

Contribution of Gianluca Spina to Management Education

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Higher education in management has seen, is still experiencing, and will see tomorrow, profound changes that have an impact on all institutions that deliver programs in this area. The recent decade is particularly emblematic of these developments. It would be naive to imagine that previous eras were particularly calm but we should recognize that recent years have been especially agitated. During stormy periods a school, a university or an institute cannot face the high waves if they are not correctly piloted. The role of the dean, of the director and of the President is then essential. Gianluca was a captain during all these years and I will emphasize here everything that, I believe, he has done to guide his school through the storm. Then I will try to imagine what, in my opinion, he would have been able to do if his destiny had been different.

What then are these major currents that have ruffled the world of management education? How to present them? In my opinion there are four main 'hot spots' in our community that represent 4 challenges that deans need to address daily. These four movements are first globalization accompanied by a continuous increase of the competition, second the importance of the choice of the mission of an institution, third the arrival of the internet, called new technologies, and fourth the issue of governance the only one able offer to an institution the necessary readability, source of its reputation.

I'll analyze them one by one starting with the first one.

Globalization and its effects

It is undoubtedly today the oldest movement, the more regular, the most commonly accepted, even if all the schools have not yet encompassed all the consequences. Boundaries in the field of higher education, in our field but it is also real in other fields, boundaries have been shrinking. I say have been shrinking because they have not disappeared. For many years students from around the world have or almost have become mobile. The teachers themselves regularly deliver their expertise beyond their national borders. The researchers are involved in international networks. Institutions are opening campuses abroad and implementing programs at home open to international students. The recognition of a school - at least the best of them- is established on an international basis. Although national reputation is far from being without effect on potential customers, the international ranking of an institution has become a priority.

In this perspective and, again, in my experience of many meetings with Gianluca, the question is "What did he do for MIP?". Regarding international programs I will take two

examples that I know: China and the supply chain program with Audencia Nantes in France. Of course I want to be quite clear. The role of a dean, of a director is to lead, to reduce barriers, to give a strong support but not to be personally involved because faculty teams are maneuvering every day and it is the teams who are in the center of the ring. Our exchanges with Gianluca were focused on the dean's job. Let's start with China and the relationship with Tongji University in Shanghai. It was around 2005 and at that period we had the opportunity to hold many meetings. Gianluca was not, and I have no doubts about that, only mobilized in respect to China but I have clearly in mind his commitment to try to establish an enhanced cooperation with Tongji. The MIP was already very present there and Gianluca was eager to open new programs. If my memory does not betray me, programs in luxury were on the table - luxury was an evidence as Italy and France were working side by side. Sports management was also on the table. The operation at the time was not crowned with success but what an amazing experience! Then the launch of a joint Masters in Supply Chain with Nantes was, however, a fine performance and this program still runs today.

In terms of rankings and accreditations I shared numerous attendances in EFMD and AACSB meetings with Gianluca. Traditionally, it is in late January that deans and directors meet at EFMD, it was Barcelona in 2015. The AACSB meeting usually takes place the beginning of February. It was San Diego in 2015. Before these final moments of exchange with him, we were together in many cities. Gianluca was a faithful among the faithful of the events. He measured how useful integration in networks was the proximity to the colleagues and therefore to the decision makers as any given assessment is made by colleagues who are by the same decision makers. According to Gianluca, gathering information and also giving information about the MIP constituted major tasks for him.

Gianluca accomplished these activities with perfection. Everyone knew they could find faithfulness, loyalty and kindness in Gianluca. Maybe I was a special colleague, but I doubt it because I can say here that Gianluca's influence was very clear in our deans' community. He was so active in the MIP EQUIS accreditation, I should say MIP Equis accreditations. The creation of the IAB in the MIP and the Business School has certainly been important to the school's internationalization. And I can say in all modesty that I was most proud and happy when Gianluca asked me to be a member of the IAB.

What would he have certainly done if his fate had been different?

I strongly believe that his first idea would have been AACSB accreditation. I think the file is already on the table. New international programs can clearly be the second idea. Indeed, our discussions have been very much centered on his desire to further internationalize the faculty of MIP. He knew how difficult it is in a public institution to escape the regulatory constraints but he was attached to this progress. This is a common objective of accreditations bodies, reflected by rankings, and it is a fact that an international faculty

boosts the work atmosphere of an establishment. There is no doubt in my mind that Gianluca would have chosen this direction.

Let's go on to the second challenge.

The mission of an institution

Mission, positioning, purposes, objectives, strategic choices are many words that express the identity of a school. This list is hidden behind the only real question of a business school: the real question is the place given to research. Certainly a lot of other major aspects are not to be overlooked. For examples: Should a school be generalist or specialist? Should we look for a distinctive positioning at all costs or is the only way a kind of 'me too ism' installed in a mainstream? Should a school primarily engaged at the master level launch a bachelor to manage a comprehensive portfolio? Should we focus all activities on one campus or is it legitimate and effective to meet the sirens of the markets by locating where there are customers? What respective places given to the degree courses, to the executive education, to the inter-company training, to the intra company training? All these questions are very serious but the main choice is research versus teaching.

Finally, is it a true choice? Because accreditation standards and rankings focus mainly on the need for a higher education institution to participate in the advancement of knowledge. Was it a choice for MIP? We shall see below that this aspect for MIP is in close relationship with governance because MIP was primarily focused on executive education and the management department focused on research.

What place for research in a business school? The longstanding and shared answer is: research can never be absent but its place depends on the activity portfolio. The place is low if the school is first positioned at the bachelor level, it increases for schools at the master level and becomes very high if there is a doctorate level. That said, two ideas have emerged more recently. The first is to substitute the expression 'intellectual contributions' with "research " marking the existence of three areas: the purely academic research, the pedagogical research and finally applied research with consultations. The second idea is to broaden the measurement of results of research, traditionally confined to counting publications, to broaden the measurement to “ research impact”, that is impact on corporate practices and society in general.

How Gianluca accompanied MIP to respond to this development?

Allow me to say, because it's only a perception that the result of specific exchanges on this issue, allow me to say that Gianluca was, as I personally also am, ambivalent on the subject. Psychologists call this a double bind because both proposals are interesting. On the one hand, as we are deans and Gianluca was one, accountable for the smooth running

of programs, for response to customers, for the turnover, for the margin obtained and research is so intangible that it is difficult to highlight its advantages. On the other hand, no matter what can be said, a school is "faculty driven" and the teachers because of their personal influence and also because they like it, request more and more time for research. How can this complex equation be solved? The politically correct way is to say that an institution's reputation in the field of research attracts the customer and therefore the issue is resolved. Research activities increase the attractiveness of the school. But unfortunately, this is true in the long term but what about the short term? My feeling is that, to solve the problem, Gianluca had chosen the path of emphasis on research related to business needs. I take as evidence (is it still relevant?) the MBA missions realized by students in companies; companies paid MIP to reduce tuition costs paid by students. In one scoop the issues of proximity to businesses; research strategy and financial resources were resolved for MIP.

What could Gianluca have done today?

Again this is more an assumption than a certainty, but it is my belief, Gianluca would have established a clear, proven, strong, assumed segmentation of MIP's faculty into groups: researcher teachers, pedagogical teachers, consultant teachers, project managers and programs managers teachers. The challenge was to sell, I say sell, the idea that one specific teacher segment does not dominate the others. Each teacher uses his or her talents in the field in which he or she is an expert to reach the objectives of the institution as a whole. Of course this is said without ignoring the impact of the presence of athletes who are able to be successful in every discipline. Gianluca was lucky to have such amazing athletes at MIP.

It's time to address the third challenge.

New technologies and internet

This was the theme of reflection of the most recent IAB meeting. Institutions around the world are facing the development of distance education, the hybrid nature of programs, the remote collaborative work between students, between teachers, between teachers and students, the drastic reduction in the availability of managers, their mobility constraints. The MOOCs abolish borders. Ted conferences, Wikipedia, blogs, social networks provide information on everything all the time and instantly. MIP has had to face this major challenge.

How did Gianluca act?

I refer to the IAB organized last February. Our opinion was sought about MIP's remarkable distance MBA launching operation. Gianluca was at ease, measuring the delicate balance between 2 ideas. First, the necessary recourse to new technologies, but which might cannibalize the programs delivered conventionally. Second, the impetus given to the teachers to put their expertise in short digital tools but mandatory accompanied by ever greater proximity to the students. We could feel the heart of a debate: teaching against learning, classroom richness against flexibility of distance, general diffusion of knowledge against appropriation by each teacher of his knowledge, MOOCs-everyone has access – against SPOTs, closed universe. All decisions taking areas. The work of the dean is similar to that of the acrobat perched on a tight rope, and who, with a single balancer, tries to reach an opposite shore. Gianluca knew how to do that well.

What would he do today?

My feeling is that his decisions, his suggestions were imbued with great realism and he did not see MIP as a first mover totally addicted to new technologies. Gianluca knew that a school, his school, lived by daily exchanges, face to face meetings between all the stakeholders. I think that, in his mind a totally digitized MIP was not appropriate. The market as well as accreditation bodies, are demanding innovation: continuing education, called the Internet route, is one path. Gianluca was pursuing this path but without excess. For him, "blended solutions" was the future. The only remaining question - we discussed about that earlier - was “ is 30% of distance a "blended format" or whether it should exceed 50% distance to be able to speak of "blended".

And finally the fourth challenge

The governance

Under this heading I class here everything related to the identity of the establishment, scope of activities say the accreditation bodies, and of course the brand of the institution. Readability, recognition at national and international level go through the definition and promotion of a descriptive mark of activities, driven by a name, a color, and representative of values so that internal stakeholders such as customers will be externally able to identify. In short, each legitimately wants to know "who is who"? In the field of services – and it is our area- the customer buys a presumed quality and thus a perception of quality, but a quality that covers what program? What activities? Who is responsible? Who to trust? Accreditation can cover an establishment (it is the case for EQUIS or for AACSB), can cover a program (it is the case for EPAS or AMBA). Financial Times rankings may concern a program (Master pre experience), an activity (continuing education), a school as a whole. What happens next? It's simple for a “stand alone “ school, a school engaged in a single activity. It's more complicated when the portfolio is extensive. It is a square when the business school is engaged in specific activities,

alongside a faculty with its own identity, both being subsidiaries or components of a larger institution; for instance a University. Complexity is a cube where the institution is public because the rules of governance are sometimes decided several hundred kilometers away. This is the case of the MIP. Gianluca, not only once again, focused on this sensitive issue, strongly emphasized by the first team of EQUIS auditors. It was, if I correctly remember, the subject of our first IAB. I will be extremely careful here because I do not know the issue in its entirety, I am even sure of not knowing all the problem, and then the subject is in my eyes may be unresolved today at 100%.

How has Gianluca been invested?

From my point of view, his desire of clarity was so strong that he overcame his desire for the preservation of MIP's old formula, as it appeared to him that the former MIP would have difficulty to comply with the accreditation standards and rankings. Did he lead this change with serenity? To put it simply, my opinion is that this was not the case, and not because of people, I think I can affirm this not just because I know many of you, but simply because Gianluca feared that MIP, his MIP would lose its values, its work habits, in short, its culture at least partially if not totally. The important thing was, and we measured that in the IAB, his willingness to go the way of a new organization was flawless.

What would he have done next?

I would argue that in his mind the question of governance and organization, belonged to the past and therefore that the current situation was satisfactory and that the external visibility would improve over time. Then, remained the branding phase: actions to be taken by MIP, by the business school to truly become a reputed brand, an internationally accredited and highly ranked institution and therefore become more attractive.. Perhaps, this had already been initiated.

I do not know, but my feeling is that if the discussion had been held on the evening of February 13th, Gianluca would certainly have suggested, during the debriefing of the IAB, to make brand promotion the theme of the 2016 IAB.

For me, during the last IAB meeting on February 13th was the occasion of seeing Gianluca, of having him congratulate us about the few days of winter break that we would be taking, and of the promise of future get-togethers in Paris or in any case during the next EFMD meeting to be held in Poland. Sadly, fate decided otherwise.

I have held very different positions in the course of my career. I have chaired scientific associations, launched academic journals, was the consultant for ministers in France and

abroad, for companies or chambers of commerce. I've been dean of a private business school in France. I am now the President of the Scientific Council of a private school and the dean of a public school attached to the university in Paris. I have known many colleagues of various talents. I say this without any affectation to all his friends here, Gianluca has always been a reference for me. He was one of those persons with whom I have had a trust relationship based on our shared views on major issues. When I try to list the qualities that a dean must demonstrate to properly do his job, I observe that Gianluca ticked all the boxes. His memory will be indelible for me when he apostrophized me with a broad smile in Brussels, San Diego, Barcelona, Paris, or Milano: 'Hi Jean-Pierre, how are you?'

You have honored me by asking me to highlight Gianluca's role as dean. Thank you for having listened to me in my modest and sincere effort to honor him.

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