

University of Tokyo, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology
Program for Evolving Humanities and Sociology
Research Visit Report

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Title of Research

The Role of Humanities in Management Education

Institutions Visited

- Yale University
- Brown University
- Georgetown University

Research Period

From August 28th to September 19th, 2012 (22 days)

Summary of Research

Today, a growing number of MBA programs are incorporating, or are considering the introduction of subjects related to humanities into their curricula. In response to the changes in managerial values, some departments in the humanities are now considered to be complementing the traditional MBA core curriculum. The aim of this survey is to gain a general understanding of the changes being made in management education classrooms through case studies conducted in U.S. universities.

On my visit to the Yale School of Management, Prof. Shyam Sunder answered my questions about his course, Management Leadership and Literature. The traditional social-science-based approach to leadership education attempts to identify 'laws of leadership' from the lives of famous leaders in the past and present them to students. On the contrary, reading literary works helps students develop the habit of reflection and self-examination, a skill necessary for future leaders. Thanks to his generous arrangements, I was able to meet many faculty and staff members of the school. Unlike at some other business schools, the latter half of the second year curriculum here is open to electives, which testifies to the trust the University places in its students. Students can take various courses across Yale University, including courses in the humanities. Some students are members of liberal arts culture clubs for their extracurricular activities. Professor Sunder also runs a lecture series called Convening Yale in which humanities scholars from various departments of the university are invited to share their thoughts with the management students. The strong ties it has with Yale makes the school a place where the tradition of liberal arts runs through management education.

IE Brown Executive MBA is a degree program for middle and senior executives founded by IE Business School and Brown University. About a third of the entire program are courses in the social sciences and humanities. During my visit to Brown I had a chance to meet with a faculty member and key persons of the executive staff. Prof. Michael Steinberg says that in this program, the role of the humanities is to conduct a deep analysis of culture, history, and politics. He has a course

called Culture, Politics and the Arts in the Beyond Business Curriculum.

According to Karen Sibley, Dean of Brown Continuing Education, the reason for the high evaluation of the program by its participants may be that the school has found something they had been looking desperately for that was lacking in traditional business schools. One of the fruits of the 'mosaic of liberal arts and management' is in the final projects submitted by the students at the end of the program, and about half of the projects were for nonprofit purposes, which is unusual for a business school assignment. On the nature of the transformational experience of this program, Patrick McHugh, Director of IE Brown MBA Program, states that it expands the horizons and broadens one's perspective, which may lead to the discovery of unexpected business opportunities.

On my visit to Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business, despite its claims to combine 'business and liberal arts courses to give students a strong foundation in critical thinking and reasoning' in its undergraduate business education, the humanities was non-existent. However, it has a unique feature of offering business coursework to the departments of foreign languages as a functional equivalent of a second major. I have visited the Department of French and received documents regarding their course offerings.

Discussion

My research on the coursework of humanities in management education suggests that the design of the course is based on some core values that professors see as belonging to the humanities, and that these values are not necessarily the same in each of the subject taught in business schools.

Another point I have observed is that the proponents of management education programs and the professors who participate in them are aware of the gap between what is expected in business school classrooms and in the humanities. The nature of this gap seems rather technical than ideological: in business school classrooms, humanities professors can not ask students to read three books for the next session. They need to go directly to the core of their teaching. They would have to design assignments differently from their specialized graduate school courses for the humanities.