



Article

When managers create knowledge, they also kill creativity

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Cover Letter

Dear Editors,

I would like to thank you for taking the time to review my manuscript, and for your insightful and constructive feedback. I very much appreciate that you found my viewpoint interesting. I also appreciate your comments and suggestions, which helped me to refocus my argument and revise the manuscript.

The title of the revised manuscript is ‘When Managers Create Knowledge, They Also Kill Creativity,’ and it is based on one of your suggestions. It focuses on the increasing bureaucracy in modern universities, and the implications of this phenomenon for the creativity of faculty members. Therefore, I believe it is a very current issue that all academics face, to a larger or lesser extent.

I believe that I have addressed your concerns, and I have been able to respond to the points that you have raised, and I hope that you will find the revised Viewpoint interesting.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Konstantinos I. Kakoudakis

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Dear Reviewers. I would like to thank you for taking the time to review my manuscript, and for your insightful and constructive feedback. I very much appreciate that you found my viewpoint interesting. I also appreciate your comments and suggestions, which gave me the chance to rethink important issues in relation to succinct academic writing, and to refocus the paper's argument. I revised the manuscript according to your suggestions, and I believe that I have addressed your concerns, and I have been able to respond to the points that you have raised. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Reviewers' comments	Our response
Paper overview	
<p>You have a number of good points in there, each of which is good enough for a viewpoint. But currently they are all mashed up and so all of them get lost. Basically, I would recommend you think about which ONE point you want to convey.</p> <p>Here are the points I like: POSSIBLE TITLE: The sick scholar I think this discussion is a really important one. We are having it now with elite athletes who fall into a slump when they stop competing, but we really do not talk about the health of academics. So this also could be a viewpoint. But I would recommend backing your views with a bit more evidence, some interesting facts maybe. It would be interesting to just think about what being an academic meant 20 years ago and what it means now on a daily basis. In my view it is unrecognizable!</p> <p>POSSIBLE TITLE: Better work for google That is a follow on form the previous points. You know, I cannot recommend to smart young people to go into academic anymore. It is no longer the place for brilliant minds to be. Rather, it has become the perfect breeding ground for compliant, mediocre people. So if I were 20 again, I would go to google to change the world. You cannot change the world in a university anymore. Maybe the title should be Academic Brain Drain.</p> <p>POSSIBLE TITLE: When managers create</p>	<p>Thank you very much for your recommendations. The revised manuscript has been largely rewritten, and now focuses on one point only, and more specifically, on the third topic that you have suggested, which revolves around the increasing bureaucracy in modern universities, and the implications of this phenomenon for the creativity of faculty members.</p>

knowledge I really love this point and I think, again, it is actually not one that has been openly and professionally discussed, we just chat about it in tearooms. I think it would be fascinating to illustrate in a viewpoint the madness that any creativity that is needed to have brilliant ideas is killed by a wide array of bureaucratic processes. Well, and then there is the topic with which you start:

POSSIBLE TITLE: Universities 2020 – no place for oddballs Would it not be interesting to write a piece where you can provide evidence that most people who had brilliant ideas were not your average citizens. They were mad, they were obsessive compulsive, they had social anxieties, they were square pegs in round holes. And today universities would simply not hire them anymore. That is the real drama, is it not

Once again, I would like to thank you for your insightful and constructive feedback on my manuscript, and I hope that the response above has addressed the concerns you raised.

When managers create knowledge, they also kill creativity

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4 Over the past two decades, universities have changed direction, adopting structures,
5 strategies, and aims that resemble those of corporations. The marketisation of the
6 sector has led to managerialism, focusing primarily on profit, control and efficiency,
7 values that are inherent in the neoliberal corporate culture (Giroux, 2002).
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9 Managerialism is driven by stringent external accountability requirements, largely
10 imposed by governments, which have increased their influence over educational
11 policy in several countries (Kenny, 2009). As a result, universities have diverted their
12 attention from the core tasks of teaching, research, and contribution to society, to
13 developing policies, ticking boxes and trying to climb up rankings (Spicer, 2017).
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22 Martin (2016, pp. 7-14) calls these processes “bureaucratic nonsense” and stresses
23 that “it is difficult to think of any academic activity that has become less
24 bureaucratic.” Indeed, bureaucracy does not only comprise a significant addition to
25 our workload, interfering daily with our core duties, but it is, often, prioritised by
26 management over these duties. It could be argued that our job descriptions tend to
27 resemble those of administrators; and it often feels like the only difference being that
28 on the top of paperwork, we have also some teaching and research to do. While
29 acknowledging that there is a certain degree of exaggeration in this argument, our
30 increasing involvement with a wide array of bureaucratic processes, ranging from
31 endless emailing and meetings (about anything), to filling out endless forms and
32 reports (any kind of them), consumes a substantial amount of our time and energy,
33 holding severe implications for scholarship. Inevitably, we have less time and energy
34 for class preparation and research, while in parallel, we feel guilty that we do not
35 work hard enough, and a constant pressure to speed up (Berg and Seeber, 2016).
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50 Our usual response to these adversities includes multitasking and devoting late
51 evenings and weekends to work, often, at the expense of family and friends. This may
52 be partly due to our high ‘self-imposed’ expectations as academics, but there is no
53 doubt that it escalates because of management pressures as a result of the increasing
54 competition in the sector. But in any case, and no matter what we do, as the demands
55 from our employers are often unrealistic, there is a constant mismatch between our ‘to
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1 do' list and the time we have at our disposal. So can we really do any creative work
2 under these circumstances?
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5 Both anecdotal and research evidence confirm that we cannot; and we chat about it
6 quietly in the corridors and tearooms. Time, for example, is one of the main resources
7 that affect creativity, and work environments that do not allow time for exploration,
8 kill creativity (Amabile, 1998). Indeed, we cannot produce creative ideas when we do
9 not have available time for deep contemplative and uninterrupted thinking (e.g. Han,
10 2015) or when we do not experience a sense of timelessness as Mainemelis (2001)
11 points out. Moreover, the lack of time adds significantly to our stress levels, which, in
12 turn, has a negative impact on creative work, resulting in research that lacks creativity
13 and innovation (e.g. Miller, 2011). The same applies to the consequences of increased
14 control over creative activities. Researchers, for instance, do not have much freedom
15 any more to create knowledge as they wish. Instead, they are expected to comply with
16 decisions and guidelines of managers who do not understand the process of
17 knowledge creation (Berg and Seeber, 2016). The oxymoron is that although
18 universities emphasise bureaucracy, which, by definition, entails following a beaten
19 track, they also desire creativity, which requires freedom and 'madness', and, hence,
20 stepping off the beaten track (Hirst et al., 2011, p. 625).
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36 Arguably, the life-time works of creative people, such as pioneers in science, the arts,
37 and architecture, were not only the results of individual traits, but also of specific
38 conditions that encouraged their creativity, and allowed it to flourish. In contrast, the
39 highly bureaucratic organisational conditions in universities are particularly hostile to
40 creativity. This detachment of the modern university from the fundamentals of the
41 academic vocation is demoralising for faculty members who have the potential to
42 produce creative work, and impedes innovation, and the advancement of knowledge.
43 What happens instead is that the knowledge we were supposed to produce as
44 academics is now produced by managers, and it is neither novel nor useful, neither for
45 academia, nor for the wider community. Sadly, this reality conflicts both with the
46 principal aims of Higher Education, and the ideals that largely influenced our career
47 choices, such as passion for exploration and creative thinking that may lead to the
48 generation of new ideas and benefit society. Actually, by killing creativity,
49 bureaucracy also kills the very ideals of our vocation.
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44 [pointless-admin-teaching](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/21/universities-broke-cut-pointless-admin-teaching) , last accessed 9.9.2019.
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