Identity and Learning (Not) to be Different

Deadline for submissions: March 01, 2020

Guest Editors:

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Within organizations there is a reciprocal interplay between identity work and learning. Processes of knowledge creation and learning are enabled and constrained by identity practices; concomitantly, the capacity to learn and to be knowledgeable is shaped by the identity positions available to individuals within organisations (Reed, 2018; Brown and Coupland, 2015). Increasingly, it is recognized that learning can be a process of identity regulation, with organizational strictures pertaining to learning ensuring that individuals know how they should act and who they should be.

As a result, organizational processes of learning lead some employees to feel included while others are excluded. As Rumens (2017) has argued human resource development programmes can construct identity binaries – male/female, heterosexual/homosexual that constrain the expression and performance of alternative – queer – identities. Individuals experiencing a sense of dissonance because they are perceived as different may need to learn how to 'fake it' to be part of an organization. Faking it may require individuals to work on their bodies to hide certain aspects of their embodied identity (Riach and Cutcher, 2014). Intriguingly, learning can be rendered ineffective because of conflicting identities and power inequalities (Hong and O, 2009). Equally, the nature of learning and how radical it is can relate to degrees of coping with insecurities and self-questioning (Beech et al, 2016). There are many ways that learning to belong or be different in organizations may be theorised, including (but are not limited to) hermeneutics, reflexivity, process theories, post-colonialism, feminist perspectives, queer theory, and psychoanalytic perspectives. These multiple approaches offer potential for this SI to disrupt accepted narratives about organizational learning based on the experiences of those with dominant, normative identities.

We welcome papers that open up and challenge existing ways of thinking about the relationships between learning and processes of identity work (Bell and Bridgman, 2018). We are particularly interested in papers that explore the relationships between identity, difference and learning; not only how people learn *not* to be different in organizations but also whether organizational processes and outcomes are altered by embracing difference.

Papers may wish to explore:

Identity and learning: How do people's identities influence, impede, and facilitate etc. processes of individual, group and organizational learning? Are there particular identities that promote learning and others than retard it? What are the key micro, meso- and macro-processes associated with the identity-learning nexus and what are their implications for how we understand issues centred on learning in organizations?

Management of identity: How do organizations seek to regulate employee (learning-related) identities? How do employees learn to manage their identities to conform to organizational expectations? What constraints are there on organizations' efforts to manage employees in relation to learning and identity? How do learning processes contribute to the gendering of identity?

Management identities: How do individuals learn to conform to stereotypical meanings of what it means to be a manager? How do managers self-manage conflicts between management and self-identities? How do our students learn to be managers?

Identity and resistance: What are the implications of identity clashes and conflicts for individual and collective learning? How do individuals resist attempts to manage their identities through processes of learning? How does the desire to be recognised translate into learning-related identity work?

Identity transitions: How do those who regard themselves as outsiders learn to 'be' in organizations? What is at risk when we cease to be ourselves at work? How do people transition into roles (e.g. into management roles) in different sets of circumstances, e.g. where they articulate feelings of ambivalence or nostalgia or regret?

Identity and reflexivity: How do organizational actors reflexively acknowledge the disciplinary processes of learning? How do issues of reflexivity relate to processes of learning in the context of identity formation? How might reflexivity generate an ethics of learning?

Identity and recognition: What are the consequences of conforming to learning-related norms in order to be recognized as 'good' workers, and what is the impact on those who cannot, or choose not to, conform? How are people's identities negotiated, confirmed and contested in interactions with others and what are the implications of these processes for learning in organizations?

This special issue, which includes theoretical and empirical work in relation to the relationships between identity, learning and outcomes, is consistent with the longstanding goal of *Management Learning,* to question and challenge current practice and assumptions (Easterby-Smith and Pedler, 1986). It addresses key areas of concern for those who work, manage and study in organizations and sets an agenda to take into the next decade.

Submission guidance

To discuss your article prior to submission, please contact the special issue editors: Christine Coupland c.coupland@lboro.ac.uk; Leanne Cutcher Leanne.cutcher@sydney.ac.au; Andrew D. Brown adb20@management.bath.ac.uk; Nic Beech p.n.h.beech@dundee.ac.uk

This call is open and competitive; manuscripts will be double-blind reviewed and a limited number of papers will be selected by the guest editors for publication in the special issue. Submissions must fit with the aims and scope of *Management Learning*: https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/management-learning#description as well as with this special issue call. All submissions should be made online: http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/management_learning in accordance with the journal submission guidelines.

References

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