

Can we reinvent the MBA?

Designing an alternative professional degree for a more sustainable economy

The Master of Business Administration is the great monopolist of business education. Yet, the institution of the MBA was invented more than a century ago in a context which was vastly different from today's one. The ultimate goal of the MBA was to equip companies with new capabilities for scientific management, socializing a new generation of work supervisors into a more analytical and compartmentalized approach to daily life in the factory.

According to many observers of different stripes, many of the notions and skills learned by MBA students remain useful today, but others don't. In particular, a single-minded emphasis on measurements and maximizations might prevent MBA students to cultivate a more holistic, systemic and human-centered view of companies. A different mindset and skillset is particularly relevant for a new generation of post-industrial ventures promoted by a new breed of highly conscious entrepreneurs, often within the context of important emerging global business movements such as, among many others, B-Corporations, Teal organizations and Biomimicry/Regenerative companies.

In addition to the new demand coming from firms, more and more students are also demanding forms of business educations that be unconventional and renewed, more suitable to their socially and ecologically evolved sensitivities. Some of them might choose MBAs as fallback, due to lack of valid alternatives that are not professional technical degrees or social entrepreneurship ones.

Growing segments of society are also dissatisfied with conventional business education and management. With sustainability, social inclusion and climate change concerns gaining rapid ground in public and expert opinion, many do look with skepticism at MBAs curricula that are still steeped within the 50-year-old profit maximization paradigm. Acknowledging the current state of our world, which set of purposes should companies serve? To the benefit of whom and how? With what limits and ethics? Many observers and researchers alike demand the philosophical pillars of business as usual to be urgently revisited.

In light of these arguments I propose the creation of an open discussion group to evaluate the potential of designing a new breed of business education. Debate and brainstorming could be triggered by generative questions of this kind:

- How can we reinvent the institution of the MBA for a new generation of sustainable companies?
- Which new contents, methods, people, time frames and contexts are needed?
- What can we learn by the many education experiments currently being conducted in other conventional and unconventional settings?

Thank you for your interest, I look forward to hearing from you!

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A few interesting references

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