

Partners in Learning
Learning to Lead Change: Building System Capacity
Leadership for Change Library

Managers Not MBA's
Henry Mintzberg
San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004
464 pages

The first half of this book contains a wicked attack on the current nature and popularity of MBA's. Mintzberg argues that MBA's have four fundamentally wrong consequences: the Corruption of the Education Process, the Corruption of Management Practice, the Corruption of Established Organizations, and the Corruption of Social Institutions.

Mintzberg's main complaint is that MBA's train elitist leaders in detached analysis with little or no grounding in the reality of managing actual situations. MBA's get good at analysis, but not at doing.

Not just a whinger, Mintzberg devotes the second half of his book to constructive solutions which essentially involve experiences in *Management Development in Practice*. He starts with eight propositions:

1. Management education should be restricted to practicing managers.
2. The classroom should leverage the manager's experience in their education.
3. Insightful theories help managers make sense of their experience.
4. Thoughtful reflection on experience in the light of conceptual ideas is the key to managerial learning.
5. Sharing their competencies raises the managers' consciousness about their practice.
6. Beyond reflection in the classroom comes learning from impact on the organization (extend management development into organizational development).
7. All of the above should be blended into a process of "experiences reflection."
8. The curriculum, the architecture, and the faculty should accordingly be shifted from controlled designing to flexible facilitating.

Based on the eight propositions, Mintzberg then presents the design of a program that he and his colleagues are conducting in partnership with four institutions across four countries (Canada, England, France and Japan). The design contains five modules:

- I. Managing self - the reflective mindset
- II. Managing organizations - the analytical mindset
- III. Managing context - the worldly mindset
- IV. Managing relationships - the collaborative mindset
- V. Managing change - the action mindset

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Managers Not MBAs **Henry Mintzberg**

The essential philosophy of Mintzberg's solution is — the key notion of learning is connected to experience — and thus much of it must happen back on the job, stimulated by what took place in the classroom. Action based learning is further buttressed by tutors, self-study, managerial exchange across countries and cultures, and "ventures" (action research projects to effect change in their organizations), and the completion of a major paper which is a mini-thesis building on the other components of the program.

Why We Like This Book

How can you not like a book that irreverently concludes: "MBA schools have tenure, prima donnas galore, the rigidities of departmentalization, entrenched programs and entrenched thinking, all in the name of changing everyone else." But that is not why we like it. We like it because it favors neither abstract analysis nor thoughtless relevance. Instead, it favors insight, reflective action, improvement with a purpose, and above all, a design for producing leaders who can improve practice as they help to produce other leaders. Because of its passionate, holistic approach this book links three biggies together: self-improvement to organization development to societal betterment. What more do you want in a book!



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