



Teaching Conference for
Management Educators

OBTC 2016 at Walsh University **June 8th – 11th, 2016**

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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Only one document should be submitted

Submission Template for the 2016 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

Imagining Management Education as Projective Test: Insights, Possibilities and Potentialities

A projective test is a personality test constructed to reveal elements of a person's unconscious subjectivity through her response to ambiguous stimuli. Projective tests can be contrasted with objective tests in which an individual's response is evaluated relative to a correct answer or universal standard. In addition to a discussion about the meaningfulness of the metaphor of "management education as a projective test," through engagement in an experiential exercise and dialogue, participants will explore how they might employ this metaphor to reimagine their pedagogy, curricula, and ways of interacting with students to facilitate those students' ability to be effective and ethical managers.

Management Education
Metaphor
Subjectivity
Becoming

2) Format

- ☒ Activity or exercise (**the activity is to stimulate thinking and dialogue during the session, not to be used with students**)
☐ Roundtable discussion (60 minute only)
☐ General discussion session

2a) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for

- ☒ A traditional classroom
☐ An online class
☐ Either

2b) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for

- ☐ Undergraduate students
☐ Graduate students
☒ Either

3) Time Requested:

- ☐ 30 Minutes
☒ 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
☐ 90 Minutes

4) Planning Details: *Does your session require any other equipment?*

No

5) Teaching Implications:

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will explore the subjective experience of teaching and implications for student learning, by examining and discussing the results of projective testing.
- Participants will develop insights and explore possibilities and potentialities for teaching by imagining management education as a projective test.
- Participants will explore management education as a self-developmental process that facilitates the development of students' ability to become effective and authentic leaders, managers, and team and organizational members.

In our experiential session, we want to explore what insights might be gleaned about teaching through the use of the metaphor of management education as a projective test. Historically, a projective test is used in psychology to explore personality. The test (most famously the Rorschach Inkblot) requires an individual to respond to ambiguous images, words or scenes in an effort to reveal subconscious thoughts, emotions, and desires. In other words, it is constructed to reveal elements of a person's unconscious subjectivity. Projective tests are contrasted with objective tests in which an individual's response is evaluated and understood relative to a correct answer or universal standard, rather than to increase self-understanding. Objective tests comprise most of what educators use, exemplified by multiple-choice or essay tests.

Primarily, management education prescribes *how* students should *think* and *what* they should *do* to be effective, efficient, and rational managers, whether in the form of decontextualized knowledge, general principles, or morally neutral techniques and skills. However, the world of professional managers is characterized by constant change and the need for adaptation, requiring skills in responding to ambiguity and uncertainty. We argue management education should then be a self-developmental process that allows individuals to *become* an adaptive and ethical manager. "On a practical level, students understand that their organizational experiences are not abstractions nor are they lived out as generalities. Rather, they are embodied, relational and lived out in 'specificities'. The essence of an individual's organizational life is that he continuously moves through unique and contingent experiences within his body and in relation to others (Eriksen, 2012)." This highlights the central importance of understanding one's subjectivity to effectively and ethically lead and organize with others, relative to management theories, practices, or skills.

Thus, the first step in this self-developmental process of becoming a leader is to increase students' self-understanding through engaging in such activities as self-reflection and self-reflexivity (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2005). This facilitates developing a conscious understanding of who they become and how they respond to ambiguous stimuli (e.g., conflict, resistance, teaming, organizing, etc.) within the context of their lived experience. Such projective testing then provides reflection and evaluation of the consequences their responses.

Thus, rather than trying to have students absorb information or teach them to engage in certain behaviors (which may, or may not be appropriate given context and changing conditions), we focus on facilitating students' self-revelation as the basis for self-transformation. By presenting them with [ambiguous] stimuli that facilitates awareness of their habitual ways of responding, they can then examine the outcomes and effectiveness of these responses in various situations. What are the possibilities for different types of "projective testing" that may be used to develop students' subjective self-understanding to facilitate their development as leaders, managers and team and organizational members?

After all, students have been relating to and organizing with others their entire lives. In fact, in each class on an ongoing basis they are practicing relating and organizing with their classmates and professor. Thus, it is not a subject with which they are unfamiliar, with which they have little experience. In fact, they have great deal of embodied knowing, much of which is unconscious, of how to interact and organize with others, whether effective or ineffective. Having students draw on their experience makes it easier to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning (Ramsey & Fitzgibbons, 2005).

Thus, becoming an effective leader, manager, or team or organizational member is not a matter of simply learning new thoughts, behaviors, and ways of being, rather is a process that can begin with an examination of the effectiveness of one's present reactive/embodied ways of being and interacting with others. Building on what students already know and have experienced, we examine their present ways of being and interacting to determine if they are ineffective or could be improved. In this way, an exploration of and experimentation with alternative modes of being and interacting with others can take place. These experiments can then be examined and evaluated to determine intentional ways of being and interacting with others in the future. Teaching in this way for years, we continually find that the content of our courses is far more transformational, with lasting impact, when interwoven with who they are now, as well as who they want to become.

In our session, consistent with the purpose of management education being a self-developmental process that allows individuals to *become* effective and ethical managers, we seek to facilitate participants' exploration of how they might employ the metaphor of management education as a projective test to reimagine their teaching pedagogy,

curricula, and ways they interact with students. These “projective tests” are meant to highlight a different way of thinking about management education as a *self*-developmental process, rather than as the acquisition of objective information, skills, and behaviors.

6) Session Description and Plan:

We will begin the session with a brief activity, one based on the idea of “the impossible question.” This emerged several years ago as a technique used in recruiting interviews, primarily in tech firms like Microsoft, Google, and Facebook (Poundstone, 2004). Rather than merely asking technical job applicants to describe how they go about solving problems, they asked an “impossible question” for which there is no answer. Thus, by asking “How would you move Mt. Fuji?”, recruiters developed insight into how the applicant generally approached complex situations.

We'll start the session by putting attendees in small (3-4 person) groups, pose an impossible question related to teaching and pedagogy, and ask them to discuss in their groups. This is the projective test, and their experience with it, that forms the basis for our session.

We plan on letting the exercise run for approximately 10 - 15 minutes (depending on the energy of their discussions), after which we will bring the groups back together. As we do in our classes, we will then build the content of our session on the insights attendees derive from how they each approached the impossible question.

We plan to do this for 20 minutes or so. The final 20-25 minutes we will devote to Q & A because we assume attendees will want examples of how we employ projective testing in our own classrooms and, perhaps, how they might do so.

7) Application to Conference theme: How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *United in Service*?

We too rarely think of ourselves as being “in service” to students, although many educators might disagree. For us, if the content of our courses – our lectures and the texts we employ – are at the center of our classes, learning depends on how well our students absorb this material. We question whether the transference of this material to students is, indeed, a service when it is “objectively” presented with little connection to the current development of our students. We take “united in service” seriously in our continual striving to help students better understand themselves throughout the course material, rather than have them understand the material.

8) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

If this proposal is accepted, it will be the first time we present our experience (including a team-taught course using projective testing) and reflection on it in a public forum. Although we intend to build on our experience in this presentation going forward (e.g., an article submission to JME), we believe an OBTC session is the ideal place to get feedback from faculty who care deeply about teaching and learning.

Having been involved with the conference for many years – and an exploration of current research - we have not identified others who have used projective testing as a metaphor for classroom pedagogy.

References

Cunliffe, A., & Easterby-Smith, M. P. V. 2004. From reflection to practical reflexivity: experiential learning as lived experience. In ***Organizing Reflection***. (pp. 30-46). Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

Eriksen, M. 2012. "Facilitating authentic becoming." *Journal of Management Education*, 36(5), 698-736.

Poundstone, William. 2004. ***How Would You Move Mount Fuji?: Microsoft's Cult of the Puzzle -- How the World's Smartest Companies Select the Most Creative Thinkers***. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Ramsey, V.J. & Fitzgibbons, D.E. 2005. "Being in the classroom." *Journal of Management Education*, 29(2), 333-356.