

DEVELOPING VIRTUES IN MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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Ana Maria Davila-Gomez¹ and Sandra Socorro² Lotero Patiño

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Abstract

The majority of management education practices privilege the development of technical and directive leadership skills in order to increase the organization's profits and competitiveness. We argue however, that with the primarily ethical concern about social environmental responsibility, management education should integrate more broadly the personal responsibility of the manager's decisions and actions. These concerns, to us, might be addressed when students, future managers, acknowledge and put into practice the richness that virtues offer to them in order to conduct ethically. The previous statement demands reflexivity in students as well as its encouragement from the part of educational environments. In this paper, we present some results of a qualitative research we conducted about the place of virtues in management education³. Through an interpretative approach, we present our findings and discuss about what is conceived as virtues, what virtues may management students develop, as well as some pedagogical approaches and suggestions intended for professors to obtain the previous aim.

¹ Ana Maria Davila-Gomez, Ph.D. Université du Québec en Outaouais, Professeur, Département des sciences administratives

² Sandra Socorro Lotero Patiño, Étudiante à la M.Sc. en gestion de projet, Université du Québec en Outaouais

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Introduction

Nowadays, in the discipline of Management, we, as academics, are mostly answering to the needs of what, in a positivistic paradigm, we consider as clients of our teaching. For business schools, organizations, as social entities, are acknowledged as the client; whereas the student, the individual, is seen as a mere resource that is required in order to obtain organizational success. We are forgetting the true aim of education, the one that Dewey (1975) claimed as the societal moral duty of contributing to the development of human beings who live in the society, and who are an active part of it, who are called to participate in it and look for self-realization and to contribute to others' self-realization. Great human beings are able to contribute to the improvement of society, to reflect about the validity of the norms and laws (or their lack therein) that govern us. This philosophical aim makes us reflect about the righteousness of the reality of management education. By the same token, a worldwide reality of inequities, injustices, as well as financial scandals that we have witnessed in this last decade indicate us that in addition to addressing the continuous increase of share value of firms, we need to go beyond and address as an objective of education a more humanistic concerned development of the student (Davila Gomez & Crowther, 2009).

In a critical sense, and inspired also from an idealistic point of view, individuals at decision making positions should develop a sense of questioning (Alvesson, 2002), a sense of justice, as they are entitled with the responsibility of conducting organizations that affect, with actions and consequences, the daily lives of various human beings. Management students need to reflect about their important role in society as future managers dealing with the knowledge of the impact of their decisions in the collective and the environment. In this sense, academic reflexivity would be a requirement not only for us as academics in order to questioning our axiological values towards the wishes of an altruistic goal regarding education, but also for our students if we want them to follow a path that seeks goodness and equity worldwide through their managerial actions.

First of all, to us, students (future managers) are not a mere resource, but subjects who continuously co-create the reality of collective entities (organizations) which at their turn interact

with the whole of society worldwide. Secondly, we consider that in order to address our concerns, we could serve ourselves from the appropriateness of virtues in management education. To us, and following Socrates (in Plato, 428-348 B.C.), virtues could be conceived as human qualities that demonstrate the goodness of a person. In the sense of goodness, we agree with Hume (1711-1776) when he elaborates about the virtues of benevolence and generosity, as sentiments needed for addressing the otherness described above. Equally, according to Marcel (1965), hope, as a virtue, allows us to think beyond the reasonably thinkable. We need to go beyond what it is mostly accepted by managers and academics upon a positivistic approach.

Our aim is to present some of the results of a qualitative research we conducted between 2007 and 2010 about the place of virtues in management education. Through an interpretative approach (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009), we present the analysis of 51 interviews conducted in the management education milieu of the province of Quebec, Canada. We discuss about the place of virtues and their impact for enhancing reflexivity in students. We explore what is conceived by individuals (professors, students and also practitioners - managers) as virtues, what virtues students may develop, as well as some suggestions of how we could contribute to their development from management education. For instance, we discuss about some pedagogic approaches that promote the exercise of reflexivity within the individuals of the educational community in order to address otherness and environmental concern, among others. We finish by considering new research avenues regarding the need for righteousness of action in managers and educators as co-creators of our continuously evolving reality. All along our analysis, we complement and compare what our interviewees conceive, with what some classical western authors have stated about virtues.

Acknowledging virtues and realizing their meaning in management

As well expressed by one of our interviewees, “*the definition of virtue is already a problem per se*”. In fact, different visions of the concept were used by our interviewees, among whom some manifested a little confusion. Despite this first ontological insecurity regarding a definition, most of our interviewees offered words to referring the concept. In fact, some professors were surprised by the fact that they did not have time to prepare theoretically and epistemologically

their answer concerning the conceptualization of virtues. To us, this initial discomfort reveals how reflexivity is not always the mental process followed by us as individuals. The kind of question we posed forced our interviewees to go to the high levels of cognition (evaluation and abstraction of a reality - following the hierarchy of Bloom (Bloom et al., 1956)) in order to verbalize a concept that they might have very well introspected, but which is not necessarily commonly used in the managerial world, either in the practice or in the academy. However, as our interviews suggest, once this first effort for conceptualization was made, interviewees answered fluently to the questions posed and were quite comfortable with the process of the interview. To us, this is an example that shows that when reflexivity asks for cognitive additional efforts, the results of its practice are mostly welcomed by individuals as they become aware of in-depth analyses and realities not explored before, as well as their realization of their points of view as a human being regarding the subject treated, in our case, the place of virtues in management and in management education.

Specifically for the conception of virtues, most managers expressed virtues as the abilities for acting with responsibility, in harmony with the environment and with social values. Additionally, some managers expressed that virtues are principles and strengths, or even habits. As quoted by one manager, *“virtues are good habits that help us grow as persons and that appear as a consequence of learning, experience, and more specifically, by repetition in the practice”*. Professors, on the other hand, were more eloquent while finding terms for referring virtues. For a majority of them, virtues are a state of the spirit, a characteristic of a good human being with an ensemble of values. As pointed out by a professor, *“virtues are a constant and firm disposition of the spirit to applying in the daily basis of life the principles of goodness”*. Some professors also referred virtues as innate aptitudes, as a philosophy of life within the boundaries of good faith, allowing him or her to act with goodness while demonstrating the ability to procuring well-being; in short, possessing virtues implies acting with ethics. Finally, students identified virtues as an acquired capability for doing good, in a moral sense. As explained more clearly by one student, *“it is a quality that allows the willingness to procuring good purposes not only for oneself but for the environment”*.

In sum, for the majority of our interviewees, despite some differences in the language utilized to

express their ideas, virtues are acknowledged as human qualities that allow individuals to act with responsibility while procuring goodness to one-self, to others and to the environment.

Now, we compare the answers of our interviewees with what some classical authors have stated. In etymological terms, Reese (1996) states:

From the Latin *virtus* (“mainlines”) paralleling the Greek term *arete* (“excellence”). Although the initial sense of the term included the meanings of “strength”, “courage” and “excellence”, an ethical signification quickly arose, and has remained central. (p. 818).

Furthermore, for Socrates (see Socrates’ dialogues in Plato, 428-348 B.C.) the idea of goodness implied righteousness of actions and desire for the common well-being. Moreover, the answers of our interviewees are aligned with some classical authors (e.g. Socrates (in Plato, 428-348 B.C.); Shaftesbury, 1671-1713; and Hume, 1711-1776), who conceive virtues as human characteristics for acting with goodness. We consider this as a humanistic vision, as it is concerned by the meaning of actions of human beings. According to these authors, a human being is virtuous when beneath his or her soul, goodness arises while acting, procuring happiness and well-being for themselves and others. In fact, as Shaftesbury (1671-1713) states:

It is in a manner impossible to have any great opinion of the happiness of virtue without conceiving high thoughts of the satisfaction resulting from the generous admiration and love of it, and nothing beside the experience of such a love is likely to make this satisfaction credited. The chief ground and support therefore of this opinion of ‘happiness in virtue’ must arise from the powerful feeling of this generous moral affection and the knowledge of its power and strength. (p. 189)

Hume (1711-1776) also highlighted that being virtuous procures satisfaction to a person. We understand that these humanistic authors addressed the tranquility of spirit, peace and sincerity that goodness in action procures on oneself, a satisfaction that relies on the feeling of self-accomplishment.

Complementary to this vision of virtues, to other authors, derived mostly from an Aristotelian tradition, a virtue is a human characteristic demonstrable in action when it is excelled by practice

(i.e. what Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) stated about exemplarity of practice, or what more recently Solomon (1992) and MacIntyre (2007) stated about the craftsmanship of practitioners). It is to note that Aristotle also recognizes the meaning of virtues as means to procure happiness for the individual. For the specific theme of management practice, Moore (2005) addresses to managers the necessity to return to craftsmanship (in the sense of details, attention, and care of their actions) in order to conduct in a human and ethical way. Moreover, Chun (2005) explains that the individuals' actions aid organizations (as a community) to conduct virtuously. Furthermore, Caza, Barker and Cameron (2004) indicate that virtuousness on organizations allows also organizational performance.

Consequently, moving forward to the meaning of virtues in management, when we asked our interviewees about its importance in the practice of management, we obtained different answers. According to managers, virtues humanize work while improving the atmosphere in the workplace. For them, virtues help them with the exercise of a responsible leadership towards the consequences of their decisions and the exercise of their power. Virtues help them to face society; as one manager pointed out, "*virtues help managers to extend his or her vision in time and in space*". According to professors, virtues are important for the managerial practice as they allow managers to comprehend, accept and manage his or her actions to obtaining the common well-being of the collective, and as that, managers separate themselves of the individualism that reign over our organizational world. As expressed by a professor, "*the manager has the responsibility of contributing with the next generation and with humanity in general*". Moreover, as added by another professor, "*ethics is a support for the organisation and its board of directors as it helps them to achieve furthermore the development and the increasing of relationships of confidence and autonomy of the people working within the organization*". Through experiencing virtuousness, managers are able to apprehend the importance of the social environment and become aware of his or her social responsibilities. This awareness prepares managers to be accountable. As such, professors agree in general that virtues contribute with the humanization of work. Likewise, students agreed that virtues are important for humanizing organizations.

In sum, for the majority of our interviewees, virtues help with the improvement of the atmosphere in the workplace and with the responsibility of managers towards the social

environment. We must note, however, that just a few of the interviewees highlighted the responsibility of managers towards the environment or even the planet as whole. Just a few professors and managers indicated their concern for ecological matters and global warming issues within the framework of present claiming responsibility from organizations. This void may be filled in academia, as we, as professors, have the moral duty to address, not only the human condition, but also a planetary identity (as claimed by Morin, 2000) in our teachings and reflections in the classroom. We will return to this necessity in next points when we will explore some pedagogical suggestions for the development of virtues in students, through, specifically, reflexivity in the classroom.

Virtues that management students may develop

Regarding the virtues considered as essential in the practice of management, our interviewees identified, almost equally among professors, managers and students, those of respect, exemplarity, justice, honesty and integrity. As expressed by one professor, “*justice implies to respect the rights of every one, which includes the singularity of everyone*”, and as pointed out by a manager, “*the manager must be just while organizing and coordinating the roles and activities in the organization; otherwise, employees will work not with pleasure as they will feel left aside from teamwork*”. This calls for a participatory management with senses of equity and honesty.

Among the answers of our interviewees, only the virtue of “justice” as such is present in the discourse of individuals when we compare these answers to what was proclaimed by ancient Greeks, and other authors, as the four cardinal virtues such as prudence (for Plato it is the same as wisdom), justice, temperance, and fortitude (also known to other authors as courage). Reese (1996) explains that “*it was St. Ambrose (c. 340-397) who introduced the term “cardinal virtues” after reading of Plato’s classification in the writings of Cicero*” (p. 818). The revision of the writings of Plato (428-348 B.C.), Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), and also the clarifications made by Walter (1987) and Reese (1996), offers us the following conceptions. Fortitude (or courage to some authors), as a quality for demanding oneself to excelling and improving in his or her own conduct towards him or herself while coordinating activities from others. Temperance, as a quality for self-control and self-advancement in order to face the challenges and duties of

him or herself in life. Prudence, or wisdom, as a quality for acting knowing what to do, how to do it and when to do it while respecting others' needs. And finally, justice as the capability of those in power to achieve the common good, the social redistribution of goods and benefits. Moreover, when Hume (1711-1776) considers justice as a virtue, he expresses “[...] *there are some virtues that produce pleasure and approbation by means of an artifice or contrivance, which arises from the circumstances and necessity of mankind. Of this kind I assert justice to be [...]*” (p. 184).

Despite the fact that our interviewees did not use the same classical words for referring virtues, after conducting a content analysis of our interviews, we considered that in their discourse, our interviewees captured the ideas and main elements of the classical concepts. As such, what individuals recognize as honesty aligns with the virtue of prudence, as well as what is recognized as exemplarity and integrity align with the virtues of temperance and fortitude, and finally, what it is recognized as respect aligns implicitly with the four virtues. Moreover, a quality that was claimed as imperative for the practice of management, such as respect, means the acknowledgement of the interest and feelings of others. To this regard, one student pointed out, “*the first virtue to put into practice in organizations is respect, because if a manager does not respect others, he or she would go no further*”. On an equal manner, a professor adds, “*it is possible and mandatory to exercise management in a way that can be respectful towards human beings, respectful of his or her differences, either culturally or ideologically, among others*”. We consider that “respect” (respect for others and for the human dignity) aligns with the virtue of benevolence proposed by Hume (1711-1776) and also discussed by Hutcheson (1694-1746), as well as with the virtue of charity proposed by Christianity (as one of the three theological virtues, faith, charity and hope).⁴ To be more precise, in the sense of benevolence, Hutcheson (1694-1746) states:

[...] Thus universal Benevolence would incline us to a more strong Concern for the Interest of great and generous Characters in a high Station, or make us more earnestly study the Interest of any generous Society, whose whole Constitution was contriv'd to promote universal Good. (p. 127)

⁴ Origins of this Christian classification are attributed to the works of Aquinas, who supports himself in the works of Aristotle and the Jeudo-Christina tradition (see Walter, 1987).

Equally, to the purpose of benevolence, Hume (1711-1776) states:

[...] The intercourse of sentiments, therefore, in society and conversation, makes us form some general unalterable standard by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners. And though the *heart* does not always take part with those general notions, or regulate its love and hatred by them, yet are they sufficient for discourse, and serve all our purposes in company, in the pulpit, on the theatre, and in the schools. From these principles, we may easily account for that merit which is commonly ascribed to *generosity, humanity, compassion, gratitude, friendship, fidelity, zeal, disinterestedness, liberality,*⁵ and all those other qualities which form the character of a good and benevolent. A propensity to the tender passions makes a man agreeable and useful in all the parts of life, and gives a just direction to all his other qualities, and which otherwise may become prejudicial to society. Courage and ambition, when not regulated by benevolence, are fit only to make a tyrant and public robber. (p. 297)

These authors remind us that managers who work responsibly and committed with the aims of society and its improvement, require not only intellectual capabilities (claimed by Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) as virtues) but mostly sentiments and awareness of procuring well-being for themselves, others and the planet. As such, benevolence as a virtue would help the manager in his or her daily duties.

Other virtues enunciated by our interviewees, even though less emphasis was given to them, but that nevertheless align with the aforementioned purposes, are the virtues of transparency (as it aligns with honesty), active listening, comprehension, communication and tolerance. These qualities help the manager to continuously develop his or her own character in order to be respectful towards others, and their ideas; therefore, managers may be equitable and just in their action. In the aim of comprehension, empathy is also a virtue that was mentioned by a few persons; it represents the capability to understand the preoccupations and motives of actions of others. As pointed out by a professor, “*empathy is a disposition of the spirit as it allows us to*

⁵ Italics as they appear in the original text of the author.

comprehend others". In an equal manner, a manager states, "it is imperative to see beyond the organizational borders [...] we need to acknowledge the intersection of the organization with society and the environment". In a similar way, a student says, "we need to acknowledge that employees experience sorrow and joy in everyday life, that they are human beings who need attention [...] comprehension covers that point; it is not only about employees' physical performance at work".

Through this process of comprehension, to us, it shows how individuals recognize that the fact of availing themselves of many diverse virtues by means of actions generates a continuous process of self-realization, in which exemplarity is achieved through experience. According to the ancient Greeks, the willingness to become better persons is enhanced by the virtues of fortitude, prudence and tolerance up to the point to enable of human beings to show goodness and ethics in their actions. Moreover, we argue that in order to comprehend others, we need a great deal of introspection about our own needs while having concern for the needs of others. To experience empathy, we rely in what Hume (1711-1776) states about sympathy for others:

All human creatures are related to us by resemblance, Their persons, therefore, their interest, their passions, their pains and pleasures, must strike upon us in a lively manner, and produce an emotion similar to the original one, since a lively idea is easily converted into an impression. (p. 86)

In addition to the aforementioned virtues, professors and managers identified the necessity of virtues such as experience and openness of mind. The latter one, as something essential for acknowledging alternative methods and processes in order to count on more social responsible managerial practices. On the other hand, students and managers identified the necessity of virtues such as patience and creativity. The virtue of creativity in the sense of elaborating and conducting innovative practices oriented to responsibility towards other human beings and society. Astonishingly enough, only professors identified the need for the virtues of sincerity and critical thinking. Our analysis indicates that sincerity comes with honesty, therefore contributes to justice, as it helps individuals to be more equitable and ethical. Just a few professors and students identified the virtue of responsibility as personal accountability for actions. For those few who identified responsibility, it implies fortitude of character as it helps to face challenges

more adequately due to the nature of understanding the consequences of their actions.

While addressing responsibility, a better future is sought, which to us aligns with the virtue of hope, as claimed by Marcel (1965) and the teachings of Christianity. To us, it indicates the aim of some persons of self-improving regarding the aspect of their humanity, which comes only through reflexivity when oneself realizes his or her impact in the world, taking into account the possibility of change therein. Additionally, critical thinking, as claimed by professors, is what we consider the most important instrument of change for managers to reflect about the issues we formerly explored (i.e. responsibility towards others, respect of the human dignity and proposition of innovative practices). Therefore, this opens also a space for our teaching, as we, as professors, need to help in the awakening of social consciousness in our students, in order for them to acknowledge the social and human challenges they will face as managers. By the same token, sincerity and honesty with oneself is needed. Reflexivity about oneself, introspection, and a critical regard towards oneself, will help us in the aim of improving ourselves. Therefore, in addition to intellectual virtues (such as knowledge, as stated by Aristotle, 384-322 B.C.), other virtues like benevolence (compared to respect and honesty that were expressed by our interviewees), which procure the completeness of the soul (as argued by some humanistic authors - e.g. Hume, 1711-1776; Shaftsbury, 1671-1713; Marcel, 1965) are imperative.

Educational aid for the development of virtues in students

As expressed by a practitioner, *“I think that virtues can be learned, but it is important to feel them; in other words, that the inner self owns them, like they are part of the spirit of the person”*. As such, willingness is essential in one’s self. In this regard, some interviewees (among whom we found students, professors and practitioners) conceive that developing virtues is easier when the person has already an inherent set of values in his or her inner self. According to some of these interviewees, some virtues are intrinsic to the person since birth or acquired by means of family values. As expressed by a practitioner, *“I believe that probably we are born with these virtues”*, or as pointed out by a professor, *“[...] virtues are born within the family”*. This first questioning about the possibility of teaching virtues appears since Socrates, to whom, initially, virtues are only a divine gift, therefore not teachable (as exposed in the *Meno* and *Virtues*

dialogues - see Plato, 428-348 B.C.). Nevertheless, Steutel (1994) suggests that it was Socrates himself who reappraises the question and opens a door to the possibility of teaching virtues in the *Protagoras* dialogue (see also Plato, 428-348 B.C.); furthermore, this open door is later taken by Plato (Socrates' disciple) in his text *The Republic* (see Plato, 428-348 B.C.). We argue that Plato insists about the critical role that formal education might play in society as it will aid citizens to acknowledge and exploit their own human capabilities for goodness.

With this possibility, we identify a second group of interviewees (students, professors and practitioners) who agree that some virtues can be learned while others are an integral part of each person. According to them, willingness, if accepted as a virtue, or at least as an expression of virtues, is an inner characteristic that a person develops by him or herself. Nevertheless, this group of interviewees consider that other virtues can be learned throughout the path of life, as expressed by a professor, *"I would say that the most important is the person's beliefs, him or her intrinsic conviction, but at the same time the person needs to be pragmatic, therefore, demonstrate in action his or her virtues, as claimed by Aristotle"*. In fact, as already discussed, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) stated that virtuousness implies exemplarity in a person's conduct. Moreover, to achieve exemplarity, we argue that even if some virtues belong to one's nature, since birth or acquired within family values, the fullest expression of those virtues can be enhanced by means of education. The previous statement enables us to questioning ourselves about some pedagogical approaches that might help students to reflect upon their own virtues, and also the possibility of developing new ones. The vast majority of our interviewees agreed to this possibility.

Following the aforementioned idea, a practitioner expresses, *"most than anything, in order to possess a virtue and employ it, the person needs to acknowledge it, perhaps name it, hence, formal education is crucial"*. This coincides with Welchman's (2005) view about education playing an important role in the continuous process of shaping the character of individuals even in adulthood. In Welchman's words: *"Dewey argues for recognition of continuous growth as a sine-qua-non for a 'good' or meaningful life"* (Welchman, 2005, p. 147). Translating this preoccupation into management education, some authors are beginning to address the philosophical principles of management education practices (e.g. Chia & Morgan, 1996;

Reynolds, 1999). These authors propose reflexivity as a means to help students in the process to awakening their consciousness about the personal impacts of managers' actions in the world. For instance, according to Chia and Morgan (1996), management education should address not only intellectual development, but also emotional awareness (and the senses of the student) about the realities of the world. Furthermore, Mitroff (2004) demands business schools to aid students in the continuous development of other kinds of values that lead to ethical and virtuous actions and not exclusively to favour the dominant skills that management education reinforces for a world of competitiveness (e.g. aggression, individualism, conductive motivation, technocratic excellence, utilitarianism, among others). Additionally, it is well known that business schools teaching managers how to conduct organizations are mostly driven by the precept of competitiveness worldwide, and in this vein, managers are asked mostly to develop skills against the opposition or the competitors, while gaining advantages in the process.

With this necessity for other kinds of values, and linking our aim of virtues aiding reflexivity in students, we note that Hume (1711-1776) states that by means of virtues, human beings necessitate to become sensible to others' needs, therefore, virtues come also as an expression of profound emotions or sentiments of the soul. In this sense, Davila Gomez and Crowther (2009) argue for a humanistic orientation in management education.

We argue that virtuousness can be enhanced through reflexivity, and vice versa, in management schools, as ontology (the inner self) needs to be coupled with a questioning of the validity of organizational practices. In this same sense, we align the pertinence of management education towards developing virtues in what Möller (2003) states about the appropriateness of structures, (e.g. schools) collaborating in a social cooperation while providing an environment that will mediate the transfer of virtues. Concerning the means by which we, as professors, could contribute to the previous statement, Comte-Sponville (1995) argues that virtues are learned more by means of example than by reading books; once again, the virtue of exemplarity. Moreover, to this purpose, we rely in what Caruana (2006) states while elaborating about the growth in virtue:

The learner needs to know how to apply the rules and when. Only the master can help the learner gain those habits that go beyond ratiocination. The second stage of the process of

becoming virtuous consists in the learner's interior struggle to overcome fear, doubts, and weakness of will when it comes to action. (p.5)

Regarding the aforementioned extract, we consider the professor as a facilitator, a mediator, a companion, a support who will alleviate the questions, emotions and doubts emerged through the student's learning process. Within learning, there is not only comprehension of intellectual contents, but mostly a meaningful understanding when relating and coupling them with problems regarding human and social tied issues. A sense of judgment is developed, the inner-self questions itself and the outside world, hence, through consciousness of reality, virtues awakening may take place. More specifically, when we asked our interviewees how did they conceive that management education could help in the development of virtues, the most used words while describing the means to attain this aim were dialogue, interaction and intersubjectivity. Basing ourselves in Husserl (1977) we understand intersubjectivity as a practice of the human interaction in which the inner-self of each individual (his or her ontology) expresses and influences others, therefore, social ideas and discussion employing a philosophical base allow the whole class to advance and elaborate meanings and impacts of manager's conduct. We argue the fact that this practice opens up space to reflexivity. In addition, our interviewees suggest that in order to enable this dialogues, the classroom necessitates to generate a favourable environment towards discussions about business ethics, managers' ethics and meanings and sense-making of management practices in the world. For the aim of enhancing reflexivity in academia, mostly with students in the classroom, it may be enhanced while aiding students to developing their own virtues. For example, as claimed by some students and practitioners, if it is imperative to reflect about the appropriateness of ethical managerial behaviour, a connection to the personal responsibility of managers needs to be addressed. Through this connection, reflexivity arises spontaneously while addressing some virtues in managers that allow them to attain ethical conduct, hence, the virtues of justice, honesty and integrity, for instance.

Within reflexivity through dialogues, critical issues in management may be addressed. For instance, while teaching and learning about subjects such as Management and Interculturality or Management and Social Responsibility, critical issues such as the relativity of regulations regarding human rights varies in each country, hence, producing different results that need to be

explored and put into context. This relativity calls for ethics in the sense that regardless of the existence of norms, a call for justice and equity necessitates the expression of goodness in managers, thus, virtues of honesty and integrity are imperative when managers are in the process of making decisions. Not only the consequences of our actions are at stake, but also the importance given to human life and human dignity; evermore, the acknowledgement of the planet as a whole and therein our place and role to play.

We argue that in order to generate more animated discussions in the classroom that enhance reflexivity in students, professors need to open their minds to acknowledge a perspective of wholeness. We argue that some discussions could include, for instance, the implications to manager practitioners upon what Schelling (1775-1854) considered as the place of liberty in transcendence (the individual's free will to choose and to act). Managers may choose to conduct virtuously in order to act ethically and responsibly not only towards the community, but also towards the wholeness. We, as professors of management, should address the reality that even though managers are paid most of the times to continuously increase the value of shares, they have nevertheless the human liberty to act and to conduct changes. As such, to us, existential and spiritual approaches aid to answer to human, social and ecological organizational disregard.

In an equal manner, with the aim of increasing the nature and fundamentals of animated discussions in the classroom, professors could support themselves on a critical approach (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000), where management education could also be an example of practicing management from a critical point of view. Why not, practicing management education from a critical approach may present as an occasion for micro-emancipation (based upon Foucault's idea (Foucault, 1975)), and avoid being labelled as followers of the traditional way of teaching through indoctrination and dexterity? In this sense, we support the imperative for management education to count more broadly with practices of social reflexivity, as explored by Reynolds (1999), and critical pedagogy (see Caproni & Arias, 1997), in the sense of including the questioning of power, ideologies and hegemonic practices, as well as the consideration of totality as a result of interconnected actions of us all.

In sum, we argue that in our classroom we should conceive the idea of wholeness if we accept to

address otherness, and as our researches indicate us, most of the individuals call for respecting toward themselves while interacting with others who handle power. A claim to be acknowledged by others in his or her own integrity, and with equal value as human beings is evident in the discourse of the persons we encountered in our researches.⁶ In the same manner, our researches indicate that people want to be treated with justice, equity, and to attain this aim, one of the virtues that gathered most the attention among the interviewees is exemplarity especially from those who own authority (e.g. managers, owners, decision makers in government, and also, management professors). We consider that by the continuous exercise of social reflexivity, we can attain the point in which a virtue such as respect emanates naturally in our behaviour, which will include for instance, the freedom of speech, respect of the human dignity while interacting, respecting the integrity of other human beings, hence helping intercomprehension. Equally, the continuous development of human qualities (and virtues) is crucial for managers and individuals in positions of power. More philosophical basis of the managerial practice and thinking need to be explored.

Conclusions for researches avenues

Education, as a dynamic tool of society entitled with the moral duty of helping in the development of citizens, has the responsibility to aid in this aim. We believe that one of the ways of contributing to attain this aim is through reflexivity, critical thinking and collective experience, therefore, contributing with the development of virtues. Our research suggests that the virtues of honesty, respect, equity and justice are essential to management practice and also within management education. In the same manner, academic reflexivity could be enhanced by the efforts conducted by management professors towards aiding students in the development of their own virtues. Alongside with this possibility, a pedagogy of discussion that includes dialogue and intersubjectivity is required, and consequently, self-reflexivity about inner-continuous development could arise. Self and social reflexivity allows the acknowledgement of realities subject to change and provides the recognition of the individual's role and his or her responsibility therein. The transformation process of the inner-self may also be attained, as self-questioning could start a self-realization of the barriers represented by our fear to the unknown, a

⁶ This present research as well as others we have conducted in the past (e.g. Davila Gomez, 2003).

fear to change. Hope for a better future, as a virtue, could help us in this endeavour. Equally, benevolence, as a virtue, aids us to be sympathetic towards the realities and needs of others, as well as to acknowledge our place in the whole of the planet; hence, the openness of the mind may expand even further.

This implies for the agenda of management research, to explore, for instance, the transcendence of the managerial practice towards the whole, or in the case of managers, to avail themselves to forethought when entitled with the responsibility of governing others and deciding for their fate, as well as the impacts of their conduct towards the planet. Equally, a philosophical questioning about the inclusion of wholeness in management education arises as a theme to address in research.

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