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Citation: Wall, T., Blasco, M., Nkomo, S. M., Racz, M. & Mandiola, M. (2023). In Praise of Shadows: Exploring the hidden (responsibility) curriculum. Management Learning, 54(3), pp. 291-304. doi: 10.1177/13505076231171371

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Link to published version: https://doi.org/10.1177/13505076231171371

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Editorial

Management Learning
2023, Vol. 54(3) 291–304
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DOI: 10.1177/13505076231171371
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In Praise of Shadows: Exploring the hidden (responsibility) curriculum

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Abstract
We frame this special issue on the *hidden responsibility curriculum* through the lens of Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's 1933 essay, *In Praise of Shadows*, which recognises the subtlety, modesty and dignity of shadows that are highly prized in Japanese culture. We do this to embody the themes both *present* and *absent* from the seven articles in this special issue. The articles share flecks and flickers, suggesting that (1) salient things happen in the shadows when it comes to responsibility learning – for better or worse, (2) students can play a role in illuminating and challenging the shadow sides of learning environments and (3) discernible symbols provide navigational possibilities in the shadows. Our tribute to Tanizaki reflects both the involuntary absence, in our Special Issue, of contributions beyond dominant White, Northern European perspectives and the lack of methodological apparatus that can effectively capture the implicit, shadow side of educational life – and life beyond – that evades conventional academic approaches. We also share reflections from the shadows of our own curation of this special issue, as an invite to shine a light on how curational ecosystems might be reimagined.

Keywords
Hidden curriculum, responsible management education, shadows, symbolism

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Introduction

In introducing this special issue, we draw on a lens from Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's 1933 essay, *In Praise of Shadows*. Tanizaki (2021 [1933]) offers a gentle exhortation to recognise the everyday practices that take place in the shadows and to recognise their salience and the insights that can be gained from exploring them. He writes: 'The quality that we call beauty . . . must always grow from the realities of our life, and our ancestors, forced to live in dark rooms, presently came to discover beauty in shadows, ultimately to guide shadows towards beauty's ends' (Tanizaki, 2021 [1933]: 29). Japanese artisans of old, writes Tanizaki, often finished their lacquerware pieces with silver and gold flecks that only revealed themselves in the shadows cast by candlelight. In daylight, by contrast, these pieces appeared garish and vulgar – barely worth a glance. Tanizaki uses this example to characterise the preference for 'excessive illumination' and relentless glare that characterises Western sensibilities. Instead, his writing invites full attentiveness to, and appreciation of, the gentle unfolding of moments concealed in the shadows of the everyday: the nuances and 'layers of darkness' in a lacquerware bowl of soup; the mystery of 'dim shadows within emptiness' of a traditional Japanese alcove; the translucent glow emanating from a jade-coloured sweetmeat called *yōkan* served in a lacquer dish 'within whose dark recesses its colour is barely distinguishable'; a steaming black cask of pure white rice in a dark corner, with 'every grain gleaming like a pearl'. 'Our cooking', writes Tanizaki, 'depends upon shadows and is inseparable from darkness'.

This perspective frames the articles that are included in this special issue. Our original call invited scholars to delve into that which 'is implicit and embedded in educational experiences in contrast with the formal statements about curricula and the surface features of educational interaction' (Sambell and McDowell, 1998: 391–392). Our intent was to leverage the hidden curriculum concept as a lens through which to explore why business schools are still reportedly failing to produce students with a robust sense of social responsibility (Parker, 2018). This situation remains despite the fact that strengthening students' sense of responsibility has been a key focus for teaching and research at many business schools following the 2008 financial crisis (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2022). In particular, initiatives such as the United Nations Principles of Responsible Management Education (UN PRME) have propelled a heightened focus on responsibility in curricula across the globe (Blasco, 2012, 2020; Morsing, 2022). Within this trend, responsibility learning involves 'the implicit and explicit learning and unlearning of and about responsible and irresponsible practices' (Laasch, 2018: 12), notably pertaining to ethics, sustainability, inequality, diversity and governance. However, with a few exceptions, scholars have turned to the formal curriculum in the endeavour to strengthen responsibility learning at business schools, despite evidence that this might not be the only, or even the main, influence on students' responsibility learning (e.g. Ottewill et al., 2005).

Our inspiration for embracing Tanizaki's worldview derives as much from what is absent from the seven articles of this special issue as from what is present. Drawing on Tanizaki's worldview, we conceptualise the hidden curriculum of responsibility as the subtle and often (at least partly) concealed dimensions of learning that dwell within the shadows, and are quite different in nature compared to the overt learning environment that is illuminated by the more easily measurable parameters such as curricular content, rankings and evaluations (Ratle et al., 2020). A Tanizakian worldview affirms the value of understanding the subtleties that can be glimpsed in the shadows, and resonates with Cornbleth's (1984: 29) early view that the usefulness of the hidden curriculum concept may depend on its very 'amorphousness that precludes close scrutiny'. Seen this way, the hidden curriculum becomes more an awareness – a 'state of mind' as Vallance (1980) calls it – that invites us to discern and explore implicit, omitted and taken-for-granted aspects of learning environments. This moves beyond conceiving the hidden curriculum as a 'black box' of mysterious

truths waiting to be opened (Tekian, 2009) or a means to crudely demarcate between what is obvious and what is not (Jones et al., 2023; Malam Moussa, 2015). The hidden curriculum concept can thus help to shine a light on seldom questioned truisms which rarely show up on the radar of mainstream management education research that focuses on intentional/overt aspects of the learning environment (Borges et al., 2017) and which are often portrayed as value-neutral truths (Ghoshal, 2005). And, as we will elaborate on shortly, it can also help to identify omissions. For instance, as we unfold further shortly, in the case of this special issue, we note and regret the involuntary absence of contributions beyond dominant White, Northern European perspectives which are so dominant in management learning and education literature (Jammulamadaka et al., 2021), and the lack of robust methodological apparatus that can effectively capture the implicit, shadow side of educational life that often evades conventional academic approaches (Vallance, 1980).

The contours of this article are as follows. The next section outlines the thematic flecks and flickers discernible in this special issue, highlighting novel insights in the field. We find that the articles evidence that (1) salient things happen and are happening in the shadows, (2) students can play a role in illuminating and challenging the shadow sides of learning environments and (3) discernible symbols provide navigational possibilities in the shadows. As we do so, we outline the seven articles in this special issue. Finally, we highlight the absences in this special issue, through which we invite new directions in the field.

Flecks and flickers in the shadows

Salient things happen in the shadows when it comes to responsibility learning

The first fleck and flicker in the special issue relates to what is happening in the shadows. Much hidden curriculum scholarship purports that the hidden curriculum is the implicit manifestation of capitalist norms and values in our schools, universities and business schools, capable of silently undermining even the best intentions to produce more socially responsible, critically thinking graduates. Thus, the narrative goes, if the economy calls for uncritical, docile, self-disciplined workers – ‘foot soldiers’ of capitalism as Ehrensal (2001) puts it – this is what the school will ultimately produce, irrespective of how progressive the formal curriculum may seem on the surface. If, conversely, the economy requires flexible, problem-solving, innovative thinkers who can become managers, then the educational system will also produce those. The school’s function therefore becomes reproductive of the social order (Apple, 1980). As Delmestri (2023: 457–460) remarks, ‘the most insidious form of militantism is that exerted by ‘pseudo value-free prophets’ that introduce ‘tendentious elements’ pretending to be dispassionate but advancing very specific ‘material interests’. This value-free claim can, inter alia, sabotage well-meaning attempts to diversify and decolonise business school curricula (Ghoshal, 2005; Wall, 2016; Wall and Perrin, 2015).

Guillero Merelo and Edwina Pio’s article in this special issue (2023) takes up this theme, highlighting the impossibility of value-neutral spaces; something is always at work even if it is not noticed. Here, in contrast to the extant literature which sees students as ‘the problem’ when it comes to responsible learning, the authors point out that some business schools may actually lag behind their students, some of whom are highly socially conscious and have strong aspirations towards improving society and expectations of their education in this regard. In this case, it is business schools that are failing to connect with, and deliver on, their students’ expectations. While careful not to recommend religious approaches to curriculum development, the authors highlight ‘the principle of secularism adopted decades ago as a precondition of a Western modernisation project’ as part of the hidden curriculum – an ‘imagined secular space’ that purports to be neutral but which can be difficult to navigate for thousands of our students for whom religion is a core

aspect of their identity. The authors highlight how Judaeo-Christian belief systems have informed core aspects of business and economics, including corporate social responsibility, and the way these are learned at business schools. The authors propose that a more 'human-centred' approach to curricula design, informed by the concept of eudaemonia – 'what motivates people's hearts and minds' – would be one way to connect with an increasingly diverse student body and decolonise the curriculum.

Next, Christina Schwabenland and Alexander Kofinas' article (2023) explores why equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) topics are currently still peripheral in business school curricula, and why, when they are addressed explicitly, this may inadvertently be done in ways that actually reinforce stereotypes and status differences among students rather than attenuating them. According to the authors, this makes it crucial to focus not only on what is taught but also on how it is taught. Both curricular omissions and problematic presences may, the authors claim, negatively affect how well students are prepared to deal with such issues in workplaces. The authors propose that the hidden curriculum is 'determined (at least to some extent) by motives and beliefs that may not be consciously articulated, and are thus "unthought" and yet believed to be true, or "known"'. They therefore propose the concept of 'unthought unknowns' to capture the dynamics that affect how, and whether, equality, diversity and inclusion are addressed in classrooms. Surfacing such 'unthought unknowns' is not feasible through thinking alone, but requires phantasy or symbolic expression – play in this case. Through the LEGO Serious Play methodology they leveraged, and drawing on animal metaphors – ducks, elephants and sharks – the authors reveal the hidden work, confusion, anxiety and fear associated with addressing these topics on the part of lecturers and support staff, which may hinder attempts to teach about such topics in practice. The authors explain how these affective dynamics leads to self-censoring regarding EDI topics, which points to the importance of what is not present in the hidden curriculum (and indeed the formal one) at the same level as what is.

Students can play a role in illuminating and challenging the shadow sides of learning environments

The second fleck and flicker in the special issue relates to discerning wider issues which might be lingering in the shadows, and that students can productively challenge this. Here, the literature points to how the racist foundations of capitalism in all its forms are largely ignored in business school education (Dar et al., 2021; Nkomo, 1992). As Liu et al. (2021: 107) argue, 'many in the field still treat management and organisations and knowledge about them as race-neutral', with curricula and faculty dominated and inhabited by White, often Anglo, perspectives and people, typically from the Global North. This perpetuates despite historical evidence that education has served capitalism by sustaining social stratification and inequality (Klees, 2020). Yet, the hidden curriculum has also been found to have positive, and not only pernicious, effects on student socialisation: it has, for instance, been found to promote citizenship behaviours and support student character building programmes (Gunawan et al., 2018). Blasco and Tackney (2013), for example, point out that the hidden curriculum need not always be dysfunctional in learning environments – instead, they show how a 'positive hidden curriculum' at a Danish business school can support collaboration, participation, collective accountability and independent thinking. As such, it is important not to make simplistic assumptions that the biases, prejudices and requirements of the (global) economy are automatically reflected in our learning environments. Renowned theorist of the hidden curriculum, Michael Apple (1980: 47), warns against viewing the school as a 'mirror of society' by assuming that the 'specific characteristics, behavioral traits, skills and dispositions that an economy requires of its workers' are so powerful that they determine what goes on elsewhere, including

in educational institutions. Rather, the latter are complex sites of conflicting agendas, unlearning, resistance and inertia – and the hidden curriculum can be purposefully mobilised to challenge problematic structures and dynamics.

In their article, Amir Keshtiban, Mark Gatto and Jamie Callahan (2023) take up this theme, showing how purposeful learning initiatives in business schools, that work outside the formal curriculum, can successfully challenge hegemonic structures when it comes to JEDI learning. The authors explore how university resources can be repurposed, akin to a proverbial 'Trojan Horse', to achieve visible extracurricular justice, equality, diversity and inclusion projects with students as partners. They argue that it is from such challenging, everyday forms of learning outside the formal curriculum, conceptualised as 'responsibility learning micro activism', that a positive hidden curriculum can emerge. Learning from these projects, and from the hidden curriculum they create, is shown to have impacted students' thinking and lives within and beyond the university. In addition, by engaging faculty members for feedback, the projects have created a positive impact on the formal curriculum too. Consequently, the authors are hopeful that these changes in the formal and the hidden curricula have the potential to counter the transient nature of the student body and seep into future students' lives too at the university.

In the same light, Uracha Chatrakul na Ayudha, Michelle Edmondson, America Harris and Fabien Littel (2023) stand as a student-educator group devoted to challenging and confronting the consciously 'unnoticed' aspects of business school hidden curriculum. They claim that the ways of doing and knowledge production in academic practices, produce and reproduce social injustice and inequalities. They challenge responsible management learning by proposing an alternative practice to traditional modes of writing and research, that is capable of articulating 'responsibility learning-in-action'. To achieve this, they articulate, they are particularly inspired by Pablo Freire's work on problem-posing education to mobilise a collaboration to explore ways of 'writing differently'. Here, sharing their own experiences in business education enables them to confront and problematise the 'consciously' hidden curriculum that articulates them.

Discernible symbols provide navigational possibilities in the shadows

The third fleck and flicker in the special issue relates to how to address the more insidious things lurking in the shadows. Several scholars note that the hidden curriculum at business schools has served to promote neoliberalism by extolling 'the virtues of capitalist market managerialism . . . as if there were no other ways of seeing the world' (Parker, 2018: 46; Ehrensal, 2001). Accordingly, success is defined unproblematically in terms of the production of entrepreneurial selves motivated by economic parameters such as employability and profit maximisation, and characterised by their creative problem-solving and productivity abilities, rather than of caring, accountable leaders with the capacity, solidarity, moral vulnerability and inclination to take responsibility for others (Zawadzki et al., 2020). Ball (2016: 1049, 1056) notes how the 'three technologies of Market, Management, Performance' have permeated the subjective experience of education, leaving individuals to struggle, alone, with contradictions, doubts and fears that require continuous self-work. A major effect of this is to divert attention from social, emotional or moral aspects of development that have no direct positive effect on performance (Holmqvist, 2021).

The articles in this section contribute new insights to this topic by showing how discernible symbols offer clues as to how to navigate and intervene in the shadows cast by neoliberalism on management learning. First, Simon Smith, Karen Cripps, Peter Stokes and Hugues Séraphin (2023) address these topics through innovating the achievement of both explorative and exploitative approaches (as understood in the organisational ambidexterity literature). The former (explorative) aim to advance the implementation of responsible management ideologies alongside the latter,

capitalistic ones, which focus on making the most of the present conditions, often financially understood (exploitative). Defining the hidden curriculum as capitalistic virtues that influence what is taught and researched in business schools, the authors note three contradictions to attempts at incorporating responsible management into the curriculum, namely that: business school operations most often follow neoliberal business practices; competency frameworks to embed responsible management knowledge, skills, and attitudes are not in place; and explorative accreditations, like PRME, are often used tokenistically to support other accreditation and marketing efforts. The authors see a step forward in the adoption of a 'Flexi-RME Approach' by PRME and its signatories, which would promote an activist stance based on relevant environmental scanning, that could lead towards developing ambidextrous organisations that work towards embedding responsible management learning alongside and within the current neoliberal context.

Next, Martin Fougère and Nikodemus Solitander (2023) share a profoundly critical glance at the advance and installation of responsible management learning in business schools, hoping to overcome the ideological narrowness of the so-called hidden curriculum that inspires them. In their article, the authors warn of the risk of a counterproductive operation in its deployment; highlighting that an emphasis on training in responsible management leads to the transformation of the so-called homo oeconomicus into what they have called homo responsibility. Through a self-reflexive methodology, which explores teaching experiences in responsible management learning, they propose the need to re-politicising the practice, to articulate an explicit ethical-political position that allows facing neoliberal intensification of its pedagogy through individual responsibility.

And finally, in Paul Hibbert and April Wright's provocative essay (2023), note the lack of engagement with the meaning of responsibility in responsible management learning scholarship and propose that we actively teach students three connected perspectives on responsibility to facilitate their ethical reflection in the shadows cast by neoliberalism instead of relying on the assumed benefits of a static hidden curriculum. They claim, first, that a perspective based on evidence-based management is important to argue the need for acting responsibly in particular situations and to identify the best courses of action. Second, for this to work, however, hermeneutic interpretations of subjective experiences are required, which can help form an intersubjective dialogical understanding of what should be done, and also help to uncover how students coming from various contexts actually understand responsible management learning messages. Finally, a deconstructive perspective can help to open up settled and contextually shared understandings of what responsibility means to unmask its hidden, subordinated, or forgotten aspects. Consequently, the authors argue, instead of simply, and often inexplicably, being acted upon by the hidden curriculum that surrounds them, students would learn how to interrogate, think critically about and reflect critically on, the meanings of responsibility in the contexts they find themselves.

Future studies: subtle absences in the curation of this special issue

As we peer into the shadows of our own special issue, we sense two main absences. The first relates to the absence of perspectives beyond a dominant White, European cluster of perspectives (e.g. African, Asian, Latin American and Eastern European perspectives). The second main absence relates to a lack of heterogeneity in the methods used to investigate the hidden curriculum, especially in terms of apparatus suited to working in, through and from the shadows, such as aesthetics.

Theoretical heterogeneity

We focus here on the lack of scholarship from African, Latin American and Eastern European perspectives in our special issue. This reflects the perspectives of our guest editorial team, but we do

believe similar dynamics are likely to be at play in other non-global North regions, such as Asia (see e.g. Jung, 2018). In terms of Africa, we suggest two main reasons for the lack of submissions from this region. The first reason relates to the competing imperatives alive in African universities and businesses schools. Many business schools on the continent have adopted PRME and now include Corporate Social Responsibility modules in the curriculum (Nwagwu, 2017), and there has been a general shift from wholesale adherence to bottom-line outcomes to a focus on creating holistic leaders who understand social responsibility and the imperative of improving national conditions (Ruggunan and Spiller, 2018). However, these efforts compete with the desire of African universities and business schools to be 'world class' and to acquire international accreditation (Darley and Luethge, 2019). The second reason relates to the paradoxical effects of decolonisation. There have been increasing calls for the decolonisation of universities driven by student demands for an education that addresses the realities of their local conditions (e.g. Mbembe, 2021; Nyamnjoh, 2019). Consequently, there is a growing body of research by African academics about decolonising universities and learning (Masaka, 2019). Some of this research centres on revealing the hidden curriculum of management education to illuminate how its domination by knowledge and teaching materials from the 'Global North' marginalises the continent as a place without effective businesses, management and leadership (Inyang, 2008; Nkomo, 2011; Zoogah, 2021). For example, Zoogah (2021: 384) traces the historical origins of management and organisation in Africa to show that although principles of management were present in pre-colonial African countries, they were hardly present in Western textbooks or management theory. Students may digest this exclusion to believe there is little management taking place in African countries or that which exists is inferior. Scholars are not just critiquing the hidden curriculum but are also exploring how to decolonise management education in Africa (e.g. Beugré and Offodile, 2001; Jackson et al., 2008; Kan et al., 2015; Newenham-Kahindi, 2009; Ruggunan, 2016).

Latin American perspectives are also absent. It is difficult to generalise within a diverse cultural and geographical context, however, considering the Chilean experience (from the first-person account of one of the members of our guest editorial team), it echoes similar dynamics highlighted with African perspectives. Here, business schools are seen to share a unique curriculum, a certain set of contents (subjects and authors) and a privileged didactic strategy that places them all in a chain of equivalence much greater than any other university undergraduate programme (Khurana, 2007; Parker, 2018). Articulated in these ways, the curriculum implies a single theoretical-practical model behind professional training, leveraged mainly by foreign literature, translated or not, with foreign examples, both assumed to be universally valid. In general, the management approach, which is presented as expert technical knowledge, is taught from a top-down perspective, that is, from the position of those who run the organisation to achieve the owners' goals (Mandiola Cotroneo, 2013). This focus on management is at the heart of business practice, with less attention paid to the context, which is assumed to be moderately stable, affected only by one relevant variable, namely the competition. Any internal or external element is a resource that can be managed efficiently, including people. For all of this, there is a particular strategy that is taught in a specific subject, all combined under the maxim of higher productivity and lower costs (Blasco, 2022).

In terms of Eastern European perspectives, most countries in Eastern Europe are still trying to rectify the transition process from the former socialist bloc to a capitalist economy started in the 1990s. Not without its fundamental differences across the region, this process nevertheless implied heavy privatisation of state assets and the transfer of the political power of the former intelligentsia to newly found management roles. Coupled with this economic process, the academic study of business and management reoriented towards processes and rarely questioned Western theories of capitalist development (cf. Grayson, 1993). This meant that ideas critical to the established mainstream are scarce to this day, partly because there was no migration of sociologists into business

schools unlike in the UK (Parker, 2018). At the same time, being in the semi-periphery of global knowledge production has two consequences. There still is, generally speaking, a lack of role models and established scholars who would regularly publish in journals like *Management Learning*, invariably due to the brain drain towards intellectual communities with better pay and higher standing abroad, more recognition given to US journals, and preference to publish in local languages or the difficulty to do so in English (Tienari, 2019). At the same time, journals' policies, akin to the considerations discussed here, tend to treat local knowledge production as the exotic Other of Western theories, whether mainstream or critical (Chutorański and Szwabowski, 2023).

The editorial and reviewer practices of requiring an explanation about the situatedness of local knowledges vis-à-vis Western theories effectively posits these as oppositional and inferior and commits them to running out of precious space for making an intellectual contribution. Thus, the relative unavailability of academics versed in publishing in the globally best regarded journals, and the slanted playing field for publication coupled with the history of business and management research in the region, might offer some explanations for the lack of submissions. The absence of a greater diversity of perspectives and voices shines a light on the hegemonic assumptions and practices that govern academic publishing – from the ranking systems for journals, publisher and editor demands, composition of editorial review boards to epistemic violence (Barros and Alcadipani, 2022). When it comes to manuscript decisions, editors must comply with journal timelines and quality standards, complicated in our case by the corona crisis, which was wreaking havoc during the original call for papers (Head, 2020). This meant that we received multiple requests from ill and/or overworked colleagues for extensions to our initial call deadline, most of which we were unfortunately unable to accommodate, despite appealing for the possibility, due to publishing schedules.

With an eye to unveiling part of the editorial process that usually remains hidden: we can reveal here that we lost, in the peer-review process, papers with valuable contributions on topics including: the hidden curriculum in pre-higher education; international teaching partnerships in China; making the hidden curriculum explicit as a teaching practice at business schools; companion meanings in business education; the marginalisation and concealment of responsible management at business schools; using reflective practice to reveal the dominant rhetoric of business education; the need for teacher training, staff development and alternative knowledge systems in business school responsibility education; the role of language diversity and reflexivity in a positive hidden curriculum for responsibility learning; uncovering the dynamics of the hidden curriculum; identity work in leader education; a decolonial practice of diversity/responsibility; and cognitive considerations in decision-making processes about responsibility education.

Manuscript decision processes, quality standards, and perhaps most importantly, the outcomes of the peer review process are subjective processes, with some wiggle room for flexibility. This, however, can also be a double-edged sword with the risk that authors spend a lot of time revising a manuscript, only to be rejected in the end or unable to meet the special issue deadlines due to multiple rounds of revision. In that regard, we tried to adopt a 'benefit of the doubt' approach throughout the editing of this special issue, but this was not always possible given the journal timeline. Examples of our reflections at submission and revision stages are reproduced below.

Example 1: Correspondence between SI editors before date for submission of first manuscripts

SI guest editor A: *I received a request from a potential contributor from [a Latin American country] who is asking for more time for submission because of covid-19 emergencies in his family. Is there any granting of an extension?*

SI guest editor B: *I have also received a couple of requests about this. I have said no, so far, as the journal has emphasised that there should be no more extensions.*

SI guest editor B: *Let's wait until tomorrow when the deadline is officially passed, and then if there aren't many submissions, I'll write to the editors and request a further extension. Also, just a note about [author] et al's paper – they wrote to me just before submission deadline to say that they were pushed because of corona and asking for an extension. I encouraged them to submit what they had anyway, as we couldn't extend the deadline. So just to warn you that this paper might be less polished than the others, but I thought it might still be worth considering if it contains a valuable idea.*

Example 2: Editors reconsidering a manuscript that had been categorised as a rejection

SI guest editor B: *As I began to work on this article this morning, I read the reviews more closely and now I wonder if it is an outright rejection. All three of the reviewers believe there is potential but a great deal of work is required. Only one was leaning towards rejection but then went with a major revision. Perhaps it is a high risk revision and not a reject??? Should we all take a relook to be fair to the authors?. . . What do you think? Any more thoughts? I can do the letter but paused. . . because the reviews which suggest we might want to give the authors a chance???*

SI guest editor C: *. . .Question is whether this one is a major revision rather than a rejection after all? I suggest we all take another look at this manuscript and take a decision thereafter –we have erred on the positive side with other manuscripts so I think this would only be fair. Would that be OK?*

SI guest editor B: *I read the comments and the manuscript again. My view is that it should be rejected after all. The authors would have to change the methodology of their 'intervention' and recraft their approach entirely. Since their 'research' is already done it would probably take two more rounds to get to an acceptable paper. The vignettes read more like reflections rather than reflexivity.*

SI guest editor C: *Having read your review, and given the methodological issues, I agree with your decision. Far too much work needed and it will be difficult to recraft this convincingly in time for our SI.*

Our backstage discussions, all held on Microsoft Teams among a geographically dispersed editorial team, are long since gone, little physical record of them remains except for a handful of timely dispatched and carefully phrased decision letters and some email correspondence among us. As others before us (e.g. Reason, 1993), we were left with a sense that we have not done full justice to our intent with this Special Issue. Without downplaying our appreciation for the dedicated, sensitive and high-quality scholarship that was at work behind the scenes – and which ultimately is showcased in this special issue – we recognise that despite protracted conversations about balancing intent, voice, power, compassion, our own and assumed expectations about the journal's fit and academic standards, our guest editorial team did not fully succeed in addressing or redressing the hidden curriculum of our own review process. Thus, despite painstakingly putting together a team of editors from five countries and three continents, and having shaped a call for papers that explicitly invited contributions from the Global South as well as scholarship informed by gendered, postcolonial and decolonial standpoints, we have ended up with a special issue that is composed

entirely of papers from the Global North, authored predominantly by Anglo academics, several of whom are familiar and recognised names within responsible management education scholarship. Our reviewers were similarly skewed, not least because reviewers from our own professional networks could be more easily persuaded to accept these reviews despite the conditions of being overworked as discussed above.

There is, without doubt, a hidden curriculum behind every review process. With this special issue experience behind us, we feel that although training might have helped us to become ‘fully aware of the effects of such unnoticeable biases on the paper and reviewer selection processes’ (Mahmoudi, 2020: 40987), we feel strongly that awareness alone is insufficient to improve ‘publishing diversity and scientific integrity’ (p. 40,988) that are beset by systemic challenges. Tennant and Ross-Hellauer (2020) point out that many aspects of peer review processes remain poorly understood, and Mahmoudi (2020: 40987) remarks that ‘there are many hidden variables in this practice that adversely affect [its] health and impact’ and which can lead to over two dozen kinds of bias (Nicolai et al., 2015). For instance, it is now well known that higher rates of rejection affect traditionally underrepresented groups (Dewidar et al., 2022); women and authors from outside North America and Europe are underrepresented as editors and peer reviewers (gatekeepers), and as authors; and that homophily between gender and nationality of authors and gatekeepers affects the outcomes of the peer-review process (Bancroft et al., 2022). This is despite much evidence pointing to the fact that ‘by individuals across different social groups (e.g. prestigious vs not, male vs female), the quality of work is, in the aggregate, roughly comparable’ (Lee et al., 2013). Academic quality standards can also function as a proxy for other biases in the peer-review process, such as cultural differences in scientific writing style and level of scientific English among non-native English speakers (Dewidar et al., 2022). We believe more work needs to be done to reimagine these processes.

Methodological perspectives

The second area of absence inevitably reflects the first, but relates more specifically to the ways in which we are investigating the hidden curriculum. We concur with Tekian (2009: 823) who says, we lack ‘established methodologies with which to categorise and document the components and content of a hidden curriculum and assess it’. From a Tanizakian perspective, we need to spend time *within* the shadows to sense the subtleties at play – the flecks and flickers. The articles in this special issue offer new contributions around discerning the contours of symbols in the shadows (Smith et al., 2023) and the use of the emotional energy of play to escape beyond that which is immediately perceptible (Schwabenland and Kofinas, 2023). Qualitative approaches using interviews, participant observation, and other ethnographic approaches are fairly common in exploring the hidden curriculum, and this has been demonstrated through this special issue. The ethnographic studies we do have, however, rarely examine the detailed interactions within business schools (Anteby, 2013). We need to know much more about the kind of socialisation that occurs through interaction at business schools, revealing the multiplicities of hidden curricula at play in a given learning environment at any one time, for instance, the unofficial or implicit expectations, values, norms and messages conveyed; unintended learning outcomes; implicit messages emanating from the structure of schooling; and the hidden curriculum as created by the students who infer and anticipate what they need to do to be successful (Orón Semper and Blasco, 2018).

We can also see that some methodological approaches have an interventionist character (e.g. Keshtiban et al., 2023). Intervening in shadows through experimental and action research methods hold additional promise for interrogating how specific teaching interventions affect student

awareness of the hidden curriculum and receptivity to responsible learning (e.g. Vijay and Nair, 2022). Specifically, we should examine the dynamics of the hidden curriculum with/on students of colour and other marginalised groups given the racialised, gendered and classed construction of the management knowledge typically taught in business schools (Contu, 2020; Dar et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Prieto et al., 2021). If we embraced a Tanizakian perspective, we might also allow ourselves to be more curious about the organisational aesthetics of the hidden curriculum. Here, we would become interested in the aesthetics of performances in business schools, using arts-based methods, practices and even artworks to ask, answer and provoke new insights and ways of learning in the shadows. As Taylor (2023: 1–2) says such perspectives 'hold the tension between intellectual clarity and embodied subjectivity. . . to encourage the messy, felt (aesthetic) experience be[ing] as much a part of [research] as the analytic insights'. Furthermore, such approaches encourage researchers 'to walk their talk, to write in ways that are as aesthetically pleasing as they are intellectually clear' (Taylor, 2023). For us, our *In Praise of Shadows* tribute is both a response to the special issue papers, and a call for more work which engages with the manifestations and workings of management learning that dwell where we do not normally look. We believe more work needs to be done to reimagine scholarly processes which value and welcome the insights generated in and through shadows, or as Tanizaki (2021 [1933]: 29) says, come to 'discover beauty in shadows, ultimately to guide shadows towards beauty's ends'.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to The Kintsugi Collective for contributing to the thought development process that led us to draw on Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's work and for giving us permission to use some of our common ideas in this special issue framing.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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