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Rethinking Management Post-graduate Education: “Next-generation MBA: Science, Technology and Philosophy - Management Foundations for the Post-industrial Society” - an innovative approach to contemporary management challenges

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Abstract: That the world is changing and changing fast is an obvious and commonsensical truth. Yet, how exactly this change is understood is not that clear. Ortega y Gasset argues that there is no such thing as human nature; all there is is human history. Sebeok claims that all living organisms are born already equipped with the mechanisms that enable them to produce and interpret the signs necessary for their survival and that in the case of the human species, such capacity is related to the sophistication of social interaction and learning potential. However, Castells' analysis of contemporary society is that we are overdeveloped in technological terms and underdevelopment in social terms. In early 70', Touraine identified the concept of the programmed society, where wider spheres of action were being controlled, at all levels of production and of consumption, and where cultural and symbolic goods acquired an ever present importance. Finally, Jaspers proposes the concepts of action-possibilities and of thought-possibilities, based on Weber's historical analysis: each societal event may be analysed according to the then present conditions that led, enabled and triggered its historical development; in parallel terms, each individual's action and thought is determined by present and past conditions that may lead to the emergence of new action and thought processes. Analysing current offers of post-graduate management education it is possible to identify a mimetic effect where there is a common, broad-band, collection of material from functional areas and then a sub-specialisation in one of these functional areas, such as information systems, marketing, finance or human resources. In addition to this pattern of a common functional focus there is often the inclusion of specific non-conventional trendy areas, from knowledge management, to corporate social responsibility, to multiculturalism, in a differentiation effort on behalf of higher education institutions. The globalisation of the top level higher education market, enabled by the technological evolution, has had this indirect effect of creating a reductive homogeneity among curricula, though with marginal differentiation items. However, what is lacking in this consensual – dominant thinking - view of management top level education is the need to rethink and to reformulate the foundations of management science itself. This need has always been present though in times of great changes this need becomes overwhelming. The greater the myopia or even the blindness towards the pressing need to re-evaluate current assumptions, the more severe such need becomes. Even within the context of the global financial crisis, the tension between both positions is visible: on one hand, the effort to continue with previous patterns of behaviour, being captive of the formulas that led to past success and, on the other hand, the drive towards creating new paradigms, in a falsification effort, trying to reconstruct new theories from new presuppositions. However, this creative tension is slow to contaminate academic institutions, in particular in terms of the creation of new competitive and innovative offers

to the post-graduate management market. What is proposed in this paper is precisely this type of offer: how to re-establish the foundations of management theory and practice taking into account both the context of the post-industrial society and the body of knowledge that has been produced so far, not restricted to loosely tied functional areas but based on a sound intellectual exercise that interprets management from three broad perspectives, those of science, technology and philosophy. The idea is not to create a one-fits-all model neither a recipe-like tool but rather to equip candidates with an effective tool-box, a thinking and acting matrix, which may enable and potentiate not only organisational success and development but also individual and societal growth.

Key words: post-graduate education, post-industrial society, science, technology, philosophy, semiotics.