## **Interdisciplinary Limits of Creative Business Education**

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### **Abstract**

This chapter investigates the disciplinary denials of subjectivities and pluriversal nature of creative business education, examining the interdisciplinary limits of its curriculum produced in response to neoliberal crisis in business education. While creative business education is depicted as an alternative way out to regain the legitimacy of mainstream business school education and its dynamism, the programmes often recycled that upholds market values of compliant culture that destroys creativity of labour and the criticality of educational process. It highlights the continuity and growth of alienation within the interdisciplinary praxis of creative business education. It argues against the use of language, methods and conceptual narratives of traditional business education within creative business education for a radical transformation of business praxis that values people, planet and society.

### **Introduction**

The business schools are transforming their curriculum to stay relevant by responding to the pedagogic and essentialist crisis faced by the compliant culture within business school educational programmes. The failure to understand, explain and offer alternatives to the real-world crisis faced by the planet and people has forced the stakeholders of higher education to change its direction. Therefore, business education is witnessing an emerging area called ‘creative business education’. In recent years, interest in ‘creative business education’ is growing within business schools, though the pedagogic interventions and radical transformation remain tentative and superficial. There are different calls to decolonise, decarbonise and humanise the curriculums for a sustainable and pluriversal knowledge tradition based on reason, science and secularism. The word ‘creativity’ is used without giving due recognition to the historical origin of ‘creative’ within ‘labour’. It is the workers who are depositories of creativity but do not get the fruits of their ‘creative’ power. The ‘creative business education’ is misappropriating the term within its promise of ‘interdisciplinarity’ by borrowing its language, methods, theories and concepts from different disciplines. Such an essentialist approach reduces the emancipatory abilities of ‘creative business education’ and its praxis as a growing knowledge tradition. It also follows Eurocentric traditions of ‘interdisciplinarity’ by bring together narrow silos of different disciplines to stay relevant and pretend to be different, new and unique.

It is central to reject the performative, Eurocentric and essentialist approach to revive ‘the social’ aspects of ‘creative business education’ curriculum where labour gets its due within its pedagogic praxis. The ‘creative business education’ curriculum needs to develop its own methods, language and theories to be independent from the failed promises of the traditional business education and its compliant knowledge traditions. It needs to address the issues and predicaments faced by people and the planet to stay relevant as an interdisciplinary project. This chapter engages with debates around ‘interdisciplinarity’ within the context of the relationship between ‘capital, labour and creativity’. It argues that creative business education and its curriculum needs to get away from the cultures around ‘efficiency, productivity and profit’ to a culture of socially meaningful business where peace, prosperity and sustainability can flourish, and risk can be minimised for people and the planet.

Historically, ‘interdisciplinarity’ emerged during 1930s (Abbott, 2001: 131–32) to overcome barriers between different subject-based departmentalisations in terms of their languages and methods of seeking new knowledge and understanding the world. Philosophically, interdisciplinarity is not “a shibboleth or a sign of one’s advanced thinking. Neither is it an incantation that will magically solve our problems. Interdisciplinary is simply a means…. interdisciplinarity constitutes an implicit philosophy of knowledge—not an ‘epistemology,’ but rather a general reflection on whether and to what degree knowledge can help us achieve the perennial goal of living the good life. It is the newest expression of a very old question” (Frodeman et al. 2010: xxxii–xxxiii). In this way, interdisciplinarity helps to overcome narrow barriers between different knowledge traditions. Transcending disciplinary boundaries and converging different disciplines, their languages and methods are twin objectives of interdisciplinary research.

### **Debates around Interdisciplinarity**

Interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and cross disciplinary approaches to research emerged to address complex issues and growing challenges in the society as traditional disciplines failed to understand, analyse and offer alternatives. Interdisciplinary studies and methods emerged in response to the disenchantment of researchers with narrow silos of compartmentalisation and fragmentation of knowledge and departmentalisation terms of subjects and topics. Interdisciplinarity is considered as an integrated approach, which can save research, teaching and learning both in institutional and non-institutional settings.

Interdisciplinarity has emerged as a way out for researchers, teachers and curriculum developers as the narrow silo of disciplinarity and departmentalization of knowledge tradition has failed to understand, analyze and reflect on everyday realities and crisis around the world. The distinctive worldview of disciplines in terms of their language, methods and theories of disciplinary singularity have failed to understand and failed to offer alternatives to recover from different forms of crisis. Such a situation led to the rise of interdisciplinary research. Medical Anthropology, Development Studies, Public Policy, Business Studies, Security Studies and Neuroeconomics are some of the classic examples of interdisciplinary research. The idea of interdisciplinarity is considered as a ‘counterculture’ by Trow (1984). The debates around interdisciplinary continues to echo in higher education institutions around the world.

From fashion business to music business, human resource management and organisational studies are some of the topics that emerges out of interdisciplinary research and teaching addressing specific issues and areas. The disciplines which failed to develop interdisciplinary research or failed to independently update their own disciplinary language, methods and theories, these disciplines are slowly varnishing from the curriculum i.e., History and Political Science. The agencies, structures, actors and market forces are also forcing some process driven subjects and topics to grow i.e., Business and Management Studies. However, interdisciplinarity as a form of shared dialogical approach requires historical, cultural and political skills to understand different issues, challenges and crisis faced by the people and the planet. In this context, there are both objective and subjective challenges to interdisciplinarity. Scholar like (Jacobs, 2013, 2009) fear that interdisciplinarity can challenge the disciplinary way of seeking knowledge. Therefore, Graff (2015) argues that interdisciplinarity is a process of undisciplining knowledge.

This rise of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and cross disciplinary research is a response to canonization of scientific revolution and its Taylorism for the growth of industrial capitalism, which has established positivist knowledge traditions. It has created a pattern of inquiry with set of tools, models and graphs within a specific laboratory like conditions that limit the scope of researcher within its number crunching empiricist knowledge tradition. Fuller (2003) has argued that disciplinarity limits the production of knowledge within a social space free from boundaries of any specific discipline. The interdisciplinary research “also convey a pervasive sense of newness and hint at tensions between applied research and fundamental problems of knowledge or theory, as well as between existing disciplines and emerging ones” (Graff, 2016:776). These tensions and contradictions can be found in the works of both advocates and opponents of interdisciplinarity (Graff, 2015; Jacobs, 2013). The essentialist and emancipatory knowledge traditions can overcome such contradictions within interdisciplinary praxis by developing language, tools and methods to reflect on everyday realities of people and planet.

Interdisciplinarity is a process of bringing together different disciplinary perspectives, languages and methods to analyse, explain and development an argument which is not possible within a single discipline (Boix-Mansilla 2005). In theoretical terms, interdisciplinarity needs to move beyond its scope of critiquing the narrow silo of disciplines, subjects and topics. It needs to engage to expand both didactic and pedagogical boundaries for a radical transformation of curriculum that reflects material and non-material realities of people by making ‘labour’ central in understanding ‘capital’ and ‘creativity’. It is labour that contains creativity that produces value for capital.

### **‘Creativity’, ‘Labour’ and ‘Capital’ in Creative Business Education curriculum**

The idea of ‘creativity’ is a form of sovereign self-expression (Abercrombie et al., 1986) in different forms of work and material revelation of inner abilities in the form of literature, mythology, music, art, cinema and science. There are attempts by intellectuals to conceptualize creativity as exceptional abilities and skills of few gifted individuals (Henry, 2001) in terms of their productivity and achievements. Such half-baked conceptualisations help in creating differences between manual and mental labour. It also contributes to separate ‘creativity’ from labour. It ignores the social, political, cultural, historical conditions that shape ‘creativity’ of labour. Such processes of separation has not only created different forms of alienation but also sustained wage inequalities around the world. This creates conditions for capital to control and domesticate ‘creative power of labour to expand its empires of profit and alienation of labour. In this way, creativity is a leitmotif of capitalism to normalise alienation and naturalise different forms of inequalities and marginalisation.

The linages of marginalisation of the creative power of labour under contemporary capitalism goes back to industrial revolution, which has not only produced commodities but also started the processes of commodification of labour in a large scale. In the process, the workers have become alienated from their own products, from themselves, from their fellow beings, and from the society as well. The capitalist co-option of labour and its creativity is historically shaped and continues to be relevant in contemporary history (Reckwitiz, 2017) in the process of accumulation. There is no limit to capitalist accumulation and creative business is a new frontier, where art is separated from artists, musicians are separated from their music, singers are separated from their songs, actors are separated from their films in the same way that manual labourers are separated from their own labour. The workers in creative industries are alienated under the capitalist co-option of creative power of labour. Bourdieu (1971), DiMaggio, (1977) and Becker (1982) have argued that there is nothing new in this process of co-optionof creativity power of labour within capitalism. The artists and workers of creative industries have always engaged with dealers, agents and brokers to sell their work. However, the contemporary capitalism has created platforms like Google, Amazons, Netflix and many other platforms that controls creative power of labour in an international scale. The contractual contract between capital and labour within creative industries manufacture the crisis of alienation as the legal regimes are created and sustained by capitalism as a system. In this way, the creative workers are complicit agents and victims of capitalist conditions of work (Huws, 2006).

Even the creative business and management educational curriculum further narrows down the concept of ‘creativity’ as problem solving, productivity and efficiency of labour under capitalism. Scholars like Guildford (1967) and Rawlinson (1981, 2001) have looked at ‘creativity’ in functionalist and essentialist terms. Cropley (2001) looks at ‘creativity’ in terms of unique qualities to innovate new technology or new ideas which gives rise to a ‘creative class of people’ (Florida, 2003). These scholars have reduced ‘creativity’ and its scope to unique ideas, intelligence and imagination to solve problems of business. Such conceptualisation is not only reductionist in its scope and outlook but also denies labour as depository of creativity. Work is creativity and every worker is a creative worker. The universal presence of creativity and its uniqueness is ignored in mainstream creative business and management education. These challenges and limitations can be managed by creative interdisciplinary collaborations (Moirano, Sánchez, Štěpánek, 2020).

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Interdisciplinarity in terms of its approach, language, methods and philosophical praxis are important to develop collective foundations of creativity Parjanen and Hyypiä (2019). Interdisciplinarity is used as a “popular strategy for innovation” (Edmondson and Harvey, 2018: 347). But there is a gap between promise and practice of interdisciplinarity when it comes to the implementation of interdisciplinary research (Timmis and Williams (2017). Interdisciplinary collaboration is central strategy to overcome the challenges of implementation. However, the interdisciplinary collaborations need to engage with both the ontological and epistemological foundations of business education for a radical transformation of its curriculum. It is possible by engaging with labour within creative industry and ensure that labour remains as central unit of analysis to understand the alienation of artists, musicians, singers, actors, photographers, dancers and many other forms of work in creative industry. Any analysis devoid of issues of labour alienation put further limitations on the interdisciplinary approach to creative business education as a project.

Methodological nonconformity is important for the growth of interdisciplinary research culture. In reality, interdisciplinarity brings together established research methods to study different issues and challenges that follow methodological conformity in an indirect way. This puts a serious challenge to the growth of interdisciplinarity in creative business education.

The philosophical praxis of creative business education is yet to be free from the positivist knowledge traditions. It lacks critical reflection on social, religious, cultural, political and economic conditions that shape both creativity and business. The positivist knowledge tradition and its practice within mainstream business education continues to influence creative business education without understanding conditions and contexts shaped by history of the past and present. The interdisciplinarity as an approach needs to engage within these philosophical gaps within business education curriculum and liberate itself from the promiscuous neoliberal knowledge traditions within mainstream business schools and its curriculums.

### **Conclusion**

In the field of creative business and management education curriculum, the idea of interdisciplinarity is yet to take a great leap forward due to various factors. Firstly, creative business management is yet to be a discipline. It continues to be a subject that borrows language from all traditional disciplines without developing it’s a coherent and critical language and methods to reflect on everyday realities of life. Secondly, the creative business management education continues to be driven by an ideologically bias knowledge foundation that serve the market forces. It talks about skills and processes without any intellectual foundations to develop critical and theoretical edge over other disciplines in terms of its knowledge traditions. Thirdly, the creative business education does not engage with labour theory of creativity and failed to offer alternatives to the crisis created by alienation among the creative masses within the market led capitalist society. Finally, creative business and management education lacks universal appeal due to its Eurocentric outlook. It lacks flexibility to incorporate non-European and pluriversal knowledge traditions that exist across the world.

The interdisciplinary limits of creative business and management education can overcome these crises by opening its scope to the wider world of critical pedagogies in different disciplines. It is important to bring back issues of labour and its alienation to the field of creative business in sports, art, cinema, music, fashion, advertisement and branding etc where labour power is commodified to seek profit. The creative business education needs to develop its mission and vision clearly and coherently without any form of servitude to capitalism and its agencies. In the world of capitalism, the creative business education and business of creativity and its flexibility in terms of working conditions and ownership over work pose a quite challenge where work histories are individualised and disconnected within an erratic work environment. Such a work environment create challenges for creative people who glorify their work in a tinsel town of creativity uncoupled from the masses. Interdisciplinary research can’t be designed by focusing on a class of people who tend to work as if they are in a leisurely profession. Therefore, all these issues are central to shape interdisciplinarity as a collective and collaborative project within creative business education curriculum.

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