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# Challenges for Management and Business Education in a "Developmental" State: The Case of South Africa

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*The purpose and quality of management and business education in universities have been subjected to an onslaught of vitriolic criticism. Most of this conversation emanates from the global north or west, particularly the United States and to a lesser extent Western Europe. I focus here on management and business education challenges in South Africa. Its sociopolitical history as well as its location in the global south, in juxtaposition to the global north, raises different challenges. South Africa's multilayer context creates differences in both the challenges faced by universities and management academics and the responses required. The dominant prescriptions for changing management and business education are inadequate where the challenge is transformative nation building across all sectors of society. After describing the challenges for management education, I offer an agenda that attempts to traverse the complex interplay between South Africa's simultaneous postapartheid and postcolonial conditions.*

The purpose and quality of management and business education in universities has been subjected to an onslaught of vitriolic criticism (e.g. AACSB, 2002; Ghoshal, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Pearce & Huang, 2012; Rubin & Dierdorff, 2013; Waddock & Lozano, 2013). These critiques have raised questions about relevance, omission of ethics, short-term orientation, and prioritization of bottom-line performance over other important societal outcomes. Prescriptions for change range from closing the gap between theory and practice, and balancing shareholder and stakeholder interests, to inculcating a triple-bottom-line perspective of performance and ethical behavior in management education. Most of this conversation emanates from the global north or west, particularly the United States and to a lesser extent Western Europe. Although the editors of this journal have acknowledged that macrolevel contextual factors (e.g., level of economic development, political system, etc.) are relevant to management and business education priorities and challenges, discussions about these issues in other parts of the world with very different national contexts are rare (e.g. Alcadipani & Caldas, 2012; Egri, 2013; Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Mir & Mir, 2013).

What are the challenges for management education in a developmental nation grappling with the fundamental transformation of the entire country? I focus here on management and business education challenges in South Africa. Its sociopolitical history as well as its location in the global south, in juxtaposition to the global north, raise different challenges for universities and management education. These challenges are embedded in specific national factors, broader core–periphery relations, and postcolonial realities. As a concept, core–periphery relations has its origins in world-systems analysis and dependency

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theory, which point to a division of the globe into two unequal parts (Westwood, Jack, Khan, & Frenkel, 2014). The core or center is represented by the developed countries in the global north and a periphery is comprised of developing or underdeveloped countries in the global south (Westwood et al., 2014: 1). This unequal division is not just geographical, but one where the ideas, knowledge, culture, and solutions for modernity for the core are privileged over those in the periphery. As noted by Westwood et al. (2014: 2), the effects of asymmetrical power relations between the core and periphery nations are multiple and affect all domains of human life from the political to the psychological. *Postcolonial* is a complex label that combines a temporal meaning referring to the end of colonization of a nation but still focused on the continuing effects of colonialism on its present condition (Nkomo, 2011; Jack, Westwood Srinivas, & Sardar (2011).

Many of the countries in the global south are classified by the World Bank system as low- and middle-income countries, while many countries in the global north are labeled high-middle to high income. Scholars have suggested a link between a country's designation and higher education priorities. Kearney (2009:15) argues that universities in middle- and low-income countries have more critical missions compared to those in industrialized countries because they are viewed as the engines of local knowledge development as well as national development. South Africa's designation as a middle-income country presents a rather complex case to illustrate Kearny's (2009) contention because it views itself as a *developmental state* grappling with profound economic, political, and social transitions rooted in sociohistorical factors.

Theoretically, the idea of *developmental state* arose from debates on explanations for the impressive transition of nations in East Asia from "*underdeveloped*" "*developing*" to " "*developed*"[1] during the latter part of the 20th century (Evans, 2010: 45). A *developmental state* purposely uses its power and apparatus to structure and spur economic growth (Johnson, 1999). While the developmental state thesis was offered by scholars as a post-hoc explanation for the improved economic status of East Asian "Tiger" nations, the South African government made an a priori declaration to use its power and structures to achieve sustainable growth and to eradicate the lingering vestiges of apartheid and colonialism (Edigheji, 2010; Subira, 2011).

South Africa's developmental challenges are dual. First, the country is striving to transition from institutionalised practices of racism and sexism premised on the twin ideologies of White supremacy and patriarchy. These practices were perpetuated by a White minority government until 1994 through the system of apartheid. The goal articulated by the new government at the dawn of democracy remains the creation of a nonracial and nonsexist democratic society envisioned in the Constitution of 1996. Redress has become a major refrain to ensure the previously oppressed Black[2] population benefits economically and socially from the new dispensation.

The second challenge emanates from South Africa's continental context. Along with other countries in Africa, South Africa is in a part of the world that has been historically marginalized, and is still struggling to recover from the political, economic, ideological, and cultural wounds inflicted by colonialism. In terms of ideology, colonialism in Africa entrenched Western forms of knowledge and suppressed indigenous identities, values, cultures, and epistemologies (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a). Like other countries in Africa, decolonization—liberation from economic and knowledge domination from the West—remains a priority for South Africa.

The critical role of higher education in the transitional challenges facing South Africa is specified in the National Development Plan for South Africa (National Planning Commission, 2011: 261–262):

> Universities are key to a developing a nation. They play three main functions in society. Firstly, they educate and train people with high-level skills for the employment needs of the public and private sector. Secondly, universities are the dominant producers of new knowledge . . . South Africa needs knowledge that equips people for a society in constant social change. Thirdly, given the country's apartheid history, higher education provides opportunities for social mobility and simultaneously strengthens equity, social justice and democracy . . . Education empowers people to define their identity . . .

[1] I use italics to recognize these are contested terms believed to reinforce a negative and hegemonic dichotomy between dominant and less-dominant countries in the world (Hobart, 1993). The term *developing* was used by the World Bank to denote the category of low- and middle-income countries. *Developmental* refers to a deliberate strategy used by either underdeveloped or developing countries to develop themselves.

[2] Refers to Africans, Indians, and Coloreds.

As the excerpt from the national plan indicates, university education is viewed as key to creating a skilled society, producing new knowledge for nation building, and shaping identities. Within such a context, university education (including management and business education) is expected to contribute to the transformation of society by aligning with the developmental goals of the country.

South Africa's multilayered context creates differences in both the challenges faced by universities and management academics and the responses required. The dominant prescriptions for changing management and business education are inadequate where the challenge is nation building across all sectors of society. In this section, I describe the challenges confronting the higher education system and academics in management and business education in South Africa. Some are similar to those faced by academics in other postcolonial nations in Africa. My perspective is based upon 15 years as an academic at two universities in the country, the University of South Africa (a mega distance-based university) and the University of Pretoria (a residential, formerly White Afrikaans[3] language university). The first half of my academic career was in the United States.

My personal observations are accompanied by secondary data including statistics on students and staff in business schools and faculties of economic and management sciences, as well as government documents and commissioned reports relevant to understanding the unique challenges for higher education in South Africa. I begin with a brief background that describes South Africa's history and contemporary context, focusing on the effects of apartheid on the country. Next, I discuss the changes that have occurred in the higher education system during the past 21 years and the implications for universities. This is followed by an elaboration of four major challenges for management and business education: (1) improving student enrollment and graduation rates; (2) attraction, retention, and transformation of academic staff; (3) accelerating research output and impact; and (4) navigating the tensions between local and global relevance. I conclude with a discussion of interventions underway to address these challenges and also offer an agenda for management and business education academics in South Africa. This agenda attempts to traverse the complex interplay between South Africa's simultaneous postapartheid and postcolonial conditions.

## SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT AND HISTORY

South Africa's history is marked by colonization of the indigenous people, first by the Dutch and then the British. Two wars were fought between these colonial powers before a settlement was reached on the political structure of the country. Settler colonization resulted in a permanent White population in the country. Throughout all of this, the indigenous population was marginalized politically, economically, and culturally (Marx, 1998). The system of apartheid established through the election of the National Party in 1948 brought total domination and suppression of the African, Indian, and Colored populations. South Africa's population of 52 million reflects its diverse history (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Black Africans commonly referred to as Africans comprise 79% of the population, followed by Coloreds and Whites at 8.9%, while Indians represent 2.5%. *Africans* refers to the indigenous Black ethnic groups (i.e. Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Sotho, etc.). *Whites* comprise descendants of Dutch and British settlers. Descendants of the Dutch are known as Afrikaners, or may be denoted as Afrikaans speakers; while the language of the descendants of the British is English. *Coloreds* represents a mixed-race group comprised of descendants of the indigenous Khoikhoi and San people who resided in the Western Cape, as well as from mixed marriages between indigenous groups and Whites. *Indians* are descendants of slaves, indentured servants, and "passenger"[4] Indians who were later allowed in as merchants for other Indians.

When the National Party gained power, it began institutionalizing its ideological doctrine of separate development (i.e. apartheid) of the races. Apartheid was an encompassing political, economic, and social system that permeated every aspect of South African society, including higher education and employment (Marx, 1998). Repressive legislation, forced removals, brutal force, and suppression of all opposition was used to effectively control and dominate the majority African, Colored and Indian populations. Africans, Coloreds, and Indians could not attend "White" universities, only those designated for their respective racial groups. Academic staff was similarly segregated. Access to management and business degrees

[3] The language of the descendants of the Dutch settlers.

[4] Refers to Indians who came at their own expense. However, such emigration was stopped in 1914. The Indian group also includes people from South Asia.

for Africans, Coloreds, and Indians was severely affected.

At the same time, a plethora of legislation excluded these groups from managerial, professional, and skilled jobs during the years of apartheid (and even earlier). Africans could only aspire to be what was then known as "boss boys," that is, allowed only to supervise other Africans in the menial jobs they held (Human & Hofmeyr, 1985). All women were legally defined as minors and were also generally excluded from the ranks of management. Thus, the apartheid system simultaneously established a race and gender hierarchy in the workplace with White men at the apex.

After sustained civil unrest, protest, and international pressure, the apartheid government made small political concessions as well as revisions to labor legislation during the 1980s that allowed some Africans, Indians, and Coloreds access to semiskilled and management jobs (Charoux, 1986). However, only with the demise of apartheid and the election of the African National Congress under the leadership of Nelson Mandela did historically disadvantaged racial groups and women gain significant access to management education and management jobs. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the demand for management and business degrees from previously oppressed groups. However, White males continue to dominate top and senior management positions (Department of Labor, 2014).

South Africa had an average annual GDP growth rate of over 3% from 1993 to 2014 (Trading Economics, 2015). Official unemployment is currently 24%, but close to 20 million people are economically active in the informal sector (Statistics South Africa, 2015). There has been good progress in improving housing and provision of basic services denied to the majority of the population during apartheid (National Planning Commission, 2011). Yet, inequality persists on many dimensions including higher education.

## CHANGES IN NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

In 1993, prior to the end of apartheid, there were 473,000 students at 21 universities and 15 technikons (Council on Higher Education, 2004: 83). *Technikons* provided training for technicians and technologists. This binary higher education system was further divided along racial and ethnic lines consistent with the apartheid government's separate development strategy (OECD, 2008). Out of the 36 higher education institutions, 10 universities and 7 technikons were reserved for Whites divided by English and Afrikaans languages. Eight universities and 5 technikons were reserved for African students (Council on Higher Education, 2004: 59). Colored and Indian students had 2 universities and 2 technikons reserved for them. Two distance-education institutions consisting of a university and a technikon were technically open to everyone because there was no face-to-face contact between the races.

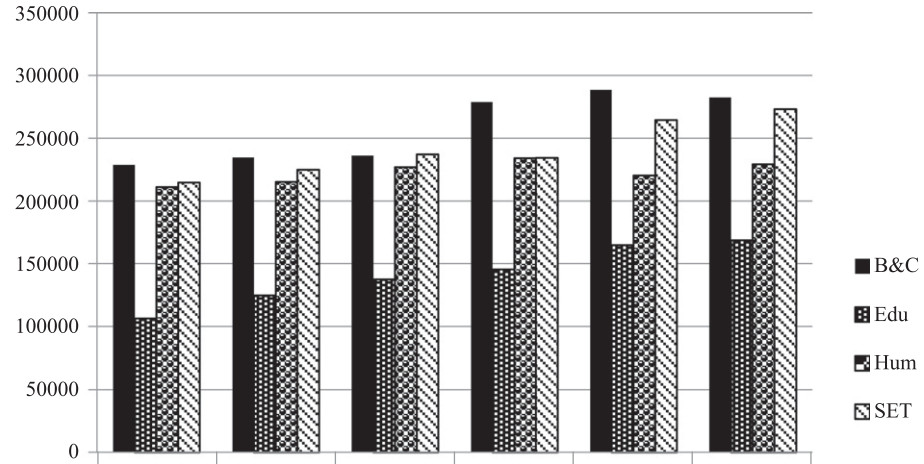
Additionally, there were 155 colleges offering professional qualifications (e.g., education, nursing, and agriculture) also divided along racial and ethnic lines. The racially divided system resulted in disparities in funding, degree offerings, human resources, knowledge production, and participation rates (Council on Higher Education, 2004). In 1993, gross participation rates were also highly skewed by race: 70% for Whites; 40% for Indians, 13% for Coloreds and 9% for Africans.[5] Africans, Indians, and Coloreds comprised 89% of the country's population at the time (Council on Higher Education, 2004: 62).

The passage of the Higher Education Act in 1997 provided the legal basis for sweeping transformation of the old apartheid-based system (Council on Higher Education, 2004). A national plan for higher education followed in 2001 that called for a total restructuring of the higher education, as well as the creation of a single coordinated equitable system with staff and student profiles reflecting the demographics of the country. The imperatives of transformation, redress, equality, and social justice became and remain dominant (Ministry of Education, 2001). Emphasis was also placed on the importance of Mode 2 knowledge production as a key driver for the attainment of socioeconomic development goals (OECD, 2008; Council on Higher Education, 2004).

A single system of higher education was achieved through mergers of formerly advantaged (historically White) and disadvantaged (historically African, Indian, and Colored) institutions. Today, there are 23 public higher education institutions consisting of 11 universities, 6 comprehensive universities, and 6 universities of technology (Council on Higher Education, 2013).[6] Two new universities will officially

[5] This is calculated as the total headcount enrollments as a percentage of the total population between the ages of 20–24.

[6] There are 50 further education and training colleges (FETs) that focus on developing intermediate-level skills for over 400,000 students.




| | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B&C | 228860 | 234588 | 236256 | 278845 | 288487 | 282299 |
| Edu | 106367 | 124689 | 137467 | 145416 | 164939 | 168608 |
| Hum | 211172 | 215250 | 226854 | 234206 | 220326 | 229184 |
| SET | 214690 | 224948 | 237166 | 234472 | 264447 | 273282 |

**FIGURE 1**

**Headcount Enrollments by Field of Study From 2007 to 2012.** *Note*. B&C = Business and Commerce; Edu = Education; Hum = Humanities; SET = Science, Engineering and Technology. *Source*: Council on Higher Education. 2014. *VitalStats: Public Higher Education*, p. 25. 2012. Pretoria, South Africa.

open their doors for enrollment in 2015. While data on private higher education institutions is hard to source, there appears to be a significant increase in private institutions, with 83 registered as of July 2013 in comparison to only 17 in 2007 (Council on Higher Education, 2011a; OECD, 2008). Only a small number of private higher education institutions are international (Council on Higher Education, 2011b).

There are 18 business schools and 27 faculties of economic and management sciences or commerce in the country. Some business schools are part of faculties, while some are independent. Business schools typically offer MBAs and doctorates, while faculties of economic and management science offer undergraduate degrees, PhDs, and master's-level degrees in fields ranging from human resource management to entrepreneurship. The need to transform the structure and eradicate inequality in higher education has created major challenges for all universities in the country, as well as for management and business education. Consequently, challenges facing academics in providing management and business education are embedded within the broader post-apartheid higher education landscape.

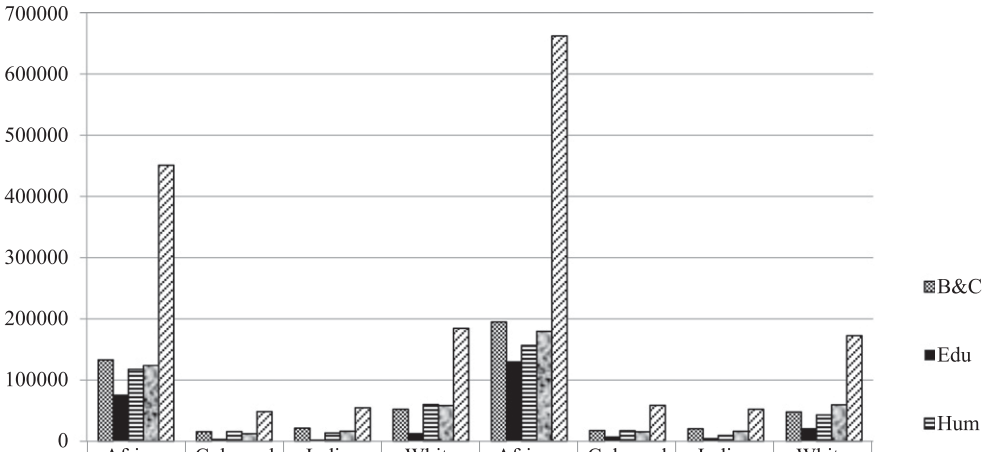
## CHALLENGES FOR MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS EDUCATION

### Improving Student Enrollment and Graduation Rates

The latest statistics reflect a doubling of headcount student enrollments at South African public institutions since 1994. In 2012, total enrollment was 953,373 comprising undergraduate, 148,035[7] postgraduate students, and 22,637 occasional students (Council on Higher Education, 2014). According to the Council on Higher Education (2004), White students continue to be concentrated at historically White institutions, while historically Black institutions remain almost exclusively Black despite growing enrollment. Business and commerce students comprised 282,299 (30%) of the total enrollment in 2012. The enrollment of business and commerce students has grown steadily over the past 6 years with a slight dip in 2012, as shown in Figure 1.

The enrollment for African students in business and commerce over the period increased by over

[7] Comprised of students enrolled for honors, master's, and doctoral degrees. Undergraduate degrees are generally 3 years of study.




| | African | Coloured | Indian | White | African | Coloured | Indian | White |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2006 | | | | 2012 | | | |
| B&C | 133118 | 15618 | 21523 | 52258 | 194985 | 17635 | 20564 | 47987 |
| Edu | 76602 | 4496 | 3198 | 13910 | 130870 | 8228 | 5704 | 21817 |
| Hum | 117586 | 15894 | 13596 | 59970 | 156675 | 17280 | 9661 | 43166 |
| SET | 123677 | 12521 | 16500 | 58342 | 179593 | 15549 | 16367 | 59683 |
| Total | 450983 | 48529 | 54817 | 184480 | 662123 | 58692 | 52296 | 172653 |

**FIGURE 2**

**Headcount Enrollments by Field of Study and Race 2007–2012.** *Note*. B&C = Business and Commerce; Edu = Education; Hum = Humanities; SET = Science, Engineering and Technology. *Source*: Council on Higher Education. 2014. *VitalStats: Public Higher Education*, p. 26. 2012. Pretoria, South Africa.

37%, while there has been a slight decline in the number of White students (See Figure 2). The percentage of women enrolled for business and commerce degrees in 2012 is 30% higher than that of males, which is similar to global trends. The government's focus on gender equality has resulted in a number of interventions targeted at attracting and supporting female students. The growing enrollment has put a strain on economic and management sciences faculties who struggle with increasing class sizes and inadequate academic staff numbers. Continued enrollment growth is expected, as South Africa's population is one of the youngest in the world with an average age of 24.5 compared to the world average of 29.1, with the 20–24 age group comprising 10.4% of the population (Statistics South Africa, 2012). My current university received 42,000 applications for the 10,250 undergraduate spaces available for 2015.

The growing enrollment has resulted in some improvement in participation rates (i.e., the percentage of age group 20–24 in public higher education institutions) for African students. The participation rate for Africans has improved to 16% in 2012 up from 9% in 1993. But for Coloreds the rate was 14%. White and Indian students had the highest participations rates of 57% and 47%, respectively (Council on Higher Education, 2014). The overall participation rate of 19% is below the 20% target set by the National Plan for Higher Education in 2001, and the international norm for a 3-year degree of 25% (Department of Higher Education & Training, 2013: 32). The participation rates are affected by many factors including inadequate funding for the growing numbers of students.[8]

Figure 3 shows the relative percentages of graduates by broad fields of study and degree level for 2010. At the undergraduate up to postgraduate below master's level, the highest proportion of graduates is in humanities and social sciences. Business, commerce, and management produced very few graduates with doctoral degrees (consistent with a historical lack of research focus in business schools and faculties of economic and management sciences). Overall, the graduation rate for Africans, Coloreds, and Indians continues to lag behind that of White students. For example, the graduation rate

[8] In 2015 the average tuition for an undergraduate B.com degree from the top-ranked universities ranged from R29,000 ($2600) to R56,000 ($5090). The National Student Financial Aid Scheme provided R9.5 billion in 2015 which will benefit about 405,000 students leaving many without the funding. Students can borrow up to R60,000 per annum through the scheme which must also cover residence fees. Fifty percent of South Africa's formal workforce earns less than R33,600 annually.

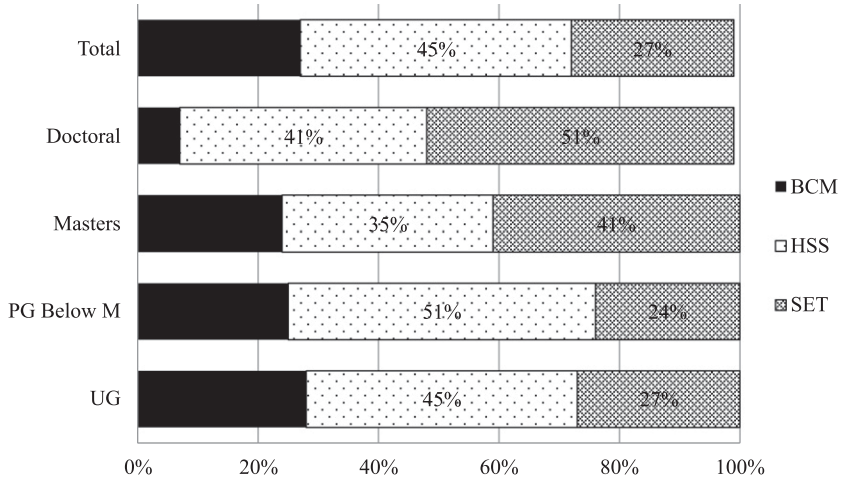



**FIGURE 3**

**System Level Graduates per Field of Study by Qualification Level for 2010.** *Note*. UG = Undergraduate; BCM = Business, Commerce, and Management; HSS = Humanities and Social Sciences; SET = Science, Engineering. and Technology. *Source*. Council on Higher Education. 2013. *Production of Graduates 2010*: 4.Pretoria, South Africa. Available at: http://www.che.ac.za/media_and_publications/monitoring-and-evaluation/production-graduates-2010 .

in 2010 for African undergraduate students was 16% compared to 22% for their White counterparts (Council on Higher Education, 2012: 9).

Economic and management science faculties are faced with large numbers of students who often do not have the requisite math preparation, largely due to the continuing legacy of inferior secondary education for the majority of African students and the general shortage of math and science teachers in the public school system. Currently, African students also do not have the opportunity to learn in their first language, as university education is generally offered in English and Afrikaans. Preparedness for university education continues to be influenced by race, but social class does play a part as African students from middle-class backgrounds are able to attend better resourced secondary schools compared to their counterparts in the impoverished townships (HESA, 2014; Ndimande, 2006).

### Attraction, Retention, and Transformation of Academic Staff

The attraction, retention, and transformation of academic staff (e.g., lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors, and professors)[9] is a major challenge. Similar to many other universities in Africa, South Africa's universities have limited academic staff capacity given the growing demand for university education. The limited capacity is one of numbers as well as qualifications. According to the most recent available data from the Department of Higher Education and Training (2013), there were 17,000 permanent (tenured) academic staff in public higher education institutions in 2011. This equates to one academic staff member for every 59 students, with some variation across universities, disciplines, and courses. One fifth of academic staff are due to retire in less than a decade, including nearly half of those in senior ranks (HESA, 2014: 1). The pipeline to replace them is inadequate.

The academic staff capacity challenge stems from several complex, interrelated causes. First, not enough academic staff hold doctoral degrees. Nationally, only 34% of academics have doctoral degrees, and in business and commerce that percentage is often lower for some universities (HESA, 2014). At my university, considered one of South Africa's top research universities, the current figure is 47% for my faculty. Second, there are just not enough students graduating with doctorates. A total of 1,420 doctoral graduates were produced in the entire country in 2010, of which 106 were in business, commerce, and management (Council on Higher Education, 2013). On a per capita comparative basis, South Africa produces 28 doctoral graduates per million of the population, while fellow BRICS country, Brazil, produces 48 per million (National Planning Commission, 2011: 278;

[9] Academic ranks in South Africa are similar to the British system. Lecturers are typically those with a master's degree, and this is the lowest rank. Appointment as a senior lecturer, which would be equivalent to an assistant professor in the U.S. system, requires a doctorate.

HESA, 2014). The figures for the United Kingdom and the United States are 288 and 201, respectively (National Planning Commission, 2011: 278). The National Development Plan calls for universities to produce over 5,000 doctoral graduates per year (100 per million) by 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2011: 278).

Although there was a significant increase in doctoral graduates from only 685 in 1996 to 1,420 in 2010 in South Africa, business, commerce, and management continues to produce the lowest percentage of doctorates in the major disciplines. Some business, commerce, and management subfields produced very few or zero doctorates in 2010 (e.g., entrepreneurship, strategy, international business). The general production of new doctorates in the field, as well as other disciplines, is hampered by the small number of senior scholars with doctorates available to supervise aspiring students. Typically, academics have teaching workloads across both undergraduate and postgraduate programs coupled with research supervision for the three degree levels. Even MBA degrees require a supervised research component. For example, when I was at the University of South Africa's Graduate School of Business Leadership, I supervised the mini-dissertation research of, on average, 6–10 MBA students annually in addition to 2–3 doctoral students. The supervision workload can be even higher for academics in the field of accounting, where a much smaller percentage of academic staff holds doctorates.

Third, increasing the academic staff pipeline is also a challenge. While growth in academic staff should come from the increasing number of the previously disadvantaged population gaining access to higher education, this has not been the case because of poverty and continuing inequality (HESA, 2014). Poor students, particularly Africans, are under tremendous pressure to seek employment after completing an undergraduate degree (Academy of Science of South Africa, 2010; HESA, 2014). Management and business graduates are heavily recruited by employers.

Eighty percent (even higher for management and business) of doctoral students attend part time, which lengthens time to completion (Academy of Science of South Africa, 2010; Mouton, 2011). Further, an overwhelming majority do not join academia. My personal experience illustrates this reality. Of the ten doctoral students who completed their degrees under my supervision or co-supervision, only two are pursuing academic careers.

Finally, the limited academic staff capacity is exacerbated by the structure of doctoral education. South African doctoral education was modeled on the classic British model of supervision that many other African countries also inherited as a result of colonialism (Dietz, Jansen, & Wadee, 2006). A doctoral degree is earned by research thesis only under what might be viewed as an "apprenticeship" model, where candidates are supervised by a supervisor and sometimes a co-supervisor and do no formal coursework (Academy of Science of South Africa, 2010). In fact, the individual supervision model continues to dominate not only in South Africa, but also the rest of the continent.

With a few notable exceptions, there has been a general reluctance to change the approach to doctoral education in South Africa (Backhouse, 2009). Research suggests the individual supervision model has made it possible for underresourced universities in Africa to offer doctoral programs (Backhouse, 2009; Szanton & Manyika, 2002). But the current structure of doctoral education creates a perplexing conundrum—more doctorates are needed, but there are not enough supervisors available to supervise.

The challenge of building academic staff capacity is not only increasing the number of academic staff but at the same time transforming the academic staff profile to ensure redress and social equity (Badat, 2009; HESA, 2010). Forty-five percent of all academic staff is African, Colored, and Indian, and 45% are female with a majority in lower academic ranks. This profile is the same for management and business. There is huge competition among universities to recruit and retain academic staff generally, but it is particularly higher in respect to employing the limited African, Indian, and Colored academic talent available. A recent study indicates that at the current rate of academic staff transformation, it would take another 43 years before equity is reached (Govinder, Zondo, & Makgoba, 2013).

### Increasing Research Output and Impact

In the last few years, there has been a steady increase in national research outputs. For the period from 2006 to 2010, publications grew at 7.19% a year, which is one of the highest growth rates after China, India, and Brazil (National Research Foundation, 2014). Nevertheless, academics across all disciplines are under tremendous pressure to accelerate research outputs. All five of South Africa's top

**TABLE 1**
**Top-Five Most Prolific African Nations in Economics and Business Research Per Web of Science 2004–2008 (Ranked by No. of Papers, % of Papers in the Field)**

| Country | No. Articles | % Articles Published in the Field | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| South Africa | 507 | 0.69 | 1 |
| Kenya | 54 | 0.07 | 2 |
| Ethiopia | 42 | 0.06 | 3 |
| Nigeria | 39 | 0.05 | 4 |
| Tunisia | 29 | 0.04 | 5 |

*Source:* Adams, J., Kin, C., & Hook, D. April 2010. *Global Research Report Africa, 6.* Leeds, UK: Thomson Reuters, UK. Reproduced with permission.

research universities, University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria, Stellenbosch, University of Witwatersrand (Wits), and the University of KwaZulu Natal (and even those outside of this group) have adopted research intensive visions that require academic staff to increase research, particularly publications in international journals. The demand for publication in international journals is fueled by the competition among the top universities to move up the global ranking lists.

Many reasons are offered for why increasing research productivity is a significant challenge across the system. First, it requires a steep climb for academics, not only in South Africa, but across the African continent because of a relatively low base. From 1996 to 2012, Africa's share of world research articles only grew from 1.2 to 2.3% (doubled), while the pace of research output in the rest of the world accelerated (Schemm, 2013). South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt produce about three quarters of Africa's total research output. Published national reports indicate that research productivity in the fields of management and business (commerce) within South Africa lags behind the sciences and other fields. The field accounted for only 7% of journal article outputs in 2013 compared to 55% for the sciences including engineering, and 32% for the humanities (Department of Higher Education & Training, 2015). According to Web of Science data (see Table 1), South Africa was ranked first among the top-five African countries in economics and business research for the period 2004–2008 (Adams, King, & Hook, 2010). Recent data from Thomson Reuters indicates South African academics authored only 66 of the 7,919 (.008%) articles published in the 174 management journals on the ISI Web of Knowledge Database in 2013. A majority of the journals on the database are based in the gobal north (primarily the U.S.), yet they are designated as international.

Second, the national system for funding research is viewed simultaneously as an impetus and hindrance to increasing research productivity. The South African government provides a research subsidy to all 23 universities. The amount of the subsidy is determined by total accredited research outputs produced annually. Universities are awarded research funds based on research units, and individual academics also accumulate funds that are placed in a research development fund or in some instances, received as a cash bonus. These incentives can range from approximately $0 to $2,700 for each accredited journal article published, with more given for international publications. Critics argue the funding system privileges quantity over quality. An easier route to accumulating research units is to publish in the more accessible national journals in the field of business and management rather than higher impact international journals. South Africa has established several national journals in practically all major disciplines, but they are cited less internationally. Only three of the eight national journals focused on management-related research are currently on international indices (e.g., ISI Web of Knowledge Database or ProQuest IBSS).

Third, research productivity and impact is hampered by the small number of PhD qualified academics, inadequate research skills training, undergraduate and postgraduate teaching demands, the structure of doctoral education, and limited infrastructure and research support. As indicated above, an overwhelming majority of doctoral and master's students attend part time, and as a consequence, few academics have the luxury of having research assistants and teaching assistants. Most academics obtained doctorates through the thesis route, which offers little opportunity for immersion in the broad body of knowledge within a field of study, or to acquire a repertoire of research methodology and statistical skills. Limited research support for attending international discipline-based conferences and the absence of strong national and continental academic networks in the field of management and business also affect access to resources. Currently, the Academy of Management has 136 (.71%) academics from 16 African countries among its 19,250 members, but few are able to attend annual conferences.

### Navigating the Tensions Between Local and Global Relevance

One of my major anxieties prior to my departure for South Africa 15 years ago was lack of knowledge about their management and business practices. I feared I was ill prepared to engage with what I thought would be a different curriculum and textbooks. As relieved as I was to find organization behavior and management texts were marginally adapted versions of well-known U.S. ones and the case studies for my leadership class were very familiar, it did not take long for me to realize there was a fundamental problem (Nkomo, 2011). Much of what was normally taught to management students in the United States was inadequate for the issues students raised in class, as well as for the management challenges confronting organizations operating in a developmental state (Mir, 2003).

I share this story to illustrate a dilemma for academics in South Africa. Despite the fact that a majority of the vision statements of universities, business schools, and faculties of economic and management sciences aspire to be locally relevant and internationally recognized for excellence, the former often becomes muted in discourse about how to attain this vision. In reality, the simultaneity of this vision is distorted by participation in the global-ranking derby for universities. Academic staff members receive regular communication about standings and the need to increase international visibility and recognition, particularly by prioritizing publication in international journals. All of this has led to a hearty debate. On one side, some argue strongly that the first priority of a developmental state is to engage in research and teaching that address local, regional, and continental needs aligned to national goals. This camp questions whether mimetic normative isomorphism is a viable strategy for a developmental state facing a significant imperative to grow the economy and to transcend the continuing effects of colonialism and apartheid on its citizens (Cloete & Bunting, 2013). On the other side, there are those who argue that all universities are part of a global system, and it is important to gain recognition and visibility within that system.

## GOVERNMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL REPONSES

Both government and institutions of higher education have embarked upon a number of strategies and interventions to address the challenges described. At the government level, the National Development Plan and a number of policy directives from the Department of Higher Education and Training clearly identify two priorities: improving doctoral education and strengthening research capacity (although there are also government initiatives to increase student access, to transform the academic staff, increase student funding, and improve academic support for undergraduate students). In terms of the second priority, the National Research Foundation (equivalent to the National Science Foundation in the U.S.) in collaboration with the Department of Science and Technology has created research career advancement fellowships for all fields that will provide opportunities for emerging researchers to be mentored and groomed for research leadership.

There is also a focus on supporting doctoral education through *bursaries* (scholarships) for full-time study as well as creating a national network of doctoral students across various fields of study. Funding is also being made available for academics without doctorates to complete their studies in the country or abroad. Priority for this funding is being given to the next generation of African, Indian, Colored, and female academics. The National Research Foundation recently launched a unique program of endowed chairs across the country in several disciplines, including economic and management sciences, to support increased research productivity and preparation and training of postgraduate students. The program allows for recruitment of leading international scholars as well. In addition to these government initiatives, many business schools and economic and management science faculties have instituted interventions to improve student access and completion, increase research capacity, and develop young academics. Some universities are offering their own full-time bursaries for postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows in specific disciplines.

Continental and South African associations are also working on various aspects of improving management and business education. The Association of African Business Schools (AABS) founded in 2005 has embarked upon interventions that have benefited business schools in South Africa as well as the rest of the continent by creating the first collaborative network. The association has 30 member schools from 11 countries with 9 from South Africa (Financial Mail, 2014). The mission of AABS focuses on improving management education in Africa to enhance the quality, relevance, and contribution of business schools to African development. As such, its primary focus has been on improving school

quality for accreditation and improving academic teaching skills.

While the AABS focuses on building networks at the institutional level, the Africa Academy of Management (AFAM) is building a network of management academics in Africa and the diaspora who teach or conduct research on management and organizations in Africa. AFAM was officially launched in 2010 by a group of scholars with a common interest in management research in Africa who caucused regularly at annual Academy of Management meetings. The goal of AFAM is to advance theory and practice about management in Africa.

Since its inception, AFAM has focused on building and strengthening the research capacity of African scholars on the continent, hosting biannual continental conferences, and growing its membership. The Academy of Management (AoM) has been supportive in all of these endeavors. The AoM Africa Conference held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2011 not only gave its members an opportunity to learn about and engage with management issues on the continent, but also had the effect of creating awareness of AFAM and its mission. The Africa Faculty Development Workshops conducted in Africa that were sponsored by AoM and delivered in collaboration with AFAM were able to assist 32 academics working on their doctorates from several African countries, including South Africa. In 2015, AFAM will launch the *Africa Journal of Management* with a goal of making it the premier scholarly outlet for theoretical and empirical research centered on indigenous and continent-focused management knowledge and practice.

## MANAGEMENT EDUCATION FOR TRANSFORMATION OF A NATION

While all of the aforementioned interventions are laudable and important, much more is needed to address the complex, paradoxical challenges facing business schools and faculties of economics and management science in South Africa, and in many respects in other African nations. The magnitude of challenges faced requires additional systemic responses ranging from a need to improve early and secondary education, increasing higher education funding as well as its structure, and strengthening vocational education options toward encouraging the removal of barriers to accreditation of private universities. The scope of planned interventions is broad, yet I believe they do not give adequate attention to the local–global relevance challenge and its effects on management education content and research. I bring this challenge to the foreground because it is a core issue for a developmental African nation trying to transform its colonial and apartheid past. The local–global relevance challenge has major implications for business and management education curricula, research focus and impact, the development of future academics, and ultimately the kinds of managers produced. My suggestions focus on an agenda for academics and administrators of business schools and faculties of economics and management science.

South African management academics and administrators have taken heed of prescriptions offered by critics of mainstream management education by incorporating topics on corporate social responsibility, governance, and sustainability (e.g., Evans, Treviño, & Weaver, 2006; Giacalone, 2007; Ghoshal, 2005; Waddock & Lozano, 2013). However, much more is necessary. Even though South Africa may technically be viewed as postcolonial and postapartheid in a temporal sense, this perspective overlooks the ways in which colonization and apartheid controlled the majority population not only politically and economically, but also through the control of subjectivity and knowledge (duToit, 2000; Fanon, 1990; Nkomo, 2011; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009). From an ontological perspective, African people were positioned as inferior human beings, and from an epistemological one, as irrational and unscientific in their knowledge of the world in contrast to those of European descent (Césaire, 1972; Said, 1979; Mudimbe, 1988). These assumptions reoccur in the modern day discourse of development agencies and media commentaries on a "rising" Africa from its naturalized deficient state (Andreasson, 2005; Cooke, 2004; *The Economist*, 2000, 2013).

It is important to understand that White minority rule in South Africa from colonial times to apartheid entrenched a denial of Africa and African agency. The gaze was toward the West, and it became the reference point for modernization and knowledge production. Consequently, we do have a management education relevancy problem in South Africa. But not in terms of a curriculum gap between theoretical and practical preparation of managers as the problem is typically defined in mainstream discussions (e.g., Chia & Holt, 2008). Our challenge is ensuring that management education is relevant to the developmental priorities of the nation as well as to erasing the negative imprints of Africa's marginalization (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a).

***"Our challenge is ensuring that management education is relevant to the developmental priorities of the nation as well as to erasing the negative imprints of Africa's marginalization (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a)."***

We must begin by fully embracing and supporting the developmental agenda of South Africa by transforming the way students understand the country's challenges, and hopefully, transform how they will feel and act as future managers and leaders. I see the primary project for us as one of foregrounding local realities. Instead of following what has been largely an outside-in approach to constructing missions and curricula, we must adopt an inside-out perspective. Postcolonial scholar Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2012: 28) describes the consequences of not making this reversal: "One may end up identifying with the foreign base as the starting point toward self, that is from another self towards one self, rather than the local being the starting point, from self to other selves." Ironically, the postcolonial organization studies literature has documented the indebtedness of management knowledge and practice to the appropriation of capital, people (i.e. slaves), as well as management ideas and practices from colonized nations during the colonial era (e.g. Cooke, 2004; Frenkel & Shenav, 2006; Prasad, 2003; Srinivas, 2013).

For the most part, the current curriculum for management education in South Africa is primarily a replication of what can be found in any Western country for reasons previously discussed. Unless management education is designed around the challenges facing South Africa and the African continent, I am afraid business schools and faculties will dwell in a catch-up mode. By suggesting the foregrounding of the local context, I am not proposing the adoption of a narrow nationalistic mind-set. Nationalism has been the undoing of many African countries that gained liberation but failed to address fundamental social and economic problems in their nations (Mbembe, 2001). Further, nationalism can easily morph into essentialism, nativism, homophobia, and xenophobia, supplanting the reality of multiple African identities inflected by ethnicity, religion, gender, class, region, sexuality, language, and culture (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2010). An inside-out path also requires skillful negotiation between being locally responsible while globally knowledgeable, about geopolitics, particularly how it influences the local.

This implies four major changes. First, chasing global rankings and international accreditations should not be the main goal (Kamola, 2011). Desired rankings may be achieved, but business schools and faculties may fail dismally in producing the kinds of managers and citizens needed to address issues of poverty, persistent unemployment, inequality, racism, and sexism, and human deprivation. Priority should be given to pursuing excellence in providing management education that will strengthen students' ability to be contributors to the transformation of South Africa and the continent (Badat, 2010). Attainment of global recognition should come as a by-product of such excellence, but it alone should not be the starting point.

Second, foregrounding the local raises the question of what kind of management knowledge is needed for building a new social order. Erasing the effects of years of neglect of the education of the country's majority population has justifiably led to an instrumental focus on students acquiring skills and technical knowledge. However the other dimension of education is nurturing subjectivity. Both must be addressed. The vision for South Africa enshrined in the new South African constitution was one of a democratic inclusive nation built on principles of social justice and equality (South African Constitution, 1996). Management education must strive to assist students in moving beyond the disabling discourses of Africa's marginality and the continuing racial divisions in South Africa sowed by apartheid. Recent research suggests closing racial divisions has been difficult for all groups and should be a priority in educating current and future managers (Bornman, 2010).

Despite calls for contextualization, creating something new and different from what has been positioned as universal management knowledge will not be easy. Too many powerful systems still push academics, particularly those on the periphery, whether they are in Africa, Latin America, or other parts of the world, to acquiesce to dominant prescriptions—from university and journal ranking systems to ingrained assumptions about the authority of researchers and management knowledge from the global north (Adler & Harzing, 2009; Alcadipani, Westwood, & Rosa, 2015; Ibarra-Colada, 2006; Meriläinen, Tienari, Thomas, & Davies, 2008; Mir, 2003). North American dominance of top management journals is slowly changing (Kirkman & Law, 2005). Yet, non-U.S. authors are still advised to "shift overt emphasis on country context to a more interesting theoretical question" as a strategy for publication success (George, 2012: 1024).

Creating a different approach in South African management education requires abandoning what has been referred to as disciplinary decadence or a tendency to ignore another discipline (or disciplines) on the basis of it (them) not being the point of view of one's discipline or field (Gordon, 2006). Relevant to my suggestion is the notion of a *decolonial* approach which by definition is transdisciplinary (Mignolo, 2007). According to Tlostanova and Mignolo (2009: 131): "a decolonial approach leads any investigation through the scholar into the world, rather than keeping him or her within the discipline." On a practical level, this would involve expanding students' conceptual resources by including topics such as African philosophy, African history from precolonial to postcolonial, South African history, postcolonialism, and global capitalism and geopolitics. As odd as this may appear, these subjects are not as readily available to university students as would be expected (Mamdani, 1998; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a).

The intent is not to impose a particular canon, but to create intellectual and practical space for management students to encounter and reflect upon different ways of knowing and understanding their own conditions as South Africans in a transnational world. Such an approach should also equip students not to assume management practices premised on a Westernized neoliberal market economy model as the inevitable or only right path for South Africa (Banerjee, Chio, & Mir, 2009). At the same time, in-service community-learning interventions should be a mandatory component of both undergraduate- and master's-level management and business degrees. Institutionalizing early on the importance of using acquired knowledge and skills to work with communities in making a difference in the lives of people should be a priority.

Third is the need to diversify missions across business schools and faculties. Everyone is carrying the difficult burden of trying to offer a range of similar degrees. My faculty offers 20 undergraduate, 18 honors, 56 master's, and 35 doctoral degree specializations. Given the limited resources both human and financial, consideration should be given to leveraging capacities across the business schools and faculties and to better align degree offerings with key industrial and social challenges in the country. For example, health care management remains a huge barrier to the government's goal of a universal health care system. Yet, there are few opportunities to obtain degrees in health care management.

A further dimension of diversification is rethinking the relative emphasis on research and teaching. Emphasis has been placed on research intensive missions with teaching missions often viewed as secondary, and sometimes implicitly less worthy. It is time to consider differentiated missions where there may be some faculties of economic and management science that focus on high-quality undergraduate teaching where pedagogical research is sanctioned. Differentiation along the lines requires serious discussions among university councils, university management, and the government, as well as collaborative conversations with the local association of deans of economic and management science faculties.

Finally, we need to do more to build and support indigenous management theory. There is already a large body of research on local issues, but not enough has been done to systematically integrate and disseminate this knowledge. We need to strengthen and better support local journals. The emphasis being placed on global rankings, particularly privileging international journals, threatens to further marginalize indigenous knowledge. The challenge of building indigenous management theory and using indigenous epistemological approaches should not be underestimated. Mbembe (2002) has noted the difficulty of engaging in the act of self-writing versus the performance of otherness in African scholarship. At the heart of this is the question, is research on topics relevant to a developmental nation like South Africa of interest to international journals? Or, drawing upon the words of the postcolonial scholar, Spivak (1988), "Can those on the margins focus their research on national problems and simultaneously speak to the universal?" I firmly believe what appears to be a paradoxical position for us in Africa can be used to disrupt and resist that which has been legitimized as universal management knowledge. It is a position from which management scholars in Africa can simultaneously reveal the problems of decontextualized management knowledge and offer new theoretical insight (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012). South Africa's experiments with new models of corporate social investment and examples of ingenious modes of entrepreneurship on the continent have the potential to provide new insights on governance and entrepreneurship.

The research we do on management and business problems in South Africa and Africa can change the boundary conditions of what is positioned to be the whole of our understanding about management concepts, theories, and practices (Nkomo, 2011). Until

muted voices join the scholarly conversation about management, it remains incomplete knowledge. The pursuit should not be publication in international business and management journals solely for the sake of attainment, but to create knowledge as a means of making a difference locally while interrupting and expanding what has been assumed to be universal management knowledge (Alcadipani & Rosa, 2011; Gantman, 2010; Jack, Calás, Nkomo, & Peltonen, 2010; Nkomo, 2011; Tsui, 2004).

***"Until muted voices join the scholarly conversation about management, it remains incomplete knowledge."***

## CONCLUSION

I have shared my perspective with full recognition of my subjective position as a management scholar born and educated in the United States. Writing this article has not been without angst. One of the reviewers of its first version reminded me of how many others (i.e. scholars of management in Africa) were relying upon me to speak for them and *"knock it out of the park*." This evoked anxiety about being seen as an authoritative voice. It is a position I will not claim. I can never fully divorce my understandings and interpretations of the challenges and solutions for transforming management and business education in South Africa from the origins of my upbringing and academic training. It is perhaps just as difficult for African-born and -educated academics to fully escape the hegemonic influence of universal conceptions of management knowledge. Perhaps, though, occupying a border position between the global north and the global south has provided a double vision for understanding how context shapes management and business education challenges.

Although this work has focused on South Arica, it also has implications for management scholars in other parts of the world, particularly those in the countries designated as "developed." The recent financial meltdown and growing inequality in many nations has been viewed by some scholars as indicators of capitalism and neoliberalism's failure to enable a better world (Adler, 2014; Edigheji, 2010; Stiglitz, 2010). There is a larger project I hope we can all be part of if we want to enable a better world (Walsh, 2011). The problems confronting South Africa have a particular national signature, but questions of inequality, racism, patriarchy, environmental degradation, and human indignity are not bounded by one nation or even one part of the world. They affect all of us.

We perhaps need to reflect upon what Quijano (2000) and others (e.g., Grosfoguel, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b) refer to as the *global matrix of coloniality* that embeds all of us in a world hierarchically organized—core–periphery, developed–underdeveloped, global north–global south, G8–G20 nations. This matrix has had consequences for the ontology and epistemology of our discipline and continues to constrict possibilities for disrupting the asymmetrical core–periphery relations that hamper our ability to think differently about the management of organizations (e.g., Westwood et al., 2014; Banerjee et al., 2009). Whether we are part of the global north or global south, there is an intimate relationship between the tasks we face as management scholars engaged in educating managers and leaders for the world. Those on the periphery face the task of asserting themselves differently into knowledge production; while those in the dominant core have to open the space for *pluriversal*, not universal knowledge (Chen, 2010: vii).

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