Teaching Strategy as Practice

Richard Whittington

EGOS Vienna 2007
The strategic pendulum swings towards staff

‘STRATEGY remains a pillar of the classic MBA. But the way the subject is taught is changing as the more enlightened business schools recognise that once students leave the classroom, strategy ceases to be theoretical and becomes part of the job of management.

…The pendulum is now swinging away from the theoretical view of strategy towards the practical. Current interest focuses on something called strategy as practice, which is concerned with what people actually do…. 

Johnson, Mintzberg and Whittington place a growing emphasis on the skills and practices that are needed to work with real people. They recognise that strategy, just like every aspect of management, is fundamentally about people.’

Research into the Classroom...

After all:

- Strategy-as-Practice is both practical and reflective
- for our students, strategy is a job!
- there’s a large gap in our courses and texts
What to Teach?

Practitioners:

Praxis:

Practices:

What to Teach?

Practitioners: who to include, and roles of top managers, middle-managers, strategy consultants, strategic planners, civil servants…

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What to Teach?

**Practitioners:** who to include, and roles of top managers, middle-managers, strategy consultants, strategic planners, civil servants…

**Praxis:** analysis, issue-selling, decision-making, consulting, communicating ….

**Practices:**
What to Teach?

**Practitioners:** who to include, and roles of top managers, middle-managers, strategy consultants, strategic planners, civil servants…

**Praxis:** real analysis, issue-selling, decision-making, consulting, communicating …

**Practices:** strategy workshops, strategy projects, reviews, hypothesis testing, business cases and strategic plans …

Mini-case studies:
Strategising at Ostgota Enskilda Bank
Writing Strategy: Shaping the Story
Exhibit 15.1  The Pyramid of Strategy Practice

Strategists:  
Who?

Strategising  
Activities:  
What?

Strategising  
Methodologies:  
Which?

Illustrations, cases etc:

Strategist job description
IBM Strategy jamming
Strategy workshops at ESB
Hypothesis testing at a bank
Planning at Notre Dame
What use strategy consultants?
Ozzie’s Off-site (end-chapter)
MacFarlane case (consultants)
RACC case (strategic planning)
What We Need …

- more research on practices in praxis
- more case studies of praxis
- more photography, videos and artefacts

Whittington et al, LRP, 2006; Molloy & Whittington, AiSM, 2005
Challenges

- is Strategy-as-Practice more than one chapter/session in the core?
- should it be taught to undergraduates or only post-experience students?
- how to make non-practitioner teachers comfortable and credible?
- can we reach to normative prescription?