CREDO’s research focus

Foundations of organization and governance

CREDO’s research is focused on what makes a good organization. This takes us directly to the study of the human person, for organization value and value adding come from the human person. This is a topic overlooked or neglected in many current studies of management and governance. It affects what is taught in business schools and what influences organisational and governance practice. It has relevance to the study of ethics.

This view was recently highlighted in a recent edition of the American Management Association’s *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, (2005, vol 4, No 1) by Sumantra Ghoshal, of the Advanced Institute of Management Research (AIM), UK and the London Business School. His view is that recent corporate collapses follow from wrong management theories being taught uncritically within business schools. Focussing on business ethics will not repair the damage, for the rot lies deeper. Most management theories are bad and need to be replaced, he maintains. He challenges Deans of schools of management education to examine themselves and the theories they teach. Current economic theories are clearly inadequate in application and in their philosophical base. He says “the ultimate goal must be to go from the pretence to the substance of knowledge. Physicists continue to seek a unifying grand theory that would combine both the particle and the wave nature of light. We too must seek the same with regard to the different and contradictory facets of human nature and organisational behaviour. But, just as such a grand unification has eluded physicists so far, so it is likely to elude us for a long time........we need to re-engage with the scholarships of integration, application and pedagogy to build management theories that are broader and richer than the reductionist and partial theories we have been developing over the past 30 years.” (Ghoshal, 2005)

Ghoshal’s call invites a serious philosophically grounded response. The economic theories he cited did not reflect an adequate or true account of the human person. For example, he maintains, they overlook the role of intentionality in ethics and human choice. In this, they overlook the nature of the human good, of terminal values, of particular goods and of the good of order.
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The ideas of Canadian philosopher and theologian, Bernard Lonergan, help us at CREDO to take up Ghoshal’s challenge to examine the base of ethics and the human good as they relate to management, organization and governance. Our research, focussed on a process model of organization and governance, takes us to us to the human person at the centre of the organization as the source of value and of value-adding. Hence we are interested in the study of the operations of thinking and of consciousness, including what is happening therein in decision and considerations of ‘the human good’.

The ‘human good’ has different dimensions and layers, such as basic human goods, particular goods and sustainable goods. These are linked to different human and stakeholder interests and will reflect differences between public and private good in government and private sector organisations.

Our foundational model can ‘ground’ a range of management theories. (Little, 1996, 2000) including current management theorists on topics such as learning, strategic management, leadership and virtue ethics.

References

