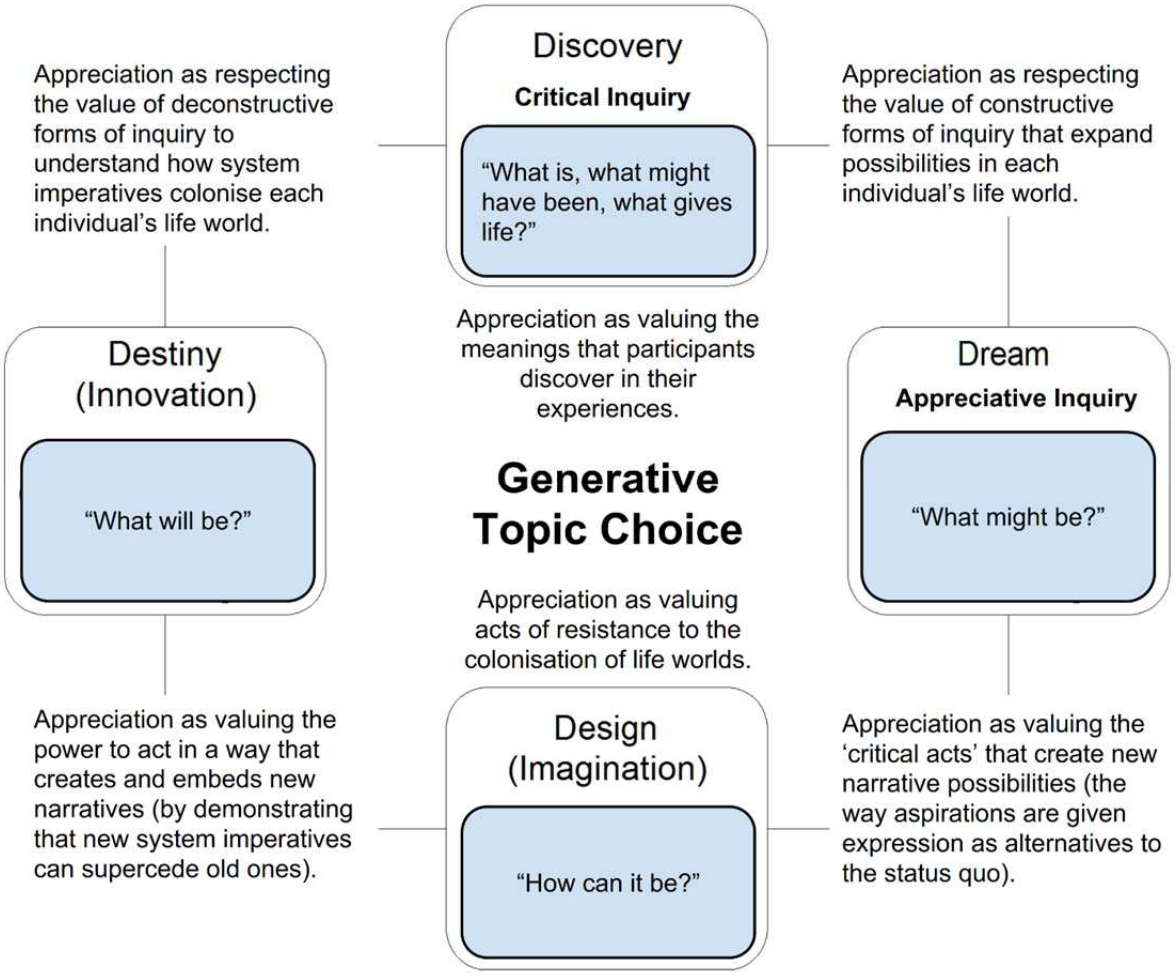
Firstly, the inter-section of systems and lifeworlds creates and maintains a community's social reality. Secondly, social knowledge is the by-product of life worlds interacting with real world systems. Moreover, just as Habermas saw the ideal as the maintenance of an equilibrium to avoid system injunctions colonising the lifeworld, so a social enterprise curriculum will need to balance the students need to design systems that are applications of their own belief systems by subjecting them to the challenges of deliberative democracy.

To do this analysis, we assembled a team of four researchers (Authors 1, 2, 3, and 5) who had specialist interests in aspects of social enterprise management (covering sustainable and responsible management, cooperative development, social enterprise coaching and new cooperativism) and subjected their work to the scrutiny of a fifth researcher specialising in critical management education (Author 4). The four specialists are working in pairs as critical friends. They have taken one alternative framework each to produce an interpretation of its competencies, knowledge, skills and behaviours. Each draft will be given to their critical friend for comment. After incorporating feedback, a further process will be followed to encourage dialogue amongst the members of the research team to broaden their outlooks:

- Present frameworks to other group members for further debate and dialogue;
- Put each framework through WorditOut software to identify its dominant discourse;
- Examine each framework as a text using NVivo to develop deeper insights into its strategic, business, cognitive and interpersonal skills ((Mumford, et al., 2007)
- Revise the frameworks and subject them to peer-review by all group members before finalising a new curriculum.

These activities are designed to encourage 'critical appreciation' through the progressive deconstruction and reconstruction of each member's grasp of what social enterprise education can be. By generating a shared understanding of the socio-economic assumptions that underpin each framework, we establish a generative process that encourages the research team members to look at social enterprise through the 'critical appreciative lens' developed by Grant (2014). The process of critical appreciation, and its focus on identifying 'system imperatives', 'critical acts', and their impact on 'lifeworlds' is summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – What is critical appreciation?



Source: (Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2015)

The process began with a deconstruction of the ARIADNE framework to sensitise ourselves to its underlying framework (competencies, knowledge, skills and attitudes) by asking the question '*what is*' the proposal for social enterprise management education set out by Moreau and Mertens (2013). Exploring alternative frameworks facilitated our efforts to discover '*what might be?*' In setting out alternative 'competencies', 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'attitudes' each researcher engages in the 'critical act' of articulating alternative educational pathways and opening up a range of choices. As we move into the second stage of the project – and make curriculum design choices – we consider 'what will be' and 'how can it be?'

The 'competencies' and 'behaviours' of each framework provide alternative system imperatives, and the 'knowledge', 'skills' and 'attitudes' (arising out of behaviours) represents alternative lifeworlds. By identifying these alternative imperatives and lifeworld possibilities, we put ourselves in a position to comment on the potential of each framework to challenge neo-liberal models of business and management education and advance the goals of CMS. Taking collective

responsibility in this way is a strategy for embedding Principles of Responsible Management (PRME) into business education and changing the discourse that influences research activities. By sharing such frameworks with our students, we provide them with opportunities for self-directed learning in which they can shape their social enterprise management choices to align with the values and principles that they hold (Knowles, 1980). Therefore, in the second phase of the study we will face the challenge of displacing of a tutor-centred approach based on a normative curriculum to one that is based more on student choice and self-directed learning.

Conclusions

The process of inquiry presented in this paper outlines a research plan for developing a more critical approach to building curricula for social enterprise management education. It is a process for answering the research question 'what system imperatives and life worlds do frameworks for social enterprise education intend to create?' In this first phase of the study, we have reflected on our approach to develop new management learning strategies and reported on the design of a critical appreciative process. Initial mapping of competencies in the ICA Blue Print, PRME, Balance and FairShares Model against the ARIADNE framework was not a straightforward or simple process, and doing the same for knowledge, skills and behaviours will be even more challenging. However, the assessment of 'system imperatives' in each framework highlights the need for a methodology that encourages reflexivity so that we can advance of debates about social enterprise education and its relationship to CMS.

In the next phase, we will apply our process to systematically compare assumptions on how the competences ('system imperatives') in each framework are underpinned by different knowledge-constituting assumptions, skills, know-how, behaviours and attitudes. In short, the next phase will seek to describe variations in the philosophies of social enterprise by comparing the 'imagined lifeworlds' of social enterprise managers. In doing so, the ideological roots of social enterprise education - and its connection to different trading practices and types of social value creation - can be made more visible, discussable and open to critique (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2016).

This paper's contribution is to set out how critical appreciative processes (Grant, 2014; Ridley-Duff & Duncan, 2015) can be applied to a new domain – social enterprise education. It is not just social enterprises that can be subjected to Habermasian perspectives but also the education system that supports them. By viewing 'competencies' as system imperatives, and 'knowledge, skills and behaviours' as imagined lifeworlds, critical appreciation can be used to deconstruct and re-construct educational curricula so that the emancipatory potential of social enterprise can be realised through the development to self-directed 'critical beings' (Knowles, 1980; Adler, et al., 2007).

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