



Special Issue: *The hidden curriculum of responsibility (un)learning at business schools*

Challenging the hidden curriculum: Building a lived process for responsibility in responsible management education

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Abstract

This essay argues that conceptualisations of responsibility in the responsible management education literature are generally superficial or unstated. We propose that this leads to practical understandings of responsibility being drawn from the hidden curriculum of socialised learning in the background of formal educational contexts. To disrupt this and enable critical thought and action, we argue for the integration of three perspectives that can be combined in a dynamic, lived process. First, we suggest that evidence-based management challenges us to seek out evidence to inform responsible management practice in ways that are thoughtful, critical and reflexive. Second, we argue that an interpretive approach employing philosophical hermeneutics connects responsibility to situated judgement about how we should interpret evidence available to us in the context of lived human experience in dialogue with others. Third, deconstruction reveals (aspects of) the ways in which the hidden curriculum constructs responsibility in the context of responsible management education texts and talk – and helps us to remain open to other possibilities. We integrate these three perspectives to arrive at a definition of responsibility as a lived process with implications for students, educators and the institutions they inhabit.

Keywords

Deconstruction, evidence-based management, hidden curriculum, interpretation, responsibility, responsible management education

Introduction

Despite the growing academic discourse on responsible management education (RME) over the past decade (Moosmayer et al., 2019), the meaning of *responsibility* remains vague. In published articles that have a primary focus on RME a definition is normally lacking, and there is a reliance on implicit understandings or an indirect discussion of what is involved in learning *about*

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responsibility (Laasch, 2018). The exception is Painter Morland (2015), who identifies a definition of responsibility as a form of ‘moral bookkeeping’ in which right moral actions are those that increase wellbeing, while highlighting that accounting metaphors of this kind may implicitly prioritise financial indicators over against a fuller conceptualisation of what wellbeing may mean. Beyond the RME literature, more developed definitions are offered in the fields of business ethics and leadership studies. For example, we find that the definition offered by Hibbert and Cunliffe (2015: 178) is consistent with Painter Morland (2015) and the problems with the concept that she identified; it describes responsibility as something that ‘. . . is value-based, encompassing shared ideals of societal wellbeing, moral decision-making, and a sense of accountability to others’ (see also: Doh and Stumpf, 2005; Pless and Maak, 2011).

While both definitions are helpful as a starting point for RME, their relative simplicity suggests various questions. How, for example, are we to determine or measure wellbeing? What is the role of the individual in coming to a responsible decision? And how are the voices of others involved in what may or may not be ‘shared ideals’? These questions are all related to values and norms which are usually learnt through socialisation, leading to further lines of inquiry about the hidden curriculum and what is implicit within it (Blasco, 2012; Høgdal et al., 2021 Assor and Gordon, 1987).

The hidden curriculum is what is learnt through unstructured socialisation in the learning context and ‘always has a normative or “moral” component’ (Greene, 1983: 3). It is ‘a source of unintended natural learning’ (Borges et al., 2017: 154) that is derived from the structure, values and beliefs that constitute the ‘implicit dimensions of the learning environment’ (Blasco, 2012: 308, see also Assor and Gordon, 1987). These structures, values and beliefs may also be manifest in the physical nature of the learning environment, given that – in a business school example – Jandrić and Loretto (2021) show how

. . . space is deliberately used to symbolically orientate the school, and to reflect organisational values and ideals [. . . and how it . . .] shapes student experiences relies on the student contextualisation of spatial designs and practices [. . . and . . .] student reaction to spatiality is framed by their ideal vision of business school experience. (p. 311)

The combination of implicitly communicated values through verbal, textual and physical means introduces a variety of influences and an individual level of unpredictability (Portelli, 1993), with the result that the learning outcomes derived from the hidden curriculum may therefore vary from, contradict or thwart formal curriculum goals in a given context (Sambell and McDowell, 1998). Furthermore, the hidden curriculum present in governance practices and normalised patterns and limits of individual interaction may act against the adoption of RME in developing institutions (Mousa, 2022), which means that it may not even reach the formal curriculum in such cases.

In addition to highlighting the influence and effects of the hidden curriculum and the challenges created for mainstreaming RME in business schools (Blasco, 2012), on a more general level we note the troubling lack of engagement with (or problematisation of) the concept of responsibility in RME research and academic discourse. This problem is exacerbated by vagueness in the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), the most important global reference on RME. Criticising PRME’s ‘axiological ambiguity’, Audebrand and Pepin (2022: 1) highlight how the principles invoke the importance of incorporating ‘the values of global social responsibility (Principle 2) [. . . but] fail to define and operationalize these values’. Similarly, the call to integrate sustainable development goals (SDGs) into RME programmes is complicated by the ways in which these ‘. . . incorporate trade-offs, tensions, and paradoxes [and require engagement in] systemic activism; [while coming with] emotional affect’ (Moratis and Melissen, 2022). Thus,

it is perhaps unsurprising that Hibbert and Cunliffe (2015) have argued that responsibility is not a concept that (even post-experiential) management students will easily grasp, let alone apply. This may illuminate why, notably, there continues to be a gap between awareness and action when the effects of RME are studied (Zhang and Szerencsi, 2022).

In this essay, we address these issues by proposing an argument for adopting and actively applying multiple perspectives on responsibility to challenge simplistic conceptualisations and support more thoughtful understandings of, and engagement with, the nature of responsibility. In doing so, we align with Moosmayer et al. (2019), who have argued persuasively that RME needs to equip students with a plurality of theories and enable them to take a multi-disciplinary approach to solving problems that require ethical reflection. By adopting our own approach that employs a distinct set of theoretical tools, we intend to inform debates on RME in ways that help educators influence how their students engage with, understand and apply the concept of responsibility in their varied contexts.

Our aim, therefore, is to show that engaging fully with the idea of responsibility involves researchers, educators and students in a commitment to a process, instead of the adoption of a static or simplistic definition that is absorbed through the hidden curriculum. To address this aim, the argument in this essay focusses on the application of three distinct perspectives that can offer different insights on how the concept of responsibility can be understood. Bringing those perspectives together leads to a new approach to how responsibility is (or might be) understood in education, and how it may be applied in practice with less reliance on the hidden curriculum and its unpredictable and context-dependent distortions (Greene, 1983; Portelli, 1993). The perspectives that are explored and brought together to support this argument are: (a) understanding responsibility as an aspect of evidence-based management (EBMgt) (Briner et al., 2009); (b) interpreting responsibility as a concept rooted in subjective experience, through hermeneutics (Hibbert et al., 2017; Hibbert and Cunliffe, 2015); and (c) taking a critical view of responsibility as a text, which conceals multiple understandings that can be revealed through deconstruction (Derrida, 1976, 1978, 1982). This combination of perspectives supports the construction of an understanding of responsibility which is explicit enough to be engaged with, but also supports a dynamic, lived process that avoids over-simplification.

The remainder of our essay is structured in three parts. In the next section, we set out our three perspectives on responsibility. After presenting these perspectives, we provide an integrative discussion highlighting that while the different perspectives may seem to be at odds, they can all have their place if they are brought together through reflexive practice. Finally, we explore how adopting this type of integrative position can inform developments in RME in ways that can mitigate the problems and distortions of the hidden curriculum.

Three perspectives on responsibility

We explore three alternative perspectives on the concept of responsibility, and what engaging with each means for RME. It is important to emphasise that the three perspectives – an evidence-based perspective, an interpretive perspective, and the application of deconstruction to the concept – have not been well characterised in the literature on RME. However, a need for each of these perspectives becomes evident when we consider the role of the hidden curriculum in shaping unintended learning in RME. The need for an evidence-based perspective is apparent in ongoing debates in which evidence is stark but ignored, such as in the case of climate change (Alcaraz and Thiruvattal, 2010), and in calls for an evidence-based approach to the effective delivery of RME itself (Forray and Leigh, 2012). An interpretive perspective is needed given Høgdal et al.'s (2021) identification of ' . . . misalignments between what lecturers say in relation to RME (e.g., in a syllabus) and how

students interpret the meaning of their lecturers' words' (p. 168). Thoughtful interpretive engagement is therefore important for those seeking to engage with and apply ideas of responsibility, especially in the context of the rhetoric surrounding corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its influence on thought and action (Winkler et al., 2020). Finally, deconstruction is necessary to address issues that go beyond slippage and risks of inadvertent inaction, since the constructions of power *behind* the talk of responsibility can support deliberate hypocritical divides between surface messages and intended actions, especially in relation to CSR (Esper and Barin-Cruz, 2019; Koleva and Meadows, 2021).

As we noted in the introduction, only Painter Morland (2015) has provided an explicit definition of responsibility in recent mainstream literature on RME. Others offer ways of thinking that might help us to work towards definitions. Greenberg et al. (2017) explore multiple forms but for these authors, there is no 'master definition' of responsibility. Verbos and Humphries (2015) do not explicitly define responsibility but instead see responsibility as definable in relation to its focus (for what or whom) in the context of particular institutional logics. In most scholarly work, however, the concept of responsibility is typically undefined or applied in a common-sense way, with implicit understandings from the hidden curriculum (Høgdal et al., 2021) being left to shape important debates in the field and learning outcomes in formal educational contexts. The three perspectives we advocate to challenge this dominance of the hidden curriculum do have several implicit connections to recent literature, even if these are not developed in a formal way.

First, the impact of *evidence* and the need for it in connection to how responsibility is developed and applied are alluded to by Alcaraz and Thiruvattal (2010) and Forray and Leigh (2012), but these connections do not offer or inform a particular definition. Furthermore, an evidence-based perspective on responsibility would, in any case, lead to a need to critically engage with the underlying epistemological assumptions and values in recognising and mobilising knowledge (Lamy, 2022).

Second, *interpretive applications* of the idea of responsibility are manifold. While such treatments do not provide focussed definitions of the concept of responsibility, they implicitly associate it with other RME-relevant concepts such as:

- CSR (Alcaraz and Thiruvattal, 2010; Arruda Filho, 2017; Burchell et al., 2015; Doherty et al., 2015; Godemann et al., 2014; Solitander et al., 2012),
- CSR and sustainability (Haertle and Miura, 2014; Louw, 2015; Maloni et al., 2012),
- CSR, sustainability and ethics (Forray and Leigh, 2012; Haertle et al., 2017; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2017; Kolb et al., 2017; Lavine and Roussin, 2012; Rasche and Gilbert, 2015; Storey et al., 2017) and
- Sustainability (Greenberg et al., 2017; Sobczak and Mukhi, 2016).

A small number of authors – while again not offering formal definitions – do a little more interpretive 'work' in the way they situate responsibility in relation to:

- Overlapping ethical and philosophical concepts (Beddewela et al., 2017; Cicmil and Gaggiotti, 2018; Dyllick, 2015),
- Practical reasoning (Cornuell and Hommel, 2015),
- Situated practice (Gherardi and Laasch, 2021), or
- Traditional and indigenous epistemologies, values and reasoning (Verbos and Humphries, 2015).

Third, while there is no direct engagement with the idea of *deconstruction* in the recent literature on RME, the work of Feix and Philippe (2020) – in addressing the ways in which taboos shape ambiguous narratives that inhibit action – has strong overlaps with the critical thrust of the approach. Others have also expressed critical or pluralist approaches (Burchell et al., 2015; Cicmil and Gaggiotti, 2018; Doherty et al., 2015; Dyllick, 2015; Gherardi and Laasch, 2021; Louw, 2015; Painter and Morland, 2015; Verbos and Humphries, 2015), which are at least sympathetic to the idea that there is something going on below the surface of texts and talk.

Overall, we find that the literature on RME is pregnant with the possibilities afforded by our three perspectives but does not contain enough in the way of material to shape the development and application of them in a focussed way. Our development of these three key perspectives, therefore, draws on relevant literature from outside the field of RME, to address the need for a sharper focus and to argue for the value of developing a more complex understanding of responsibility in RME that leaves less scope for the hidden curriculum to shape ineffective understandings.

Understanding responsibility as an aspect of EBMgt

EBMgt has been presented as a method of

making decisions through the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of four sources of information: practitioner expertise and judgment, evidence from the local context, a critical evaluation of the best available research evidence, and the perspectives of those people who might be affected by the decision. (Briner et al., 2009: 19)

However, despite the inclusiveness of that definition, EBMgt has typically privileged certain kinds of evidence – namely, that produced by the scientific method. Thus, EBMgt's core premise relies on 'using scientific knowledge to inform the judgment of managers and the process of decision-making in organizations' (Rousseau, 2012: xxiii). Responsibility, implicitly in an EBMgt perspective, is the use of scientific evidence to inform judgements about the right course of action to support wellbeing (c.f. Painter and Morland, 2015). When we consider how EBMgt works in practice, however, it is clear that scientific evidence is not the sole basis for forming a judgement about the most appropriate course of action.

Even when the 'right' and most responsible management decision is clear-cut from a scientific perspective, practitioners are not guided by this evidence in the absence of a number of relational factors connected to the decision maker and the context of the decision or process of interest. For example, in their study of the re-organisation of the management of a hospital emergency department, Wright et al. (2016) found that alongside the best evidence it was important to have both an 'insider' decision maker (with sufficient rationality, self-belief, determination and communication skills) and a context in which the need for change was recognised and trust in the decision maker's judgement was already established. With those factors in alignment, the transformation of the emergency department's management processes was completed effectively – with beneficial patient outcomes – when a near identical approach introduced by a management consultancy had failed to be adopted a couple of years previously. However, it is important to note that the evidence that was deployed was the same in both cases, lending support to the value of an EBMgt approach.

Nevertheless, if we expect to educate students for responsible management practice through an EBMgt perspective, we may be disappointed because of the individual, relational and contextual details that are necessary to make even a well-reasoned case persuasive. Thus, it is unsurprising that insights from a recent empirical study show that the majority of undergraduate students are not fully persuaded by an evidence-based approach to management practice, and those that *are* fully

persuaded see it as a shift in how they understand themselves rather than simply accepting the utility of the approach (Wright et al., 2018). Based on our experience and on literature debates (e.g. Learmonth, 2006; Morrell, 2008), many management educators might be uncomfortable in pushing students towards what is, effectively, a particular form of identity work or a deliberate shift in self-image to adopt EBMgt, even if they agree robust scientific evidence on responsibility-related issues (such as sustainability and climate change, for example) needs to be more widely considered and even more persuasively communicated.

The reason for reticence is offered by critics of EBMgt who argue that all management knowledge is situated (related to particular contexts), motivated (it is mobilised to serve particular interests above others) and involves ideas and concepts that are vigorously contested (e.g. Learmonth, 2006; Morrell, 2008; Tourish, 2013). It is difficult to set aside these concerns, in the context of the widespread politically motivated uses and abuses of knowledge that reach us through daily news (such as anti-vaccine campaigners deliberate misuse of data, politicians' outright lies about, and manipulation of statistics). Instead, students also need help to develop a critical, interpretive ability. Moreover, a sophisticated and complex evidence-based perspective to responsibility based in science and rationality – in contexts where common ground is sought – is not necessarily effective when the basis for what *counts* as the best-available evidence is disputed (Wright et al., 2016). This leads to the conclusion that for an EBMgt approach to contribute effectively to understandings of responsibility and the action that should follow, some complementary attention needs to be given to the interpretation(s) of responsibility and how the fulfilment of the idea can be demonstrated in a particular context.

Interpreting responsibility through hermeneutics

Philosophical hermeneutics offers perhaps the most fully developed perspective on interpretative approaches, as a distinct alternative to the scientific method. Philosophical hermeneutics ‘. . . argues that interpretation is intrinsic to human experience, and that every interpreter (that is, every individual) is historically and linguistically situated’ (Hibbert et al., 2017, and see also: Gadamer, 2004). This perspective helps us to see how the concept of responsibility is experienced subjectively through a process of interpretation that is both constrained within the framing context of particular historical tradition(s), and opened up through engagement in contemporary debate and dialogue (e.g. Hibbert et al., 2017; Vandeveld, 2010). It follows that responsibility cannot be a fully settled concept from this perspective, but rather responsibility has to be seen as a matter for interpretation about which people might arrive at an agreement through dialogue.

The meaning of responsibility that emerges in a particular context therefore depends on an open conversation that retains some boundaries, connected to the situated nature of each participant in the debate. For example, there was a wholesale re-evaluation of the nature of responsibilities across most European nations in response to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022. Values and opinions about support for (sadly, some and not all) refugees, the morality of supplying armaments, and even the legitimacy of individual participation in another nation's conflict were radically revised in a short period of time. In another example from a more managerial context, the COVID pandemic had implications for employment relations and working practices, including remote digital work in particular contexts (Eaton and Hecksher, 2021; Leonardi, 2021), effects on multiple levels of wellbeing beyond serious illness (Greenberg and Hibbert, 2020), and implications for personal, organisational and institutional responsibility for taking measures that protect ‘essential workers’ and marginalised and disadvantaged groups in society (Rouleau et al., 2021).

In some ways, these significant and highly visible examples have both illustrated the need for dialogue about responsibility (and promoted responsible action), but there is a need to capture and

preserve the theoretical principles about how we do this. Since most differences in individual circumstances (or at least the pace of change of them) will not be so radical, dialogue will be required to reveal what these circumstances are for each party and to support clearer understandings about responsibility that emerge from such insights, rather than allowing the hidden curriculum's implicit dimensions of structure, values and beliefs to guide socialised learning in less thoughtful ways (Blasco, 2012; Portelli, 1993).

Thus, basing RME on an open, dialogic perspective informed by philosophical hermeneutics (Hibbert et al., 2016, 2017) can help to overcome some of the doubts about what responsibility means. Interpretation and dialogue allow some interrogation of the otherwise unexplored contextuality, motivation and uncertainty associated with the management knowledge that we seek to use to inform responsible management practice, through active interpretation and critical discussion (Vandevelde, 2010). The interpretive perspective also admits – and indeed depends upon – a more significant role for situated judgement and expertise born of long experience (Gadamer, 2004).

An interpretive perspective on responsibility informed by open dialogue suffers, however, from some problems. These include a lack of shared traditions and the differences in the experience of interpretation through daily life (Gadamer, 2004; Hibbert et al., 2017) that are associated with divergence between how parties understand how to act on their (different interpretations of) responsibility for those whose interests are concerned. Similar issues can arise whenever stakeholders have a commitment to a bounded view, which lacks the openness that allows for a fusion of interpretive horizons (Hibbert et al., 2016) with others. Thus, a major downside of the interpretive perspective is its reliance on some shared tradition or experience as the bedrock of dialogue. This can narrow the interpretive frame when the shared context is minimal, leading to relatively conservative interpretations, which some may see as being too tied to the past and unchallenged authority. The ultimate and extreme form of the resulting conservatism is evident as fundamentalism (Ruthven, 2004). Conservatism of this kind is a poor fit for developing radical new understandings that can inform more engaged and inclusive views of responsibility. For example, if we relied on interpretive approaches alone, would their reliance on tradition and shared experience have allowed our responsibility to ensure that human rights are respected for diverse groups to have progressed as much as it has (at least in some contexts)?

Thus, although an interpretive perspective on responsibility can better accommodate subjective human experience as a basis for management practice, there is still a need for a perspective that can robustly challenge our settled understandings, to reveal unexpected or suppressed interpretations that show what or who is excluded from our dialogic exchanges. This can include a consideration of our own position as educators within the practices of responsible management and RME, and the ways in which our own participation in those practices is shaped by the contexts within which we are situated (Gherardi and Laasch, 2021). That is, there is a need for a more radical challenge to unsettle existing understandings of responsibility that may be deeply entrenched, to develop to more radical progress in responsible management practice and the approaches to education that support that.

Responsibility as/in a text for deconstruction

If we are looking for a source of radical challenge to unsettle our understandings, deconstruction provides an appropriately demanding and critical perspective. Deconstruction is a philosophy of critique developed by Jacques Derrida (see especially: Derrida, 1976, 1978, 1982). Applied to 'the practice of reading, interpreting and writing about texts', deconstruction

. . . explores the infinite play of differences in meaning mediated through socially constructed practices [and therefore] a deconstructive reading of a text calls on the reader to constantly reflect, question, and reformulate their understanding of what is happening ‘inside’ the text to construct its meaning, through the expression and suppression of difference. (Wright et al., 2020: 277, and see also Caputo, 1997).

Examples of how deconstruction can reveal the suppression of responsibility have been set out in, for example, Middleton’s (2009) deconstruction of texts addressing abuse in the Salvation Army, and Peterson and Albrecht’s (1999) deconstruction of an organisation’s maternity policy. Operationalising deconstruction (which is somewhat contentious) for use in education could be facilitated through one of the structured enquiry approaches to deconstruction surveyed by Wright et al. (2020). For example, the set of guided questions the authors provided to practitioners (to situate, disorient and re-orient understandings) enabled individuals from a wider range of organisations – from within the commercial, cultural, educational, public and third sectors – to apply an approach to deconstruction. The practitioners were also able to identify texts that were ripe for deconstruction through deploying the guided questions below (Wright et al., 2020: 282):

- (1) *What is the storyline?* orients the research participant to the basic storyline that serves to unify the text;
- (2) *Are there dichotomies?* disorients the text and the research participant’s assumptions by identifying and dismantling concepts in the text that derive power from suppressing their binary opposites;
- (3) *Are there silences?* continues the disorientation by inviting the research participant to search for and interrogate what is missing or absent from the text, including voices that have been silenced;
- (4) *What are the contradictions?* completes the disorientation by inviting the research participant’s to focus their attention on the places where the text fails to make sense, revealing contradictions and disruptions in meaning; and
- (5) *Can the story be resituated?* shifts from disorientation to reorientation by inviting the research participant to consider how the story might be resituated to resolve the conflicts made visible by previous questions.

The same textual tools, which enabled practitioners to deconstruct a wide range of texts that were significant in their organisations, could also be provided to individuals as part of their development of a critical engagement with the idea of responsibility. By focussing on text(s) that implicitly or explicitly purport to address responsibility in their (future) contexts – perhaps sustainability statements or CSR policies, or their university’s policies on student equity and social inclusion – students may be able to develop multiple plausible understandings of what responsibility might alternatively mean to inform their options for responsible management practice.

Although deconstruction provides access to plausible, hidden and suppressed alternative meanings – and in practice, allows new, plausible interpretations to be imagined – it is not without its critics. In general, such postmodern approaches, even among their ‘friends’, have raised concerns about a spiral into a view that ‘anything goes’, which obstructs consensus and shared conceptualisations that can inform action (Parker, 1995). Thus, applying deconstruction could leave (inter alia) management students with many plausible ways of understanding responsibility, but no confidence in applying their understanding in practice.

To overcome the application issues, it is worth thinking more about how ‘the expression and suppression of difference’ (Wright et al., 2020: 8) can look in practice. Different conceptual texts (Middleton, 2009) can inform how individuals in a given context construct an understanding of

their responsibility, which does not lead to a resolution of the differences (c.f. Parker, 1995). Deconstruction, therefore, adds some possibility for generating an acceptance that there are multiple ways in which responsibility can be understood and exercised. In this way, deconstruction opens up (some) space for a different dialogue. If a subsequent dialogue is to progress, it will still need to draw on evidence and interpretation to arrive at a re-constructed, shared understanding.

Discussion: responsible understandings of responsibility

This essay, to this point, has focussed on developing multiple ways of (going about) understanding responsibility, to inform perspectives for RME that are less reliant (intentionally or not) on the hidden curriculum and its distortions and unpredictability (Blasco, 2012; Høgdal et al., 2021; Portelli, 1993). Our argument has sought to show the benefits of working with all three perspectives explored earlier in the essay, despite the tensions and uncertainties that this kind of critical stance introduces (see Ellsworth, 1989). Arguably each perspective can exist in tension with the others and, in doing so, provide a challenge to superficial engagement with the concepts of responsibility and responsible management. Furthermore, Moosmayer et al. (2019) have argued that it is actually necessary for RME to work with a plurality of theories to overcome the dominance of economic theory – which is always in the background of the hidden curriculum in business schools (Parker, 2018). Our distinctive selection of theoretical perspectives fits with their approach and accords with Parker's (2018) exhortation for business schools to stop intentionally manipulating the hidden curriculum to promote 'the virtues of capitalist market managerialism [. . .] as if there were no other ways of seeing the world' (p. 46). Each of our proposed perspectives provides elements that, together, support critical thinking and answer calls to accept the paradoxes and tensions and enable action (Moratis and Melissen, 2022).

However, we acknowledge Scherer's (2018) counter-argument that

In the case of incompatible perspectives, it seems, one has three options: (1) to set priorities on one perspective and neglect the other(s); (2) to subordinate certain perspectives under the dominance of one superior perspective; or (3) to introduce a new perspective that is able to bridge the gap between incompatible theories. (p. 393)

From his perspective we have taken option (2) in favouring an interpretive stance; conceptually this sits in the middle of the other two perspectives since both of them do – as the previously cited examples from Wright et al. (2016) and Wright et al. (2020) show – at least *involve* interpretation in their practical implementation.

In any case, we argue that each of the perspectives we have included and integrated here provides useful support for thinking and action. EBMgt asks us to be objective – although that is never fully possible – and not to dismiss forms of evidence that can possibly inform responsible management practice in ways that are thoughtful, critical and reflexive. Interpretation, through philosophical hermeneutics, helps us to see our responsibility to use our situated judgement about how we should interpret the evidence available to us in the context of situated, lived human experience – and highlights the need to negotiate an understanding with others before application. Applying deconstruction can reveal (aspects of) the ways in which the hidden curriculum constructs responsibility in the context of RME texts and talk, and asks us to remain open to other plausible possibilities, in the face of evidence that conceals as it reveals, and interpretations that cannot be seen as final.

Speculatively, taking the three perspectives together, therefore, leads to a lived process centred in tension around the middle perspective. Here, managers (to be) learn that they will never be fully

certain of the limits and nature of their responsibility, but are not excused from using their situated judgement to arrive at an interpretation that questions implicit understanding and allows them to act. This way of understanding responsibility necessarily requires individual thought and action, but is inescapably connected to social contexts – the physical settings, systems and people that we are engaged with – that inform our understandings and brings others into our interpretive perspective through dialogue (Hibbert and Cunliffe, 2015; Hibbert et al., 2014). It is, therefore, understanding situated in relational practice through the processes of connection between individuals, in which they are changed along with their understandings of their responsibility.

The implications of our argument for the conceptualisation of responsibility are additions to Painter Morland's (2015) conceptualisation of the term as a form of 'moral bookkeeping', in which right moral actions are those that increase wellbeing. Such an understanding is consistent with an evidence-based perspective as perceived by a single individual. However, an interpretive perspective asks questions about how we understand what is agreed to be moral in such a conceptualisation, which requires a capacity for judgement formed through experience and refined through dialogue (Hibbert et al., 2017). To this, deconstruction adds a further nuance through asking whose interests are visible or occluded (Wright et al., 2020) in the notion of wellbeing as we elaborate below. We, therefore, seek to build on Painter Morland's (2015) work and the insights offered in our argument, to advance a new definition of responsibility:

Responsibility is a commitment to a lived process involving three dynamic elements. First, it is a commitment to the development of judgment, through engagement with evidence, experience and dialogue with others, about how one should understand the moral issues at stake in our decisions and actions as they affect others' experiences of wellbeing in our social contexts. Second, it is a commitment to continue to allow the voices of others to be heard alongside our own as we develop our understanding of such moral issues, to the point of refusing to consider any conversation about moral concerns to be finally resolved. Third, it is a commitment to plan future action on the basis of the first two processes.

For management educators, our argument about, and revised definition of, responsibility will offer three particular challenges. The first relates to the use of evidence. Although our revised definition does not prioritise an evidence-based perspective, we are not decrying or eliminating all reliance on evidence-based argument; in our current age of deliberately deceitful, populist demagogues, that would be particularly irresponsible. Instead, we are arguing that one *does* need to be able to draw on evidence, but in the context of experience and judgement. We note that this is not solely a philosophical point, for it also reflects how evidence tends to be used to effect change (Wright et al., 2016). This applies perhaps most significantly in relation to experiences of wellbeing. Eudaimonic (the condition of human flourishing and living well) and hedonic (having pleasure, feeling good) factors are important in assessing an individual's wellbeing (Capone and Petrillo, 2020; Delle Fave et al., 2011; Lui and Fernando, 2018). While such factors have been characterised and measured in distinct ways (Giuntoli et al., 2021; Henderson et al., 2014), both eudaimonic and hedonic experiences can vary significantly for individuals within the same context. Thus, how we understand our responsibility for the wellbeing of ourselves and others cannot be derived from statistical evidence in the absence of dialogue and interpretation. Further research on the relationship between the experience of wellbeing and lived-out approaches to responsibility may be helpful in developing this point further.

The second challenge relates to the endless conversation that is the consequence of deconstruction and paying attention to the multiple interests hidden in any situation. Management students are very familiar with the myth of the decisive manager, who can quickly marshal information and resources to commit to the correct line of action. How can we offer instruction that encourages instead (wherever possible) slowness, tentativeness and an acceptance that there is always residual

uncertainty? We have long focussed on developing management students' ability for critical *thinking*; to that we must add the ability to develop critical *reflexivity* that draws on experiential insights in contexts neither we nor they can foresee. By combining critical thinking and critical reflexivity, students' current conditions and how these impact on their responsibility are kept open to question rather than allowed to function as an alternative manifestation of the hidden curriculum which extends beyond formal learning environments.

The final challenge is perhaps the most fundamental. The value of developing judgement and the acceptance of care, deliberation and residual uncertainty are virtues that can be cast in a utilitarian light as appropriate managerial caution. However, making the always-present but often overlooked moral dimension of the hidden curriculum clear, and a matter of interest for management students, is perhaps the most enduring challenge. This will be an enduring difficulty due to the need to have students (at least to some extent) be aware of and question the structure and actors in their educational contexts – and that includes ourselves as educators. Thus, we need to be aware of our own role in the learning context and how we transmit the values and beliefs that constitute the 'implicit dimensions of the learning environment' (Blasco, 2012: 308), as well as how we signify the structural elements that work through us to deliver 'unintended natural learning' (Borges et al., 2017: 154), which may include physical, governance and behavioural constraints over which we have little individual control (Jandrić and Loretto, 2021; Mousa, 2022). We have a duty, as a minimum, to make these constraints and their effects clear to our students – and ourselves.

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