

Something like 'Asian, Confucian, Buddhist values as a different way of looking at quality and critical education'.

These notes are a draft sketch to show the kind of things I would like to write about. I am aware of some papers I would like to quote from but are not yet for public distribution. So this will be shown to try and get permission.

My situation is that I think I work on quality systems trying to understand how learning happens in relation to this. I have tried to interest Management Learning people in quality with limited results so far although I did contribute a paper for a conference 'Management theory at work'. They seem more interested in a critique of 'managerialism'.

A recent conference on 'Connecting Learning and Critique' confirmed my impression that critical management education may not be going anywhere. The question was asked whether CME could work as a pedagogy without any claims for emancipation. It was also suggested that CME would be better positioned as a contribution to the status and legitimation of universities and business rather than make any claims about enhancing the technical performance of management.

However, one of the papers at the conference was on Wuwei Management, based on Confucian values. The project is based at the Department of Product Design Engineering, Norwegian University of Science and Technology with some help from Peter Senge from MIT. There is no reluctance to consider some practical results.

Meanwhile I have started to attend some meetings of a Deming special interest group at the Institute of Quality Assurance. There has been some discussion around how much Deming and Juran learnt from the Japanese in the 1950s. My own impression is that some of their ideas as presented in the 1980s simply have not been tried in the USA. Maybe it is not useful or possible to reconstruct this history but it would be possible to use Asian ideas to critique western approaches to quality.

Maybe 'Asian' is not the right word. There are Buddhist groups in the West such as the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. There is a Zen element in the Wuwei approach so there may be a connection. So far as I know the Wuwei project will start in Europe and America. This would be another reason to be aware of the origins of Deming and Juran but to maybe start again in working out how ideas can be applied.

One paper I am looking at is 'Metaphysics and Management: Understanding how Eastern Philosophical Assumptions shape Conceptions of Self, Action and Performance' by Robert Chia. So far I have an idea of the structure and can pick out some relevant samples. "Continuous improvement in its more authentic sense is fundamentally predicated upon the rejection of an ultimate end-point or perfect state of being."

There is a Buddhist paper that is being revised but some of the material has appeared as part of an article in Topics by Bronwen Rees on 'Organising for global change : who takes responsibility?' This includes 'Rather than attempt to draw up ethical principles...organisations need to build a process for developing a joint ethical practice- thereby enhancing and inviting true collaboration at the level of values.'

References etc on second sheet

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Learning with ISO 9000 (more on quality and possible links with learning)
<http://www.learn9.net>

Wuwei Management – An Ancient way to post-modern learning?
Mette S. Husemoen and C. Will Zhang

Mette@design.ntnu.no

From Pedagogy of Possibility to Pedagogy of Refusal
Linda Perriton and Michael Reynolds

The cultural and political meanings of management education and their implications for critical
management education
Chris Grey

The three papers above are in the proceedings of the 3rd conference ‘Connecting Learning and Critique’
Copies cost £20 from Teresa Wisniewska

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Institute of Quality Assurance
<http://www.iqa.org>

Management Theory at Work website (next conference April 2003)
<http://www.mgttheoryatwork.co.uk>

METAPHYSICS AND MANAGEMENT:
Understanding how Eastern Philosophical Assumptions shape
Conceptions of Self, Action and Performance

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Man0010.pdf from the website

<http://www.ex.ac.uk/sobe/Research/DiscussionPapersMan/Man2000/Man0010.html>

Topics from www.erconsultants.co.uk Bronwen Rees brees@dial.pipex.com
<http://www.erconsultants.co.uk/pdf1/Topics401.pdf>

Acrobat Reader from Adobe <http://www.adobe.com/acrobat>