

## *Is Critique « Teachable » ? Action-research and Humanities in a French Business School : Two Cases Studies*

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### *Introduction*

For almost 10 years a team of professors led by professor Eve Chiapello at HEC has pushed the idea that traditional management school curricula do not encourage students to think critically. The problem lies both in what is taught, and how it is taught.

“Downloading” knowledge, through a process of transmission (from teacher to student), is interesting providing that what you want is to develop erudition, as opposed to the ability to act critically in a given situation. “Teaching” management, as understood by the team we researched, implies a lack of authenticity (Fourcade & Go, 2012) expressed in two ways:

Students usually play role and are not really involved in the situation, as the situation has not been decided, or at least co-decided by them.

Consistent with Henry Mintzberg’s critique the teaching situation - with a classroom, a teacher in a “sage on the stage” situation, who is supposed to “know”, and students quietly listening to the pure truth - is also lacking authenticity linked to the practice of management (Mintzberg, 1996). Management must be taught “in practice” that is to say starting from the practice of managers rather than the theory of management.

Another element that hinders students’ development of a sharply honed critical spirit is the lack of space (physical space and time slots) dedicated to thinking, collectively, under the strict authority of the professor, the space to come back to the last teaching experience, and discuss it. This reflexion should be multilayer, students and professors should take time to discuss about issues such as:

Did we perform as expected in the last exercise? This is usually done during the session. Following that, what did I/we feel during the exercise? What is the sense we give to the particular exercise. Our assumption of the word “sense” (in French, and its Latin root) encompasses three meanings:

- a direction of motion toward somewhere
- a value or a set of values ( does it make sense or have meaning?)

- sensibility, an experience linked to the five senses

Where are the physical spaces and dedicated time slots to exchange with students and professors, on a regular basis? At HEC, the team we worked with over the last two years was lacked that reflective time within the mainstream courses.

What about the environment? If you attend a lecture, in an environment that has been design by man, the environment has been designed for you, to help you feel secure for example. You stop questioning yourself and you trust the assumption that this should be good. The day you are moved outside of your zone of reference, critical thinking rises again.

From this set of questions rose the motivation to create “relative autonomy zones” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970) within which the team of professors of HEC could develop some freedom to act deliberately, to develop critical thinking. With this objective in mind, the team of professors took advantage of two ideal institutional opportunities to host their project.

The first opportunity grasped by our team was the request from Renault, a few years after the Nissan takeover, to develop an academic “chair” (a think tank funded by Renault) within which a program to develop intercultural awareness could take place. The teaching program had to be developed by HEC together with the Ecole Polytechnique, the leading French engineering school. Renault in France, Nissan in Japan, and Samsung motors in South Korea - all part of the Renault Nissan Group -received the order to open their doors to this program. Eve Chiapello, together with professor Eric Godelier (a Historian, in charge of the social science development at Ecole Polytechnique) were responsible for developing this program from scratch and for handling it.

The second opportunity was linked to the rise of the sustainable development issues, Corporate Social Responsibility. Without being too cynical, a business school such as HEC “must” at that have something to say about the increased importance given to these issues by their Master’s students. Eve Chiapello pushed forward the idea of developing a third year major in “alter-management”. She was supported and encouraged by professors from several departments and by the dean; he wanted to send a strong “signal” that the school does not encourage only finance courses, but also the opportunity to develop the presence of social science within the management curricula.

This alter-management was born as the first critical thinking approach incubator. Given the initial lack of critical thinking development on the one hand, and the two new organisational vehicles on the other hand, our team of professors worked very hard over the last five years to implement these two programs inside their local “eco-system”.

In the following section, we draw a picture of the learning outcomes we can extract from this five year long dual experiment. Anticipating our conclusion, and going back to our main question about how to integrate humanities in the management education, we claim that it is not necessary to integrate the humanities into the management curricula, but rather the humanities based reflexion of the faculty’s curricula, can be used to shed light on the implicit, hidden dimension of the management teaching approach that may hinder the development of a critical perspective.

## *The Chair “Multicultural management and company performances”*

Expressed another way, we call for the inclusion of the critical knowledge of social sciences and humanities based on the practice itself and not by means of a kind of “applied philosophy” which implies the prior development of impartial, independent and full knowledge that is subsequently “taught” (Carr, 2004, Colby, Ehrlich, Sullivan, Dolle, 2011: 54-55). If critical thinking is first and foremost the ability to question what is taken for granted and obvious at present, it is worth asking oneself to what extent can this be learned with standard teaching methods and without calling into question the very nature of the knowledge being imparted. As stated in the Carnegie report: “[s]imply taking courses from a variety of fields is not sufficient however. The material must be taught with integration in mind, coming together in ways that students can draw on in their personal and civic lives as well as in their work” (Colby, Ehrlich, Sullivan, Dolle, 2011: 167). It is therefore necessary to ask oneself whether a critical pedagogy or a pedagogy focused on critical thinking can really exist without calling into question the neo-liberal management approach in its entirety.

This is the very question raised by the Chair set up by Eve Chiapello and Eric Godelier at HEC, Polytechnique, IIM Ahmedabad, Keio University and Samsung University, and largely financed by the Renault Foundation. The complex functioning of the chair was based on two assumptions: the idea that crossing borders (between schools, cultures, companies, countries, etc.) gives rise to both a reflective attitude and critical thinking among management students, but also that intercultural and multicultural questions within a company can be viewed with a pluralist and decentralized vision by students who transform themselves into researchers. The Chair’s program was based on the hypothesis that multicultural working groups of three students, made up of one MA student from HEC, one from Polytechnique and one from either IIMA or Keio, could produce new results on research subjects selected by the senior management of Renault.

The topics chosen were primarily to do with intercultural or multicultural issues which had come up in the French company: for example its alliance with Nissan, its functioning in India or Japan (or more recently in Korea), the development of the Indian car market or even marketing strategies in non-French speaking countries. Following training lasting at most two months (only for the French students) and an internship period of four months (one month in France and three months in India, or Korea or Japan according to the origin of the third member of the group) the students were required to produce a report which was then evaluated by the professors of the Chair and the internship “tutors” (supervisors) at Renault who had overseen the students “in the field”. A presentation was given at the end of the internship and a prize awarded for the best report.

The question of relationships between cultures is not neutral; it is really linked to the context within which the Chair was created. Since 1999, Renault and Nissan have drawn closer following a model of an alliance (rather than a merger). The stated goal of this alliance is not to make two cultural disparate organizations converge according to an “intercultural” model – a sort of new “culture” created through the mixing of the parent cultures (Barmeyer, 2007); nor is it to impose a single dominant culture. The alliance charter signed in 1999,

specifies the values of the collaboration between the companies – it has the motto “Renault stays Renault, Nissan stays Nissan” – it includes cooperation and mutual respect, preservation of identities, cultural complementarity (Barmeyer & Mayrhofer, 2009). In other words the alliance’s model is based on the idea that cultural diversity, the multiplicity of experiences and organizational structures are the pool from which we can draw the key elements necessary to create a new form of management.

Based on this model, the regional management committees therefore created CCTs (Cross Country Teams are cross-functional teams made up of engineers and managers in both Renault and Nissan) to encourage the cross-fertilization of the two companies. It is evident that the integration of employees of the two companies raises a problem due not only to the organizational structure based on hierarchical principles (according to Hofstede’s model), but also due to clashes that were brewing and which appeared to be cultural differences. At a deeper level, the model raises issues which highlight the absence of a theory to conceptualize the reciprocal fertilization of cultures. Neither Hall’s model (1966), nor Hofstede’s models (1994), nor Schein’s (1985), appear to be sufficiently detailed to produce working results in this context. Up to now, intercultural management has mainly been concentrated on the problems and conflicts which arise from a difference between two companies of organizational or national culture (Dupriez & Solange, 2002, p.125) whereas the specific situation of the Renault-Nissan Alliance leads one to think that there is a requirement for a new management model: multicultural (rather than intercultural) and characterized by a high level of plasticity – capable of transforming itself according to the information that comes out of the field.

This is why the creators of the Chair fought against the intercultural concept, considered to be the movement toward a single model. Instead, they favored a multicultural model, for the several cultures already within the company that had more or less convergent interests, for which there was necessarily a series of political phenomena, negotiations and compromise between the communities. The multicultural approach has as its starting point the diversity of cultures and therefore the idea that we evaluate companies not only on the basis of maximized profit, but also according to multiple criteria for different categories of actors and according to the compromise required between the different objectives of the organization. The stress is on the different types of performances of the company rather than simply on its economic performance.

If the search for a causal link between performance and company culture is always at the heart of the sociology of management (Alvesson, 2002 : 42-70), the performance approach allows us to conceive the company as the source of a fairly large range of values, a place within which there are several groups or communities. In other words, the company is a meeting and mixing point for several cultures. The multicultural option, unlike the intercultural one, is thus based on the idea of not measuring the differences between cultures based on the specific obstacles to overcome, but rather on the different ways in which actors interact among themselves within the company. The question of how to approach the field or what other means can be used to obtain certain decisive data within the given cultural context then becomes a pivotal question one for the training of a new generation of managers.

Through the underlying question raised by the Renault-Nissan Alliance, we see that the goal of the Chair, above and beyond its objectives stated by Renault, was neither to generate meetings, nor to promote a culture that would be the result of the changes to the two original cultures, but instead to conceptualize the implicit and the tacit – which are central elements to our way of existing in a culture – without necessarily including them in a system of coherent values. It was to teach the students to analyze culture as a socio-historical phenomenon, one where the articulation between practice and concepts varies according to the interpretations that are produced by the actors of the cultural variable. We then understand the importance in this training program, of the series of courses which is unusual for business schools: ethnography, sociology, or even history.

The adoption of an ethnographic approach within a company, based on an introduction to participatory observation methods is supposed to lead to a duplication of the practitioner-intern's view of his own practices, obliging him to establish a involvement/distancing relationship with the object. Following this view, the immersion of the student in another culture, through in depth training, should allow him to formulate the issues arising through his own experience, by seeing himself as would the “other”. It means to “un-train” (the meaning is here for the student to free himself from a specific training or education model): the intellectual formatting created by the French system of education (preparatory classes followed by engineering or business schools) which is continued in the carrying out of the duties associated with the top positions in big companies and which often makes managers blind to organizational problems linked to interpersonal and intercultural interactions.

When evaluating this training program, it was important to differentiate between two levels of research. On a superficial level, it was necessary to understand if training in France, India and Japan allowed students to develop skills, new positions and attitudes with regards to the multicultural questions that can arise within a French company. However, after several interviews with Eve Chiapello and Eric Godelier, I learned that their questioning went much further than the acquisition of a certain level of sensitivity to cultural questions. The ambition of this program was wider: to form “reflective managers”, capable of reflecting on their own experience and of taking the distance necessary to measure the consequences of their decisions or strategies. In other words, using Schön's formula, it was to train reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983, 1987), open to cultural differences and capable of analyzing the multicultural context of the company – identifying cultural misunderstandings which hide behind visible conflicts. The objective was, using Godelier's words, to put into place a pedagogy of intellectual and social “decentering”.

There are three aspects in this decentering pedagogy that I want to highlight. Firstly, one of the primary objectives of the course is to enable the students to no longer conceive culture as an “essence”, in their bones, which determines individual's behavior in a homogenous way. This conception is dominant in management and tends to limit culture to a fixed, homogenous set of values, behaviors and standard ways of acting; it is mechanically imposed on people like a second nature. Another characteristic of cultural essentialism is the opposition of the surface and the depths (Schein, 1985) which allows one to compare culture to a kind of software, a mysterious mental program uploaded into individuals through inexplicable socialization processes and deeply rooted within them. In the end, de-essentializing a culture

implies understanding the culture not from phenomena that explain the differences, but from an ethnographical description of the functioning of a community of individuals: the set of values or representations is no longer perceived as the factors which determine a community but rather as the ways of organizing the actions of members in their environment (Godelier, 2009).

The idea is therefore to give students the tools to describe the rationalities of the actors belonging to the same community. The full interest of this program is then to place students in the position to be able to make explicit the implicit. This is why it is necessary to bring to light the invisible dimensions of culture, adopting a critical approach (according to Kant's use of the term critique) which "consists of seeing what kind of facts, familiarities, acquired and non-reflective ways of thinking underpin the practices which we accept" (Foucault, 1981). A critical perspective does not mean taking a position condemning the world of the company and its actors systematically or ideologically. It just means that scientific knowledge requires distancing from everyday categories and practices (Godelier, 2010); the goal then becomes to create the required distancing effect from these categories and this resembles a requirement for decentering.

Secondly, it involves teaching the student to enter into the practice of management using tools, techniques and so on instead of taking a theoretical approach using broad, muddled questions designed ahead of time. A small management object can thus crystallize a certain number of problems and tensions within the company. The microscopic point of view creates a line of access for larger dimensions, creating a precise perspective for students to use subsequently to explore larger organizational questions. In other words, on one hand, the technical management tool is considered a boundary crosser that condenses the knowledge of a community of actors; on the other hand, it is the means to analyze institutional transformations (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2004). So while they are usually presented as neutral, the management tools distill a large part of the political dimensions present in the company. They facilitate management and/or control, dominance and/or governance, categorization and/or reproduction. Thus these tools can be the object of a sociological description which sheds light on the interactions between these tools and their immediate environment and, more generally, with the socio-economic system that incorporates them. The object then becomes a boundary crosser between the two levels: the micro level of observation and the macro level of analysis of the culture of the company (Chiapello, 2011).

In the multicultural context, this same management tool can either reproduce the cognitive structure which authorized the training, or become the object of a "hijacking", of an alternative use or interpretation (Pélata *et al.*, 2009). This "contextualization" work requires the implementation of a "historical" approach to track the different contexts within which the tool was used inside and outside of the company. Establishing the history of the tools' use, enables us to understand how actions were carried out and how the actors reflected on them from their position and in light of their interests (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977); the organizational philosophy which underpins these ways of behaving and reflecting (Douglas, 1999); and the relationship between the company and its exterior/environment (in the case of Renault-Nissan, the relationship between the two companies with different histories).

The third important point in the program is the introduction of an ethnographic approach to management science. During the different phases of the training, the students learned to share in the life of a community in order to be able to describe the organization. Each student was supposed to observe the rituals and strategies put into place in order to be able to exist and work together within the company, and also to ask the actors to explain the sense of their behaviors (Descola, 2005). He would then have an “oral history” which, when compared to the official, institutional history of the organization would allow him to reconstruct the salient points of the company’s culture (Godelier, 2006 : 94-105). This adoption of an ethnographic approach in a management program fits into a larger movement of importing research methods from the social sciences and humanities – the movement accelerated during the crisis (Chanlat, 2000; FNEGE, 2010).

While the formalized teaching of finance makes management science similar to the natural sciences, history, sociology, anthropology, geography or even philosophy facilitate the development of a holistic approach to the company and its environment. The non-utilitarian knowledge of these subjects is different both in its rigor and the research methodology it inspires; techniques like coaching, personal development or the numerous psychological and psychosociological approaches have long been present in the company (Brunel, 2004). History relates social and political events, behaviors, economic flows and ideas; it therefore enables one to distance oneself from one’s current situation and therefore is an indispensable tool for understanding one’s present (Bloch, 2006). Anthropology and ethnography enable one to immerse oneself in the life of the organization while still, continuously analyzing one’s own involvement and one’s interaction with the field thanks to a series of tools (newspapers, interview analysis, etc.). The management situation can then be the object of an empirical analysis, with is defined as a practice: instead of ideas or methods, we find “practices, bodies, places, groups, instruments, objects, nodes, networks” (Latour, 1989; Girin, 1990). The knowledge of the humanities and social sciences are learned in the field, through action research (Carr & Kemnis, 1986), in order to transfer the abstract categories learned during the initial training to their concrete reality as tools (Godelier, 2010 ; Colby *et al.* : 55-59). From this point of view, the pedagogy of decentering is a pedagogy of enactment (Colby *et al.*: 89-90).

Did this program, with its great ambitions, live up to its promises? It would be utopian to imagine that six months of training would suffice to transform the habitus of business schools. That is why the results of the evaluation are ambiguous. On one hand the students accepted letting go of certain aspects of culture, abandoning the desire to fully master reality which often characterizes a specific management attitude. They learned, above all, to work within a complex multicultural environment, respecting the diverging opinions of their team members and learning to manage the multicultural conflicts frequently generated by misunderstandings linked to use of words and concepts which are not equivalent in different cultural contexts. Working in a multicultural team in the context of a company, immersing themselves in an unknown culture, forced the students to decrypt communication codes at a deeper level in order to go beyond their literal translation and to delve into them more deeply. The students therefore progressively steered toward facing the tacit elements of cultures and being interested in the way in which communities did things, even if only to build a shared

rationality and to work together. If it were needed this would once again prove the virtues of teamwork in education (Colby *et al.*: 90-94); it also calls into question the imposition of pre-formatted, “scientific” methods not based sufficiently on reality. The journey through the social sciences, and the confrontation with the reality of the field allowed students to decrypt certain socio-cultural variables within the company. The company then appears to the students to be less a monolith than a political and cultural artifact requiring a certain level of social competence to be understood.

However, the importance of this approach to education which aims to make students real researchers within the company must be highlighted. Transforming real company subjects into research topics over several months, the program introduced these young people to research pedagogy which appears to be radically different from the usual pedagogy in business schools. In the latter, the future manager is “prepared to evolve within a simplified reality in which problems, that he resolves by quickly applying predetermined solutions, are solved; these predetermined solutions are offered as an explanation in all circumstances, something that is at least better than silence” (Fnege, 2010 : 40-41). In contrast, in the program created for the Chair, the student is forced to leave the framework of *just in time* questions and answers, to take the time to question the actors, but also to call into question his own work and his way of interacting with others. As in all serious research, the study of the object thus becomes the opportunity for self transformation and asceticism (Foucault, 2005; Pezet, 2007). Concretely, it is the research which allows the student to develop the know-how that consists of constantly rethinking his research question in the face of new elements, to question his facts, in sum to adopt a critical approach.

It is here that the real potential of program can be found, but also its ambiguity; these two aspects are reflected in the relationships that the students had with their Renault-Nissan supervisors. The supervisors were almost all senior managers of Renault and Nissan; they were looking for solutions and operational results, seeing the students as consultants. A conflict between two rationalities arose, even though in reality the two are intermingled. According to the supervisor’s rationality, of necessity, the company encounters a series of problems and must put into place solutions using consulting methods, based on the implementation of proven procedures and specific know-how. The research action rationality pre-supposed joint work by the supervisor and the student-interns; it first focused on the reformulation of the visible problem and then followed with the search for a solution.

The research action approach was based on the prerequisite of critical thinking and free questioning as we have seen above. However this approach clashed easily with the managerial rationality requiring quick results as it took time, went deep, and implied a political questioning of certain stakes. This led to the distancing of the supervisor, indifference, and even attempts to instrumentalize the “research” of the students in order to meet other needs (for example gaining information from the field). As a result, the students told me they often felt abandoned by their tutors. At the other extreme, some also felt as if there was an attempt make them to “follow instructions” and even to “find answers”. In this case, the students felt like they were being followed or spied upon by the very person who was supposed to introduce them to the field.

Indeed, in both cases, the tension bore witness to a relationship which, through its very nature, exposed a series of misunderstandings which were a result of the interaction of the company culture – always asking for results – and the requirements of ethnographical research. It showed the resistance of the company to a critical perspective that is all the more subtle and penetrating as it looks at specific and often tiny aspects of the organization rather than focusing on the whole of the neoliberal company management. Indeed, it is not by chance that the success of the research was dependant on the ability of the students to make the most of the clashes in order to question more deeply the balance of power and domination inside of the company. This, however, first implied the ability to freely question the “teaching” relationship between the supervisor and the student, describing it as a power struggle.

This questioning was precisely possible because of the degree of liberty that was supported by a program which was exceptional. In other words the critical approach was made possible only by the “anomaly” of this elite program: the Chair permitted a limited number of students, coming from the most selective universities, to meet in a large company wearing a researcher’s hat. This was both a luxury and a privilege – we can only ask ourselves what will be the effect of it a few months or years later, when the students start their professional lives. What will happen to their critical attitudes when they are working as managers in companies, subject to the constraints of rapid results and solutions? We doubt that the ethnological and historical approach will suffice to create a real resistance to the dominant managerial culture: we may need to turn to other knowledge, namely philosophy, to allow students to develop and widen their critical approach and capacity for self-reflection, thus leading to the construction of techniques for “government of self and of others” (Foucault, 2010) which could completely call into question the existing.

Yet can we still state that this is still “education” according to the usual meaning of the word? Is it not self-training or co-training? In the end, terms such as “training through research”, “active teaching” or “pedagogy of enactment”, seem to hide or remove the meaning of “education”. From this point of view, the training program hides a broader question: is the development of a critical perspective not in contradiction with any educational approach? If the acquisition of a certain form of critical perspective on management seems possible exactly because of the mastery of a certain number of tools, one can then suppose that critique requires the student to first *free himself from education*.

### ***The alter-management major***

Since 2006, the Alter-Management (MA) major has been offered to HEC students in the second year of their master degree, in other words right at the end of their studies. The program aims to make them capable of “initiating and supporting the process of change and innovation in complex organizational and human contexts, taking into account not only the technological and economic dimensions but also the human, societal and ecological”. In addition, the program claims to have “a different teaching approach, combining highly theoretical and reflective courses with very concrete projects chosen according to the capabilities which need to be developed by the students”. The prefix “alter” combined with

“management” thus seems to make sense as it takes into account the ethical, social, political, environmental, intercultural implications of the activity of management, to which they are not considered to be automatically linked, in addition to the fact that within a “pedagogical project that is opposite to the traditional teaching approach” the program goes from experience and the “personal reflections of students to develop knowing how-to-be, know-how and knowledge”.

Moreover this prefix brings to mind “alter globalization” and the social movements which have joined together behind this approach, namely within the framework of the World Social Forums, and thus introduces a possible reference to important breakdowns in current social and political critical perspectives. The economic crisis seems to have pushed organizations toward sacrificing all moral scruples and reflection, in the medium to long term, on the altar of efficiency at any price and of the famous “management through stress” with the consequences to which it leads – regularly raised in the press and popular literature primarily around the theme of “suffering at work”. The students of the MA major are supposed however to develop the capacity to introduce ethical values into these same organizations as well as to develop the ability to adapt and innovate in a changing socio-economic world, however the program does not teach or spread a doctrine. It aims to base itself on an unconventional pedagogy, with interdisciplinary goals, that evolves and values experimentation.

In addition, the MA is not only characterized by the reflective dimension of its courses, it also forms an introduction to management itself; grouping the concepts and possible reality into topics as well as framing the problems, showing the possible plurality of practices, not only from the field but also by creating a bridge with work from the social sciences and humanities. From this point of view, it meets the challenge laid down by Anne Pezet and Eric Pezet in their work (Pezet & Pezet, 2010), at the same time favoring “vocations” within the sector of the social and solidarity economy. It tries, in the words of Eve Chiapello, to introduce students to a critical perspective on capitalism:

“Teaching management is both an ambivalent and difficult activity. Ambivalent because if we take a critical perspective on the subject, the teaching of its concepts and techniques becomes tedious. Difficult because it is not easy to transmit this critical perspective to an audience which does not know the company and which, moreover, will be spending much of their lives there.” (Pezet & Pezet, 2010 : 127)

The MA is then a structure which succeeds in attracting students who already have the disposition, the taste for critical thinking and the theory; students who are “looking for something else”. From the point of view of the teachers, they then tend to speak to the school culture of preparatory classes and French IEP (institutes for political studies), to mobilize it once more within the framework of a teaching approach that gives value to reflection and complexity as part of its perspective on managerial and the economic activity. “Critique” is then mainly the ability to implement convictions and values, but it also appears to result from the research approach, the openness to debate ideas and exchange experiences.

Sometimes, it is also related to the capacity to deconstruct and reconstruct socio-political rhetoric. From this point of view Eve Chiapello's course "History of critique" was fairly eloquent. This year it ended with a skit by the students: on a TV set, the manager of a pharmaceutical company was being confronted with her responsibility in an environmental scandal. She was being berated by different groups each representing a form of critique of capitalism studies seen during the course: social critique, ecological critique, conservative critique and artistic critique. The students were engaged and the ambiance of this session, which I attended, was quite relaxed and pleasant. What struck me above all was the underlying dimension of serious rhetoric in a role play where each student showed their capacity to go to the limit of a certain type of argumentation. Another interesting fact, which Eve Chiapello raised with me separately, was the general difficulty that the students had with social critique, more specifically with the concept of exploitation which did not appear to exist for them. This often leads her to point out the paradox that they do not seem to have assimilated one of the most fundamental forms of social critique, namely Marxism. Whether suppression or ignorance, it perhaps translates a certain scholastic or social habitus, and which, in spite of their critical thinking, distances them from problems linked to the world of work that they do not yet know and that they perhaps do not even foresee experiencing.

The value given to this rhetorical "intelligence" and the culture of the students which runs throughout the paradigm of the MA, seems to me to contribute to a highly rationalized understanding of critical thinking: the capacity to doubt shared opinions, to oppose them with a solid argumentation and, on a practical level, to design viable organizational diagrams - within the framework of a social and solidarity economy - which are both precise and technically convincing. Looking at the teachers, they appear to focus on the cognitive quality of the know-how of their students. They are careful to propose courses that take into account the expectations they observe. Eve Chiapello formulates it as follows

"They like courses that go fast, where they are trying to catch up. They need lots of structure, with lots of rhythm, something that is dense. In my course this year, I spent two hours on artistic critique, and they were frustrated when it ended, so I had to extend it. We also started a professor of social economy who began his course asking what their expectations were; however, they only like this kind of approach to last twenty minutes, not more! They also sometimes find it difficult with courses which are too built up, such as the research seminars. We had a young sociologist like this, who did a reading seminar, around the question of regulations. She brought in experts in the sociology of law, to reflect on the capacity of NGOs to create standards. She worked on the classification of Bordeaux wines, in order to explain that behind this dynamic there was something else; but the students did not understand the link. There were no connections or connectors, she left too much space to the researchers. They expected something more synthetic... There is a lot of projection, many clichés. But the student who is not capable of going further than the brochure and certain clichés does not interest me. That said, it is upsetting when you do not have anyone in your program and you are reproached for it."

The students are therefore quite exacting in their requirements with regards to the synthetic dimension of the courses. They do not appreciate "wasting their time", "being confused". They are ready to hear the "subjects" of "critical theory", to try to design, to

rationalize and objectify the forms of alternative organizations according to certain dominant patterns. However the form in which this content is proposed must correspond to their expectations in terms of intellectual stimulation, expectations that are at a high level.

Some of the questions which arise from these stated expectations are: would the students be prepared to participate in forms of training which “lose” them, which to some extent make them “waste their time”, which lead them on a “stroll”? Listening to Eve Chiapello, we ask ourselves if they actually succeed in disengaging from a sort of consumer relationship to knowledge, and from a somewhat “Stakhanoviste” conviction that the quality of work is still linked to its quantity. When one of the students affirms for example that he has never worked less than at HEC, what can we infer from this about his requirements? On what do his satisfaction or his dissatisfaction depend? From which point does he have the impression that he is learning something? Is there a space in the MA to question these expectations, their criteria, their normativity together? In order to leave behind the obligatory PowerPoint presentation, or more generally leave behind the management of the school that is so “not alternative”, where the “good students” excel, must one absolutely jump into doing a thesis? Must alter-manage not also mean to alter management? Must not a training in critical management work to de-train (or deformer in French), particularly in the case of hyper-trained students?

In the framework of HEC and the current context of systemic violence that the shocks of global capitalism are causing in our within our societies, the MA appears to be a pedagogical proposal that needs to be deepened further and perhaps even generalized, opened to students at different stages of their training in the school. It is clear that the expectations of the civil society with respect to this are significant, and that a business school of this size and scope cannot remain deaf and blind to them: the school will need, with increasing urgency, to respond to them. When developing the MA, it is important to avoid placing it in sector of activity, giving it a “social” or “ethical” label would negate its refusal of the status of a specialization to be a celebration of alternative management practices. Indeed its strength comes from the fact that it can be applied to areas that are not necessarily linked to social economics, that it can facilitate the alternative exploration of these areas, and that even though it has to focus on a specific type of fieldwork within the framework of the training in order to maintain the program’s attractiveness. Indeed we can consider that all areas can be included in its area of competency and experimentation, as long as they do not contradict a certain minimal ethics requirement. Francis Imbert expresses it as follows:

“In the area of pedagogy, as elsewhere, the objective of a training program will never be fulfilled by *targeting the form* – Latin *forma*, meaning mould – rather it is based on a continuous *de-formation* – uprooting the molding provided through schooling. A *de-formation* that is understood, as for the analyst, as “*continuous work being on the agenda, looking at the problems that arise in practice*”. This work over a lifetime, destroys the objectives of a training program that falls into the imaginary trap of the *ideal form* for training. It implies not *remaining alone*, to have a work community where the desire and tools for resisting – *the desire not to give into one’s desire* – can be developed and transmitted from one to the other.” (Imbert, 2004 : 120)

To take oneself out of this mould implies not giving into one’s desire. To achieve this, it is necessary to provide spaces within which it is possible to formulate the problems of

critique, not only by conceptualizing it, but also by trying to think more deeply about what it does to us, the way in which it commits us and involves us as subjects. In the *Entrée dans la vie* (Entry into life) Georges Lapassade, devotes an entire chapter to initiation rites (Lapassade, 1963). He distances himself using a type of objective sociology, which describes the way in which individuals find themselves integrated, via social rituals, into dominant institutions. He shows that the rite must be thought through, not only from the point of view of its integrating potential, but also from that always problematic point of view of the individual being initiated and for whom it is never possible to insure that he will fully adhere to the social role that he is playing. This demonstration is one of the essential elements of the deconstruction of the myth of the adult which proposes the idea of the man as a necessarily still birth, a being who is irreparably unsuited to the institutions he spends his entire life entering. It is this unfinished process which somehow condemns us to adopting a critical perspective or, expressed another way, to pushing into crisis of the models that we are proposed. For a public which is at the threshold of its entry into professional life, the MA could then contribute, in its way, to working on making conscious this unfinished process and to stimulating the desire for lifelong training and un-training.

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