

Impact and Management Research:

Exploring relationships between temporality, dialogue, reflexivity and praxis

Abstract

This paper introduces the special issue focusing on Impact. We present the four papers in the special issue and synthesise their key themes, including dialogue, reflexivity and praxis. In addition, we expand on understandings of impact by exploring how, when and for whom management research creates impact and we elaborate four ideal types of impact by articulating both the constituencies for whom impact occurs and the forms it might take. We identify temporality as critical to a more nuanced conceptualization of impact and suggest that some forms of impact are performative in nature. We conclude by suggesting that management as a discipline would benefit from widening the range of comparator disciplines to include disciplines such as art, education and nursing where practice, research and scholarship are more overtly interwoven.

Keywords

Impact, Management Research, Organization, Temporality, Performativity

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How, when and for whom does management research create impact? This has been a question for decades (see Bartunek & Rynes, 2014) and one that does not seem to have been resolved (e.g. Nobel, 2016). Yet, this is clearly an important issue for many people. Hence this special issue of the *British Journal of Management*, attracted the highest number of submissions that BJM has received for a special issue. It draws together four papers that seek to address the question of how management research might create impact.

In everyday usage, impact is defined as the action of one object coming forcibly into contact with another. Fortunately, there may be limited evidence of peer-reviewed research outputs coming “forcibly” into contact with policy and practice. Our hope in this special issue is that we can suggest a richer conceptualization of impact that moves beyond this linear sense.

Bresnen and Burrell, (2012) note that over the centuries, courtly, aristocratic, ecclesiastical and mercantile patronage played a role in enabling research and practice across the arts and sciences whilst shaping the research agenda. Who, then, are the contemporary patrons of management research? And what do they get for their patronage? Our research is supported by our universities, by governmental funding agencies, by industry and occasionally by individual curiosity. Some argue that “disputes on the purpose and nature of management research appear to have taken on some of the characteristics of language games” (Romme et al., 2015: 545). Indeed, one is left to wonder whether “the only real beneficiaries of the protracted debate on relevance are those academics who make short-term publishing gains” (MacIntosh et al., 2012: 374). That said, business, management and organization research (hereafter, simply management research) has expanded in scope and scale to the extent that. Davis notes that “judging by the number of scholars involved and their volume of research output, the field of organizational research has been an incredible success” (2015: 179). Today, many thousands of articles, papers and books are published on the subject of management every year and our industry continues to expand.

But there is concern that the measurement of impact has become too academic. Websites like the Web of Science and organizations like Academic Analytics focus almost solely on citations and equivalent measures. Further, there is an implicit linear temporal sequence (i.e. impactful papers beget more impactful papers). Increasingly visible measurement systems within the university sector mean that “scholars are now much more attuned to where, when and how they publish” (Pettigrew, 2011: 348) and academic worth is judged, in considerable part, by “how many people cite your work” (Barley, 2016: 3). Whether through national audits of research excellence or individual audits for promotion or tenure, “the dominant metric remains citations” (Davis, 2015: 182). Yet this need to persuade a jury of sophisticated peers (McCloskey, 1998) of the merits of a scholarly publication has resulted in a situation where few practicing managers find research presented in a form that they find useful (Markides, 2011).

One reason for this is that it takes years of specialist training and a Ph.D. to differentiate between high quality, rigorous research and other forms of interpretation of organisational phenomena. That is, joining the language game, which is essentially an epistemology (Wittgenstein, 1953), is more-or-less a full time job. Many articles are written by academic ‘producers’ for an academic audience that is primarily constituted by other ‘producers’. One consequence is that, often, “the academic community is two or three cycles behind practice. We [practicing managers] are more use to them than they [academic researchers] are to us” (Beech et al. 2010: 1347).

Over the same time frame as management research has been evolving toward a “productionist” view (Heusinkveld et al., 2011), the nature of both organizations and organizing has changed rapidly. Entirely new industries have emerged, enabled by new technologies, and “organizations are morphing furiously into new forms” (Barley, 2016: 2). Set against this tumultuous context, a conceptualization of impact founded on a temporal sequence where ‘upstream’ research impacts on ‘downstream’ practice seems somewhat impoverished.

Aguinis, Shapiro, Antonacopoulou and Cummings (2014) address this by offering a pluralist conceptualization of scholarly impact. They identify multiple potential

stakeholders of academic scholarship, including students at various levels, corporate employees, unions, government policy makers, funding agencies, non-governmental organizations, accreditation organizations, and the media. Further, they note that each stakeholder group may evaluate scholarly impact on the basis of different criteria, which may include “citations, publications targeting practitioners, executive education, and engagement with the media” (p. 632).

The roles of journals in fostering management impact

A number of significant journals have curated special issues on the nature, purpose and relevance of management research. These include the *British Journal of Management* (2001, Vol 12), the *Academy of Management Journal* (2001, Volume 44, issue 2; 2007, Volume 50, Issues 4-5), the *Journal of Management Studies* (2009, Volume 46, Issue 3), *Organization Studies* (2010, Vol 31, Issues 9-10) and *Management Learning* (2012, Volume 43, Issue 3). In particular, the *British Journal of Management* has published influential works on the nature of management research (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998) and the double hurdles facing management researchers seeking to produce work that is both rigorous and relevant (Pettigrew, 2001). These special issues have opened up ways that management research, largely though not exclusively conducted in business schools, may inform the practice of those in managerial roles.

Journals play a more important role in management schools than professional domains such as engineering and medicine with which it is often compared and which also foster applied research. Schools of medicine and engineering tend to be populated by those professionally trained in those areas. By contrast, management research is a messy, multidisciplinary meeting place characterized by porous boundaries and populated by researchers trained in a number of root disciplines including engineering, science, economics, sociology, psychology, history, social anthropology, etc. Indeed, the authors of the four papers in the special issue are drawn from a similarly diverse range of scholarly backgrounds. Whilst Pfeffer and Fong view this as a source of paradigmatic weakness (2002) which inhibits the progress of management as a discipline, we

advocate viewing this diversity as a source of strength in an increasingly multidisciplinary world. Pettigrew's observation that there "seems to be no natural focused community for our management research" (2011: 349) is consistent with the overall diversity of the field and its constituencies. This characteristic does, of course, make discussions of impact more complicated and this special issue offers a number of contributions within that complicated landscape.

The Special Issue

In this section we introduce the four papers and their key themes. From these we construct a perspective for each of our central questions of how, when and for whom management research creates impact. Each paper responds to the call for management impact in a way that extends discussion of the topic.

Anderson, Ellwood and Coleman, "**The Impactful Academic: relational management education as an intervention for impact**" argue that the 'double hurdle' of rigour and relevance (Pettigrew, 1997) will not be overcome purely through academic publication. They question the way the 'gap' between researchers and practitioners is understood and show how a more equal relationship (Bartunek and Rynes, 2014) can be formed through what they term 'relational management education'. This approach builds a community of inquirers through all the activities in and around business schools, including publication but also teaching of full and part-time students (future and current practitioners) and executive education or consultancy. The crucial factor is that all such activities are undertaken in a scholarly fashion – that is, that they foster critical thinking rather than technical or instrumental training or application of ideas. Hence the focus is on co-creation of ideas, challenge of existing ideas and practices and being willing to disrupt and experience discomfort in the pursuance of learning. This scholarly approach entails multiple members of the community acting together with particular purposes such as: integrating forms of knowing; applying knowledge; and fostering practitioner inquiry. Thus, for Anderson, Ellwood and Coleman, impact happens over time in contexts created in business schools, which foster a scholarly engagement amongst a community who are oriented to a critical and questioning way

of being. Hence, if impact is to be analysed or assessed, it needs to be understood as a holistic form of educational engagement.

Cunliffe and Scaratti, "**Embedding Impact in Engaged Research: Developing Socially-Useful Knowledge through Dialogical Sensemaking**" note that impact is often regarded as an 'add-on' to research, a 'transfer' after the fact that is achieved through impact pathways which aim to translate academic theory into business practice. Proposing an alternative, they build on Haraway's (1988) concept of situated knowledge in which both the people in the situation and the knowledge being produced are agential in transforming the production of social theory. This contrasts with a view of theory as an abstraction either pre-formed and applied to situations or derived from analysis of, but separate to, situations. Hence Cunliffe and Scaratti also address temporality, arguing for the importance of embedding impact within the research rather than it being something that follows on afterwards. The situated approach envisages dialogical sensemaking including academics and practitioners, both of whom bring expertise, tacit and explicit knowledge of their situations to surface purposefully and put to use 'knowing from within' (Shotter, 2010). Cunliffe and Scaratti show how such dialogue can be enabled using conversational resources: 'being attuned to relationally-responsive dialogue'; 'engaging in shared reflexivity'; 'recognising arresting moments'; 'surfacing the play of tensions'; and 'creating action guiding anticipatory understandings'. Thus, for Cunliffe and Scaratti, impact necessarily occurs over time and involves engagement of both practitioners and academics in the situation in which the knowledge is being produced. This then is not a stage-based or upstream/downstream model in which research happens first and is then followed by impact. As the knowledge has the potential to influence and improve the situation, it is significant for all those concerned within the situation, including the academics whose ideas and practices are impacted by the dialogical experience.

Wells and Nieuwenhuis, "**Operationalising deep structural sustainability in business: longitudinal immersion as extensive engaged scholarship**" introduce a genuinely longitudinal perspective – in their case a period over 25 years. Building on the

ideas of Thorpe et al. (2011), they see scholarship as being generated over a career in which research, practitioner engagement, teaching and broader engagement in society all play a part. Wells and Nieuwenhuis are concerned with 'deep sustainability' in which enquiry, idea-generation and practice are entwined such that impacts are changeful, socially constructed over time, relevant to, and produced by, a particular set of circumstances and hence diverse. This is, in one sense, inconvenient for the production of traditional research papers, but can produce knowledge that is truly grounded. A longitudinal immersion with a context produces a 'scholarship as expertise' in which the knowledge bases of expertise from each person become melded and blended. That is: "Many of our ideas and insights came from managers inside the automotive industry, even though these were expressions that were in conflict with the mainstream of 'official view'." This latter point is significant for Wells and Nieuwenhuis as they overtly drawn on critical management studies and its aim to produce radical alternatives (Delbridge, 2014). Thus, for Wells and Nieuwenhuis, impact occurs as ideas and practices become co-influential over a considerable period of time. Academics and practitioners bring expertise to the scholarly approach and the outcomes occur both in practice and in the grounded generation of theory.

Sealy, Doldor, Vinnicombe, Terjesen, Anderson and Atewologon, "**Expanding the Notion of Dialogic Trading Zones for Impactful Research: The Case of Women on Boards Research**" build on Romme et. al.'s (2015) concept of dialogic trading zones as places in which academics and practitioners can collaborate over time. As with other authors in this special issue, Sealy et. al. emphasise the importance of time spent in the relationships and they trace their work over 15 years. The dialogic aspect of trading zones of exchange and co-production rely on moving away from a simplistic conception of production and consumption of knowledge (MacIntosh et. al., 2012) such that a sense of shared purpose can be established for genuine cross-fertilization. The trading zones need to offer places of psychological safety in which participants can take risks, and trade-offs are to be expected. For example, during the time of the work, the team produced 20 public reports which would not necessarily be regarded as valuable in a

strictly 'purist' view of research and yet time and thought invested in these outputs were crucial in building reputation and legitimacy of the team for others in the trading zones. Sealy et. al., argue that the understanding of who should be in the trading zone should not be restrictive and over time they have expanded beyond managers to include policy makers, companies, media, experts of various sorts and others. They also caution that not everything works and their efforts to challenge some embedded views have not borne fruit. Thus for Sealy et al., impact occurs in zones which are inclusive, where dialogue occurs to support co-production and the impact is multi-directional on practice, policy and academic outcomes.

Common themes in the papers

The actions and activities revealed in these papers suggest that there are certain underlying foundations in impactful work: dialogue; praxis; and reflexivity. Dialogue is not merely communication or an exchange of ideas, as is particularly evident in the papers by Cunliffe and Scaratti and Sealy et al. Rather, it is a process in which all participants are open to the possibility of being changed by the other, sometimes in uncomfortable and discomfiting ways. Indeed, dialogue may represent one of the methods by which one set of ideas come forcibly into contact with another. There can be positive phases of co-production, but also disagreement and ideas that do not work (e.g. Sealy et al.). Thus, the crucial thing about effective dialogue is that it takes place in relationships over time in which the 'highs and lows' can be absorbed.

Praxis is understood differently in various parts of the literature; however, the way that it appears to operate here is as the pursuit of knowledge-infused practice, undertaken purposefully for change. For all of those involved in the scholarly practice of impactful work, bringing about change in the situation is important, as also is change in the understanding of the situation. To give just two examples, the paper by Anderson et al. develops notions of "relational management education" as an intervention aimed at changing practitioners. Wells and Nieuwenhuis focus on a dialectic relationship between academic research and "the praxis of business and society."

Lastly, reflexivity is prominent in all the accounts in this special issue, though it is more explicit in some of the papers (e.g. Cunliffe & Scaratti) than others. Reflexivity is the process of critical self-questioning which facilitates the production of the self as the impactful research instrument. Theoretical knowledge is honed in traditional ways and through trying to put it to use. Working in teams with diverse others leads to developing other languages and an elaboration of the self. Critically engaging with self-knowledge to recognise boundaries and limitations and move beyond them enables new ways of thinking and acting. And this requires people to be able to be vulnerable with each other – to express a *lack* of knowledge, to act with *uncertainty* and to *risk reputation* and the self.

Therefore, underpinning dialogue, praxis and reflexivity there needs to be an ethic of engagement, which provides a psychologically safe zone for such risky behaviour (Sealy et al). Although this can be difficult to achieve, and may take many years, it is what enables us to move into the unknown – which is the basis of research, learning and innovative practice.

When considered from the perspective of an individual researcher over an extended period, this moving into the unknown can have multiple consequences. A common objective in management research is to see new ideas adopted in the practice of organizational members, and most particularly amongst managers. Those working from a critical perspective would likely differ, but concluding peer-reviewed papers with a section on implications for practice is recognisable pattern. Bartunek and Rynes (2010) offer advice on the construction of such implications for practice and some editorial policies mandate or encourage their inclusion. The combined effects of changing ideas and changing practice across and within communities of academics and practitioners characterise the historic debates and conversations which we reviewed earlier in this paper. This however, is only one dynamic and it is interwoven with another which relates to both self and other. If impact for management research is not the dictionary definition of coming forcibly into contact with another, then it surely is the exerting of influence. Yet, this very process generates reflexive and recursive

(Hibbert et al., 2010) tendencies that also change our sense of self. As researchers we both shape, and are shaped by, the formative experience of journeying into the unknown. As insights and findings emerge from our study of managing and organizing, our theories, models, explanations and advice grow and change. Inevitably, in seeking to change the world of practice, some change occurs relationally for us too. Figure 1 suggests that impactful research is likely to act generatively in these four distinct but related realms. Not all engaged research needs to take place at the precise intersection of these activities, and it is entirely legitimate to focus on one or another at a particular time.

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On Temporality and Performativity

In calling for contributions to the special issue, we did not specify a focus on temporality and performativity yet these two issues appear across each of the individual pieces.

The papers emphasize the longitudinal nature of the academic-practitioner engagement they describe. Sealy et al., for example, described how their roles with regard to trading zones evolved over time. Wells and Nieuwenhuis emphasized the importance of longitudinal immersion processes. Cunliffe and Scaratti emphasized the developmental aspect of dialogical sensemaking; it does not just happen all at once. Anderson, Ellwood and Coleman describe education as a means over time through which impact is developed; it cannot be done in one journal article. In other words, all of the papers, one way or another, incorporated issues of temporality though this was not the central focus of any of them. Further, these nascent temporal dimensions related to academic-practitioner collaboration since none of the papers characterized impact through academics simply making their work available to practitioners

These temporal insights are important and under explored in relation to engaged scholarship (e.g. Bartunek & Woodman, 2015; Albert & Bartunek, in press). The special

issue authors make important contributions by suggesting ways that impact must evolve over time, that impact is a process, not (solely) an outcome, and that it requires different participants to make their own contributions in time. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of the sequence of events. We would note that just as impact evolves in longitudinal research settings, research questions can also evolve (MacIntosh et al., 2016) in ways which might influence both impact and those being impacted.

Albert and Bartunek (in press) suggest that in such collaborative, engaged situations, several temporal dimensions may be present in addition to sequence (the orders in which events occur). These include punctuation, interval, rate, and polyphony. What is the punctuation of contributions? Do they happen only sporadically or continuously? At what intervals do they occur? Immediately? Long after a group starts? How quickly? Do contributions occur quickly after each other or after long periods of time? Does polyphony characterize them? For example, do academics and practitioners proceed across different tracks that nevertheless intersect with each other in productive ways (Bartunek, 2016)? Thus, the papers open up ways of expanding the understanding of temporal dimensions of impact.

Performativity connotes the extent to which concepts, ideas and theories produce rather than simply describe the world. There are examples where it is argued that theories in economics (Callon, 1998) and marketing (Mason et al., 2015) shape practice in ways that confirm the theories, and questions have been raised about how much they might do so in management (Abrahamson et al., 2016). What MacKensie (2007: 56) calls 'Barnesian performativity' goes further. In Barnesian performativity, there is anticipation that theories (precisely because they are abstract and general) are always and necessarily transformed through practice (Barnes, 1983). That is to say, as theories are picked-up and put to work by practicing managers, not only do they help to produce the world, but they are also changed by it (Callon, 1998). We see this in Andersons et al.'s paper, where academics and practicing-students work together to make theories meaningful in pragmatic and perplexing situation. Consequently these

two sets of actors engage in new theorizing through the process. This observation shows the performance of reflexivity as not just as an individual enactment of change but as impactful on a collective, albeit in different ways for different people.

In one sense, the four papers may be considered exercises in performativity. As noted above, taken together, they emphasize the importance of dialogue, praxis, and reflexivity. While their conclusions emphasize the value of all of these, they do so because of the experiences within the studies themselves that validate how important these dimensions are. Anderson et al. emphasize the importance of dialogue and do so based on their experience using it in teaching within a community of inquirers. Cunliffe and Scaratti 's message focuses on the *doing* of dialogical sensemaking in a way that includes reflexivity, leading them to emphasize the value of these for others. Wells and Nieuwenhuis focus on the crucial importance of dialogue and reflexivity in a sustained, longitudinal and immersive process. They describe how this happened in their own setting and make recommendations for others doing the same thing.

We would suggest that one of the values of the papers in this special issue is that, in the process of studying impact through engaged scholarship, they each included reflection on their own processes, and these in turn incorporated a performative dimension. Scholars who consider impact as something totally external may find it much more difficult to incorporate this dimension well.

For whom does management research have an impact?

We return to our earlier question" 'for whom does management research create impact'? And if it does, how and why? Although identity categories are likely to exhibit some porosity and hybridity, impact might start with people who are engaged in scholarly communities either as practitioners, academic researchers or students (for example DBA students).

The type of impact might primarily be in stimulating further theoretical development as ideas are elaborated and changed in new contexts or in managerial practice. Taking who is involved and the kind of impact achieved as organising ideas produces four ideal types of impact. Whilst the relation of theory to practice is

frequently seen as residing in the actions of practicing managers based on theoretical knowledge that mostly comes directly or indirectly out of business and management schools (Sandelands 1990; Czarniawska 1999), this is simply one form of impact. The use of particular models and frameworks which emanate from academic research is commonplace, to the point where phrases like cash-cow and balanced score card have recognizably become part of the managerial lexicon. These frameworks and models may be performative in the sense that managerial action in relation to markets and strategies is shaped by the very definition of barriers to entry, competitive advantages, etc. There are however, three other distinct ways in which academic research can come into contact with a particular community of practice (see figure 2).

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When those in the academic community are impacted by ideas which are theoretical in their orientation, one observable outcome is a pattern of subsequent citation. The consequent time lag may partially explain why some practitioners believe the academic community to be “two or three cycles behind” (Beech et al., 2010: 1347). Further, we have already noted that citation is the dominant measure of impact within the academic community despite recognising that citation can be heightened by people avowedly disagreeing with the views espoused in a heavily cited paper. Nevertheless, we readily evaluate the merits of both individuals and ideas on the basis of h-indices and other similar citation measures. Further, we have argued that such citation patterns are at least in part, performative. Some forms of outputs (e.g. review papers), in some particular outlets (e.g. typically prestigious journals) tend to receive higher citation precisely because we ascribe them higher status to begin with.

Impact may however take a different form amongst the academic community. In terms of research practices, impact may take the form of setting a research agenda within a particular field, or prescribing the adoption of particular methodologies to

further explore a phenomenon. Notably, a significant proportion of all published research concludes with suggestions for further research. At the time of writing the most recent edition of *British Journal of Management* (Volume 27, Issue 3) and every article incorporates some advice on further research. This trope is also visible in calls that direct the attention of an entire sub-field such as the practice turn, the search for microfoundations in strategy and elsewhere, the rise (and fall) of mode 2 knowledge production or the invocation to expand our use of methods that work with data sourced from ethnography to big data. Whilst such calls can also generate impact as citations, funding calls, opportunities, presidential addresses to learned societies, editorials and other communicative acts tend not to be cited straightforwardly in future research.

Finally, scholars often overlook the form of impact which relates to education and learning rather than research per se. Our universities teach students who go on to inhabit managerial roles in a range of organizational settings. The impact of research on the curricula to which we teach generates a different form of citation where students legitimate their own thinking and acting with recourse to concepts, values and modes of inquiry which they have absorbed in classroom settings. Further, those professions which are allied to management (e.g. accountancy) absorb research and reify it in the form of accreditation standards whereby the status and practice of professionals become imbued with particular concepts, practices and frameworks.

We suggest that these four ideal types of impact (set out in figure 2) interact with each other over time. Indeed, performativity, one form of impact may generate others. There are likely to be time lags and feedback loops at play which make it difficult to give a singular and definitive answer to the question with which we opened i.e. how, when and for whom does management research create impact? Rather, a processual, emergent and temporal perspective is required to see the overlaps and generative mechanisms that produce impact(s). This view of impact as a territory which can be inhabited in multiple ways suggests that we, as management researchers, need to consider how much we see ourselves engaged in a process of producing better artefacts (e.g. a new framework or model), producing better questions that shape an agenda,

bettering our individual career or shaping the educational process by which future managers are prepared for their role(s). As Lambert and Enz note, rather than being rewarded for the number of “A” journal articles written, faculty members [could] be rewarded for the impact of their research on practice and the extent to which the research can be integrated into degree program curricula and executive education programs (2015: 13).

Concluding Remarks

We believe that this special issue on impact and management research extends understanding of a phenomenon that is much more complex than sometimes realized. The papers in the special issue address dialogue, praxis and reflexivity and show how these unfold in practice, something that is typically not discussed with regard to impact. In addition, we have drawn attention to the temporal evolution and performativity of both scholarly and other forms of impact. We do so by considering the forms that this impact takes.

We acknowledge the different and potentially diffuse audiences for whom impact may, or may not, occur. Through an exposition of impact over time we problematize traditional notions of sequence such as upstream/downstream and theory/practice. Within a co-constituted impact landscape, where “the practices constituting a legitimate enactment of a popular concept vary over time, between and even within organizations, it remains unclear which iteration represents the concept” (Wilhelm and Bort, 2013: 430). Thus impact is accounted for differently by different communities on different bases and in recognising this we suggest that there are implications for the management research community, not least in the ways in which we induct and train new members of that community.

Management research has long drawn lessons from other disciplines, notably medicine and engineering (see Tranfield and Starkey, 1998). In previous decades our discipline aspired to the “idea of an ‘administrative science’ that would apply the

insights of social science to the problem of managing bureaucracies just as engineering applies the insights of natural science to design” (Davis, 2015: 179). However, there are dangers in such aspirations if they are taken to imply another version of ‘upstream-downstream’ orientation which also characterizes the distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ research. These dangers include marginalizing research that is grounded, inductively-oriented or practice-based. Many research traditions start with experiences in the field and develop more general insight and theory from there. For example, sociology or social anthropology of work may be no more or less pure or applied than similarly oriented management research. Much of the scholarship in such fields argues against hierarchical distinctions, which might inhibit the very dialogic orientation that the papers in our special issue highlight as central to impact. Whilst we might learn from medicine and engineering, we might equally learn from a range of other disciplines. Some which may be of particular interest are those that have performance or practice at their heart, such as literature, music, drama and art (Creech, 2008). For example, Adler (2015) showed how art can inspire leaders, and Styhre (2016) and Patriotta (2016) have shown what management scholars can learn from great literature.

Similarly the formative training process in fields such as education and nursing interweaves the lecture theatre with periods of observed practice and reflection in schools and hospitals, often following Schon’s (1983) model of reflective practice. These disciplines bring academic analysis to practice to work with practitioners such that performance becomes influenced by new thinking and theory can become embodied in performance (Gabor, 2013). Equally, theory picks up insight from practice. This may involve some co-production with academics and practitioners/performers together or may be undertaken over time with some meetings and working together and some work apart, and this would appear to be closer to the examples in the papers in this Special Issue than a traditional notion of ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ work.

We are struck by the fact that few business or management academics, observe their students practising management in organizational settings before offering them

critical feedback. Further, we are struck by the different language, tone and conclusions that an introduction to a special issue on impact and management research might feature were it to be written by those who foreground “manager” in their identity narrative rather than “academic”.

We close therefore with the observation that performativity theory suggests that we need to pay particular attention to how management and organization research is purposefully picked up and put to work in daily working lives. This special issue calls for and offers more nuanced understandings of how managers and policy makers come to encounter and engage with research findings and theories, and how they and other key actors transform those theories through their use: in practice (cf. MacKenzie 2006). We have suggested ways of mapping the network configurations and devices (i.e. mapping who we work with, where and how, what theories we invoke and transform, for what practical purpose), assembled to support impact occurring for specific constituents. Further, we hope to have provided a foundation for agenda setting and the identification of opportunities for new, co-constructed research programme designs for future research where impact may be *designed in* to a process of inquiry rather than designing programmes of dissemination with ‘pathways to impact’ that ‘show and tell’. This deceptively simple reversal of logic could be transformative to research practices themselves suggesting new forms of collaborative working between academics and outside constituents. Equally, we would acknowledge that anti-performativity, i.e. a deep-seated aversion towards any type of theorizing which may directly or serendipitously find some practical implications in the hands of managers, is an important touchstone for those within our community engaged in critical management studies (Fournier and Grey 2000).

We hope that this special issue represents movement toward a more holistic view of scholarship which at least acknowledges that impact might best be achieved through teaching activities rather than research. Perhaps our search for impact is

inhibited if we look exclusively in the pages of peer-reviewed journals at the expense of classrooms and curricula.

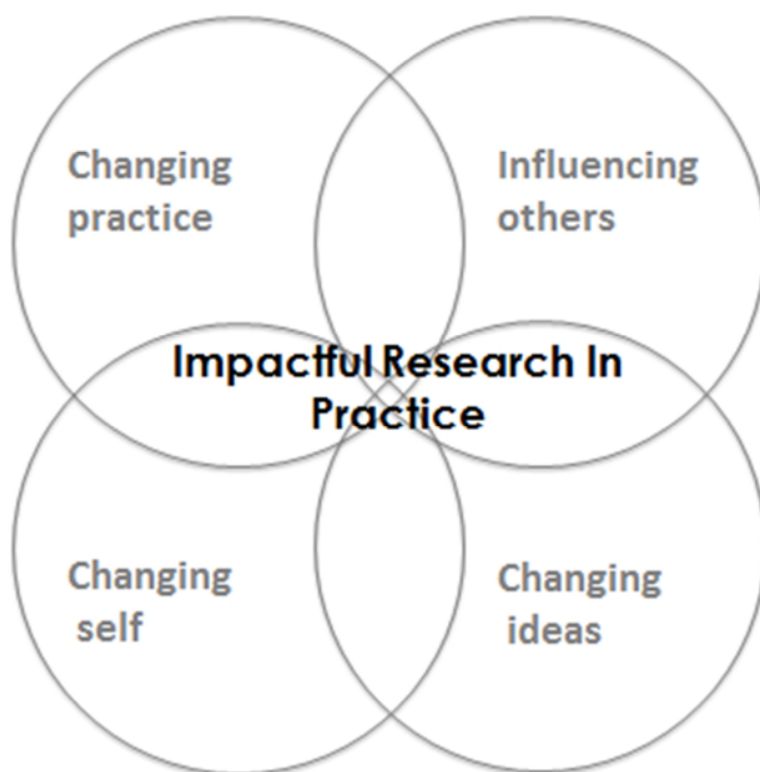


Figure 1: Intersecting activities in impactful research

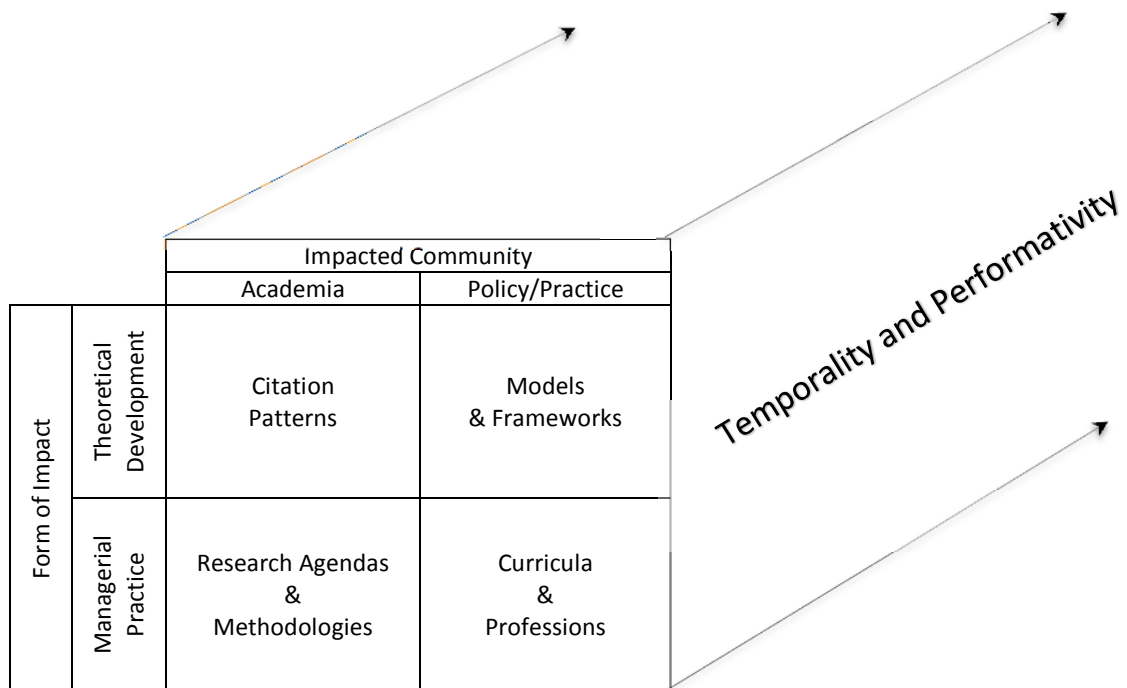


Figure 2: Impact Map

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