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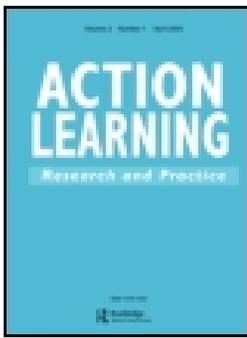
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BOOK REVIEW

Managing change, creativity and innovation, by Patrick Dawson and Constantine Andriopoulos, London, Sage Publications, 2017, 638 pp., £97.99 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-47396-427-3, £36.22 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-47396-428-0

This is the third edition of this book, previous editions having been published in 2009 and 2014 and it has been reprinted regularly. It is quite clearly a textbook aimed at Organisational Behaviour courses and targeted largely at those students and scholars who are studying the management of organisational change. The authors are both university professors – one at Cass Business School, City University, London and the other at the University of Adelaide, Australia, so the scope of the book is both international and indeed global in nature. Both authors have very extensive research pedigrees, largely grounded in industrial and commercial enterprises in the business sector.

This third edition has been further updated from its' predecessors and added to with the specific intention of reflecting ongoing conceptual advances and contemporary debates. It contains new case studies drawn from global organisations, such as Amazon, Apple and TNT; includes a number of reflective exercises, review and discussion questions, hands-on research tasks, recommended readings and useful websites, and also features access to a range of learning and revision aids, such as video and web links and free journal articles. Strongly-referenced and comprehensive, the book contains some 39 figures and 34 tables as it seeks to make a cross-disciplinary use of relevant models.

The book sets out to interweave the processes of organisational change, creativity and innovation and this is reflected early on in Part One – Setting The Scene: The Changing Landscape of Business Organisations, which offers definitions of these three fields, and also includes a useful history of management thought. Part Two – Change and Innovation in Organisations, moves in greater depth into a more theoretical realm and offers useful material in such areas as Gareth Morgan's organisational metaphors, the centrality of power and politics and both individual and collective resistance to change, before going on to consider the activity of Organisation Development, including dialogical OD, the learning organisation concept and the Appreciative Inquiry approach. This all lays the groundwork for the authors' particular emphasis – an approach which emphasises the interconnections between context, process and time. Part Three – Creativity, Innovation and Change in Organisations, then contains the '*meat*' of the book, with consideration of individual and group processes, the importance of leadership and the significance of organisational structures and systems in either enabling or disabling change. Part Three ends with an examination of the importance of organisational culture in promoting innovation. The book quite deliberately does not aim to offer over-simplified guidelines and prescriptions for action, and indeed regularly disparages the '*guru literature*' of other authors who have previously done so. It does, however, (and somewhat paradoxically) offer a number of '*lessons*' for managing change, creativity and innovation. They are:

- There are no universal prescriptions.
- Change is a political process.
- Time, planning and flexibility is essential.
- Critical reflection is central.
- Learn from all experiences and do not simply focus on anecdotes of '*success*'.

- Align training, education and staff development with the practical needs of new operating philosophies and working procedures.
- Communication is more than just communication.
- Contradiction provides healthy food for critical reflection.

The book is strongly reflective of a number of (largely unspoken) assumptions. For example, of the many case studies used in the book the vast majority are drawn from such organisations as Disney, TNT, Amazon, General Motors, KPMG and Apple, together with some interesting others (such as Leeds Rhinos rugby league team and paint and biscuit manufacturers). There is, however, a paucity of public sector cases considered and those that are included feature one on the privatisation of the publicly-owned electricity industry in New Zealand and one on the former British Rail – drawn from 1971! There are few cases examined, for example, from human service organisations, and the few health care examples which are featured do not ever address the issue of *'emotional labour'* which is a central factor in the work of health care clinical staff (Hayward and Tuckey 2011). The values running through the case studies, and indeed the book as a whole, therefore tend to emphasise the primacy and supposed excellence of business enterprises.

There is also a much more important central underlying assumption in this book (as in many other such textbooks) which can be identified as the ideology of *managerialism*. This comprises a belief that all organisations (private and public) have more similarities than differences and that performance in all such organisations can be optimised by the application of a set of generic management skills and theory. The experience and skills which are specifically pertinent to an organisation's core business and to the context within which it operates are thus considered secondary to these generic qualities. The underlying values behind managerialism (and strongly embodied in this book) are:

- The primary value is solely economic efficiency, or the pursuit of maximum output with the minimum inputs.
- Faith in the tools of management and the ability of managers to use them to resolve problems.
- The active and the technical dominating over the reflective and the humane.
- The subordination of knowledge and truth to meet the demands of key stakeholders.

The book does not, for example, anywhere address Rittel and Webber's (1973) valuable distinction between tame and wicked organisational problems and the work of Keith Grint (2010) in building further upon these insights is also not covered at all. The authors' (again unspoken) assumption must therefore be, by implication, that all organisational problems, as well as being generic, are also tame.

In such a view, all that is needed for organisational success is a supposedly rational assessment which involves gathering and collating the information relevant to an organisational problem, listing the options for action, calculating the cost/benefit of each, evaluating the potential consequences and then choosing the *'best'* course of action. The more complex the tame organisational problem is, the more important it is believed to be to follow this orderly flow. Reg Revans' personal journey from originally being a scientist focused on pure research in physics to working on practical problems in an *'operational research'* mode in coal mines, schools, factories and hospitals (interestingly in both private and public sectors) and then towards addressing the influence of human action and learning on the improvement of organisations and systems indicates the limits of such a purely scientific approach to human problems (Edmonstone 2017).

Many organisations (and particularly human service organisations which are typically located in the public and charitable sectors) do not have the *'reconciling function'* (Hampden-Turner 1992) of profit maximisation to guide them and are largely focused on wicked problems which are fundamentally social in nature and therefore not susceptible to being worked on by the rational-empirical scientific method outlined above (Sarason 1978). Social problems can also be seen to be intractable; that is, not permanently solvable because they are reflective of the imperfectability of human beings and society and therefore deeply-rooted in the human condition. Such social problems are thus not solvable in a once-and-for-all fashion but have to be solved over and over again depending upon the idiosyncratic context (time, place and historical circumstances). Any solution therefore only lasts until the problem recurs in another form and so such social problems can never be finally eliminated or ignored because they are the inevitable consequence of human diversity and the social structures associated with it. That is why they are, in Rittel and Webber's terms, wicked.

There is also a further assumption in this book that all organisations have some kind of objective existence independent of those who work within them and who seek to lead and manage them, rather than seeing *organising* as a social process which all participants shape and are shaped by at the same time and about which no independent and objective truth can be known because we are all of us participating in or co-constructing that process. So the book is essentially a positivist account which treats organisations as concrete entities and practice as easily definable and measurable (Francis 2003).

Thus the book, with its' cornucopia of concepts and models, is actually an example of *'episteme'* or *'know-why'* – context-independent, impersonal tools and techniques based upon an assumption that knowledge is universal, timeless and invariable. This stands in sharp contrast to action learning's emphasis on *'techne'* or *'know-how'* – pragmatic and context-dependent practical wisdom.

The authors of this book are, unsurprisingly, extremely well-read and if organisational life is complex, messy and confusing then the book is certainly a reflection of that reality. At no point is action learning as either ethos or method specifically considered, nor is Revans ever referenced, in this huge textbook, yet related issues such as single and double-loop learning, the learning organisation and explicit and tacit knowledge (P and Q) are certainly touched upon and the importance of critical reflection is strongly highlighted. With its' complete over-emphasis on the business sector, insofar as the book touches tangentially on action learning it is, perhaps unsurprisingly, of the business-driven variety alone and the only recognisable names from within the wide action learning field which this reviewer could find in the text were Michael Marquardt and David Coghlan. This is quite surprising, given the authors' orientation towards an approach which interweaves context, process and time. The book will certainly be of value as a useful resource to draw upon for students working, for example, towards a Masters qualification, and the multiplicity of case studies and reflective exercises will most likely enrich their *'know-why'* understanding, but it has little or nothing new to say for practitioners in the action learning field.

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