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In My End Is My Beginning

John E. Reilly and Romeo V. Turcan

Introduction

When we embarked on this project, our object was to highlight the extent to which the tide of populism and its manifestation in a post-truth, fake-news society in all areas of human experience needed to be addressed by the curriculum through which problem-based learning would prepare graduates to cope with the new world order. It has emerged that future research is needed at this intersection not just to extol the virtues of the PBL methodology, but to address the issues to which we drew attention in our opening chapter. In it, we indicated our sense that populism represents a major challenge to learning and teaching in all disciplines

J. E. Reilly
Higher Education Consultant, University of Kent, Kent, UK
e-mail: j.e.reilly@kent.ac.uk

R. V. Turcan (✉)
Aalborg University Business School, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark
e-mail: rvt@business.aau.dk

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R. V. Turcan, J. E. Reilly (eds.), *Populism and Higher Education Curriculum Development: Problem Based Learning as a Mitigating Response*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-47376-1_17

and indicated that the failure of the academic body to foster the societal engagement of learners and engage actively itself with the political process and debate reinforced the challenge. We are supported in this view by a number of authorities. The Vienna Declaration of European Rectors 'Universities for Enlightenment' expressed, in powerful terms, concern at the threats to the democratic character of universities and societies and argued for an active response (see Vignette 1.2). UNESCO echoes this concern in relation to the resurgence of nationalism, which is another manifestation of the populist agenda. There is a danger that the term 'Populism' can become a holdall expression. There is no consensus on a definition (see e.g., Devinney and Hartwell 2020) and consequently what forces, movements may be labelled as 'populist'. In our discussion, we indicate a wide variety of external pressures on universities, which, in broad terms, might be considered to be manifestations of the broader populist themes. For a more in-depth understanding of this phenomenon, the discussion is to be set in a broader, cultural and historical context.

Discussion

Sir Peter Scott (Chap. 2) recognises that the emergence of populism has the potential to undermine higher education in a number of ways. He explores the understanding of populism and concludes that because it is inherently inchoate it may present less of a risk than some have argued. It is an encouraging conclusion, but it perhaps underestimates the way in which, as Turcan demonstrates (Chap. 16), ignorance can actually be fostered and in effect become a weapon to be exploited by populist politicians. Indeed this is something, which, in a different way, Scott himself recognises, namely that 'the basis of populism, its core support, can be found among the less-educated but its leaders, typically, are products of elite universities'. Scott recognises that the response to populism requires curriculum reform in 'an archipelago of learning – in which curriculum and course will be problematized'. As he points out 'The shift to problem solving in the curriculum has sometimes been restricted to the adoption of new pedagogic techniques rather than the decisive shift away from content acquisition. Instead the renewed emphasis on skills have elided

both problem solving and content acquisition'. This is a challenge to the advocates of PBL and the recurring theme addressed from different perspectives in other chapters. As a former university head, Scott's comments on the need for the democratisation of higher education and the reform of the curriculum and learning and teaching methods and, as he says, the very 'constitution of knowledge', are powerful exhortations. At the same time, he recognises that 'the emergence of populism … has the potential to undermine higher education in a number of ways', echoing the Vienna Rectors.

A number of the fellow-authors view the threat to the academic world in terms of academic freedom undermined by government and university governance and management. This is particularly true of the chapter by Dholakia et al. (Chap. 3), which juxtaposes 'an authentic, liberal culture' with 'an ascendant populist neo-liberalism', which is 'replacing the function and intellectual diversity of the institution with a monolithic conviction of efficiency and productivity solely indexed to contested economic objectives'. In this context, the authors highlight the growth of a small number of American universities with endowments measured in billions of dollars, which, in their view, far from reinforcing their autonomy seriously undermines their independence and identifies them with and harnesses them to the financial market, and ipso facto to the politics and policies of that market.

While they present a powerful analysis, future research is needed for example to explore whether the neoliberalism encroachments on the university have been facilitated by, what is approaching, mass participation in higher education. 'Mass participation' has had a radical effect on the university world bringing it into the sphere of popular and political debate. The dramatic nature of the change can be illustrated by a statistic. For example, in the UK in the mid-twentieth century (1950s), only 5–6% of the age cohort (18–24) participated in higher education; in 2020 the figure is approaching 45%. Future research is needed to explore ways in which neoliberalism is affecting the curriculum and what, in the contemporary world, should be the basis for curriculum content and development. From the Dholakia et al. perspective, the priority is one of structures, management and governance. These are powerful elements determining the nature of the university, but unless curriculum content

and learning, and teaching methods are the focus of critical discussion and analysis, reform of structures (management and governance) will not address the multiple areas of concern outlined in the introductory chapter.

Populism is considered from a different perspective by Rachlin (Chap. 5) in his review of recent history, which he, too, regards as a threat to the liberal order. He asserts that 'Demagogues know how to gain payback by playing on emotions and how fear can unite people across political divisions. Today's populists have mastered this art not only by exaggerating facts or presenting alternative facts, but by spreading lies and falsehoods'. He contends that the tide of populism has been stemmed in countries such as Denmark and that the elections for the European Parliament in June 2019 reinforce that view. However, ongoing monitoring and analysis is needed to test the thesis that the populist tide has turned, as recent events suggest the opposite: the outcome of the UK General Election in December 2019 won by repetition of the slogan 'Get Brexit Done'; the surge in populist support for Sinn Fein in the February 2020 election in Ireland; recent events in India fostered by the BJP and Prime Minister Modi; ongoing populism in Poland and Hungary and the current likelihood that President Trump will be re-elected at the end of 2020.

As Rachlin asserts 'It has taken generations of liberal democracies to develop and consolidate the basic values on which Western societies are based: the triad of power; the rule of law; freedom of speech; freedom of mind and respect for the individual. It is difficult for many to understand that the political situation in our part of the world has been able to take such a steep and dramatic turn away from the basic values'. He concludes 'It is sad enough but the blindness of the age cannot be remedied with algorithms and artificial intelligence. This "blindness" is the challenge which higher education must address'. Here, too, we see an echo of the Vienna Rectors, UNESCO and other bodies. Advocates of PBL might respond that the methods of problem-based learning provide a basis for counteracting the Rachlin 'blindness of the age' and opening eyes, but although PBL emphasises 'real world' problems these tend to be limited in scope. Here too more research is urgently required because it is not evident that the PBL methodology is inherently concerned with the nature of the contemporary world, which the graduates will enter or that

the curriculum explicitly deals with the contemporary populist issues identified in the Vienna Declaration.

One of these issues is discussed in the paper by late Rt Hon Bruce George OBE, former UK MP (Chap. 6). The academic world, in essence, thinks of the world of knowledge as borderless but as George indicates, in a paper written some years ago, borders have a potent, political and emotional resonance. This can be aptly illustrated from the United States and the proposed wall between the United States and Mexico and the UK where the frontiers between the UK and the EU and in Ireland have become key populist elements propelling the most significant constitutional and economic decision (Brexit) since the Second World War. The paper by George might be considered of less relevance to the university world as it focuses on controlling the flow of migrants, but it should be understood that all the apparatus and the politics of national borders has a direct impact on intellectual mobility. There are well-documented cases of senior and distinguished academics either failing to be granted a visa to work in the UK Higher Education sector or deciding that the process is too intrusive to be worth pursuing. At the time of writing, there seems to be a real possibility that UK students will no longer be able to participate in the Erasmus programme. For higher education alone, this means excluding c.17000 outgoing and c.32,000 incoming students and c.3500 outgoing and 5000 incoming staff. Exclusion from or limitations on participation in Erasmus will deprive individuals of a formative experience and reduce the international dimension in host institutions for peer groups who interact academically and socially with incoming cohorts. In terms of the numbers involved and their impact on the economy, the Erasmus Impact Study published (2014) demonstrates that the mobility brings considerable economic, social and political benefits for the individual and in this case the UK. However, it has not become a populist *cause* whereas in comparison the fishing industry, which employs in total c.24,000 c.12000 at sea and c.12000 in the processing industry and contributes only c.0.12% to the UK economy has become a make or break element in the withdrawal negotiations between the EU and the UK. It has become an emotive populist issue where evidence is irrelevant and it too relates to the emotive border delineation question.

Borders have a significant impact on scientific collaboration. Already the UK is excluded from the Galileo Project and the extent to which it will be able to participate in the next European Union Framework programme Horizon Europe is uncertain. National frontiers may inhibit the development of some subjects and research to suit populist nationalist agendas with a focus on what are determined to be national priorities rather than the pursuit of knowledge as a universal goal. This phenomenon is most starkly perceived in subjects such as history, which has been conceived as a basis for establishing a sense of national identity and through this contributes to the growth of nationalism. Popular presentations of history can be used to promulgate myths about the past. This applies not only at a national level but also to wider regional interpretations. Recent scholars such as Frankopan (2018) endeavour to challenge the Euro-centric understanding of the past, but formidable as his scholarship is, it seems unlikely that it will dislodge populist views and the populist requirement from governments that the curriculum should underscore a sense of national identity even if this is at the expense of a more open, evidence-based understanding and the real danger is that a historical perspective is increasingly absent from the curriculum in all subjects.

The recognition that national identity and frontiers permeate and can distort the curriculum in most subjects is one of the forces behind the movement to 'decolonise' the curriculum. Because the topic, in news coverage, has often been reduced to a symbolic and tokenistic level associated with the removal and destruction of statues and place names associated with colonial exploitation, it has distracted attention from the core objective. The phenomenon—the call to decolonise—is one which should be the subject of further research, because it is, on the one hand, an example of a populist thematic, and on the other hand, it raises serious questions about the essence of what constitutes 'colonial' curriculum, which embeds cultural and nationalistic preconceptions and interpretations. Lest it should be thought that this applies only to the Humanities and Social Sciences, it should be noted that it has equal force in the STEM subjects where values, philosophy and tradition continue to structure learning and teaching. Gishen and Lokugamage (2018) present a strong case for diversifying and decolonising the medical curriculum in

the UK and illustrate that the topic is not one restricted to former colonies, but confronts academics in all countries.

Chapter 12, by Dreher and Haseloff, on Artificial Intelligence (AI) touches on the ways in which AI is having a profound impact on the nature of work and more sophisticated methods of production, which have implications for the role of the skilled worker who requires high specialist skills and, because of the complexity of the processes a new approach to problem formulation and solution. This presents higher education curriculum planning and development with four challenges: the need for constant reformulation and innovation; the need for a more intense application of high-level problem-solving competences; the need for high-level staff development in problem-based learning and problem formulation and the need for a more granular, relevant approach to the assessment of the PBL learning outcomes.

The authors argue that the key driver for the implementation of AI is economic when applied to productive processes, as illustrated in the first of their two vignettes. However, AI is being applied, increasingly, in more diverse fields such as Medicine, in which the main driver is not always directly economic. Moreover, the application of AI is not always benign. Hence, graduates in all fields require new insights and critical analytical skills, not simply, as the Dreher and Haseloff chapter suggests, to be able to manipulate processes, but to appreciate how and when AI is being used in ways which are antipathetical to the public good. This provides another illustration, not only of the imperative to respond at pace to the world outside higher education, but for an interdisciplinary curriculum which will alert and prepare graduates for their future working life.

The chapter is challenging relating as it does to vocational higher education. It leaves open a range of issues in the realm of AI, some of which are touched on in our introductory chapter, which indicates opportunities as well as threats to traditional higher education paradigms of learning and teaching. Perhaps the key lesson is that effective engagement with AI requires a more interdisciplinary approach. Here, too, we should be reminded of what Zuboff (2019) states in relation to Surveillance Capitalism: that it uses 'algorithms and censors, machine intelligence and platforms' to undermine 'individual self-determination, autonomy and decision rights'.

A number of chapters discuss different aspects of the relationship and interaction between universities and business in the preparation of graduates for the workplace. Gregersen (Chap. 8) explores ways in which the management structure and academic organisation have an impact on learning and teaching. A key concern is that disciplinary silos, which are constructed and maintained for management purposes, can seriously impede interdisciplinary curriculum development and the effective formation of graduates. In addition to the rationale outlined by Gregersen for these 'silos', it may be noted that senior academics may support disciplinary silos because these have helped to establish their reputation and career so that they become strong supporters of the status quo. Gregersen explores the extent to which resource allocation models, which are based on teaching and research and performance criteria make it difficult to prioritise and support external and global collaboration. She expresses concern at the view that is gaining currency that the process of management of universities is no different from that of a large business or factory.

Building on Gregersen's propositions, future research should explore the extent to which what lies behind the concerns, which she documents is a strong populist agenda that the university is not for knowledge transmission and creation, critical learning, teaching and research, but rather to be regarded as an instrument for the (uncritical) implementation of the current political, social and economic agenda. The second populist political imperative is that the market is the engine which the university must fuel and to do so adopt market structures and attitudes. This risks losing sight of the objectives, or rather the urgent need for graduates with a critical, analytical, flexible mind-set willing to challenge received wisdom and policy, prepared to be innovative and creative, who are prepared for and committed to lifelong learning for which PBL is ideally suited if it has the resource and the structure to do so.

The nature of university management structures and attitudes is considered by Fast and Clark (Chap. 7). They see the implementation of new public management supported by populist views of the nature of a university, as the fundamental reason for a divorce between the senior management and the process of education and research. Their chapter raises questions about the actual impact of the new management structures on curriculum content, which need further research. They explore the extent

to which the philosophy of science can counteract what they perceive as the harmful approach to learning imposed by the new management. As they express it, 'the organisational discourse went from an idea of the university as a knowledge development community where the focus was on studying, discussion, debating, disagreement and where argument, logic and critique were the most important towards the production factory', where competition is the driving force 'not only between universities but also between departments, research groups and people'.

Another perspective on university business relationships is explored by Sorensen (Chap. 9), who voices the external imperatives for more active relationships between the university and enterprise/business and the forms which this can take. He illustrates that while the objective is to achieve understanding and cooperation, the relationship has within it the potential for conflict and misunderstanding. The case study presented in the annex reveals the range and complexity of relations with an industry, which does not follow what might be regarded as a pattern of classic relations with its partner university.

The rhetoric extolling the necessity and the benefits of university–enterprise collaboration has become universal and is portrayed to be axiomatically a good thing. However, as Sorensen's chapter reveals, the assertions obscure the complexities, potential conflicts of interest and the profound implications of the interaction. Moreover, there is a fundamental issue which universities are nervous to explore but which ought to be the subject of in-depth research. Partnerships assume the quality of relationships and shared if not equal benefits and the often quoted 'knowledge triangle' almost has a theological resonance 'creating the conditions for increased relevance and utilisation of universities' activities', which is self-evidently beneficial and good.

However, if universities are genuine research-based institutions, they should be at the frontier of knowledge formation looking to tomorrow rather than today. It would be absurd to suggest that this is not also the agenda for the most advanced enterprises, which will, in the case of the largest, have strong research sectors but there should be a strong health warning spelt out in capitals. The interests of the two parties are not synonymous. The enterprise objective is not altruistic in the sense that it is prepared to pursue fundamental research and follow where it leads. It has

always a strong economic imperative dictating the structure, shape and direction of the research. At times, there may be a congruence of interest between industry and the university in their research objectives but there are also occasions when interests and objectives diverge. Insofar as universities become harnessed to the interests and objects of industry in their research, then their commitment and ability to undertake fundamental research may be undermined.

It may be heresy to suggest that a similar concern applies to the 'deep wisdom' that work placements and internships are an unalloyed benefit. Two chapters explore internships from different perspectives. Two graduates—Kriegsbaum and Deak—discuss their experience (Chap. 10) and Christensen (Chap. 11) explores different models of internships, favouring a University Students' Industry Collaboration (USIC) model in which students are not physically located in the firm but visit it for meetings. Both chapters indicate reservations about internships. Christensen criticises what he considers to be classical modes of internships (work placements) advocating the USIC model. Overall, the students commend their experience but note that in specific fields their knowledge acquisition and the knowledge direction provided by staff were deficient. This reservation, while limited, may indicate a more general challenge in PBL and that is the extent to which knowledge acquisition is not always optimally acquired through self-directed learning. Both chapters are advocates for internships. However, it could be argued that the emphasis on the primacy of practical experience is an example of a populist world theme, which undervalues academic research led knowledge as a basis for genuine progress. The intellectual is, in the utilitarian world, a second-class citizen. The Pure Mathematician has an uphill battle to justify the subject on the basis of 'intellectual challenge' and the 'aesthetic beauty' of abstract reasoning. Equally problematic for the contemporary commentators is the idea that students should debate Plato's concept of beauty as an abstraction. Utility is the new deity. The increasing imperative that internships/work placements are virtually an essential prerequisite for future employment, could demonstrate the relative weakness, if not the failure, of the academic world and the erosion of academic values, giving rise to the effective counter-universities funded by the training in Google and Amazon, to name but two.

The question must be raised: has the pendulum, governed by the populist trope, swung too far from the academic to the practical? To parody *Animal Farm*, the cry seems to be 'Industrial experience good—academic knowledge and understanding bad'. This is evidently an absurd parody. Nevertheless, parodies do call for an exploration. If working life for most graduates is to continue into their 70s or beyond, spending a relatively short time acquiring intellectual capital may not be wasted. Experience can be garnered throughout a working life. To expect universities to produce 'oven-ready' products (their graduates) may be to misunderstand fundamentally the nature of knowledge, understanding and learning.

The range of knowledge in all subject areas could be said to be expanding almost exponentially. If interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary learning is also becoming essential, then perhaps experience might be postponed and be accepted by industry as part of their responsibility. In other words, a new type of collaboration may be necessary, one in which learning is not perceived simply in experiential terms but as the acquisition of a knowledge platform and an intellectual training on which continued learning and experience may be firmly built. It may be that some PBL should involve learners in grappling with concepts and abstraction, rather than the everyday (so-called real-life) problem, to develop (stretch) their horizons and logical powers of reasoning and analysis.

As Sir Peter Scott (Chap. 2) indicates, 'populism' presents mass higher education with serious challenges, one of which is socio-economic: 'The extent to which these systems are fit for purpose in an inclusive and democratic society'. As he indicates, 'In most developed countries applicants from the most socially privileged groups are between three and four times more likely to be admitted than applicants from the least socially privileged groups'. The failure to democratise, he suggests, is an element in the rise of populism and bias against 'so-called expert or elite knowledge' and 'a search for uncomplicated truth'.

Daskou and Tzokas (Chap. 13) explore social inclusion. They recognise that social inclusion has become, in their words, 'imperative for a stable society'. Government and inter-government statements on the topic perhaps neglect to indicate the scale of the challenge and the growing inequalities, which have a profound impact on all aspects of society. Some writers on populism argue that the power acquired by populist

politicians has its roots in inequality and social exclusion. A large excluded segment of society may be vulnerable to extremist views, right and left, which appear to recognise their situation and identify other groups, countries or organisations as their enemies; offer slogan-based solutions to complex challenges and gain power as a result. Social exclusion is thus a central feature of populism and the role of higher education is not only to help to redress the severe inequalities in society and enable the individual to enter the 'inclusion' zone, but to do so in a way which means that the individual is no longer susceptible to the false clarion calls of the populist leaders but recognises that complex problems require multifaceted and often difficult and unpopular responses.

Although the objective of social inclusion is high on government and university formal agendas in practice, notwithstanding the case studies in the Daskou and Tzokas chapter, the wider impact of engagement with social inclusion in all subject fields is difficult to identify and should be the subject of in-depth research. As with decolonisation of the curriculum (which some see in terms of the inclusion of black and minority ethnic groups), it is not simply a matter of helping the individual, but ensuring that the essence of curricula is effectively inclusive and that all graduates understand the imperative for social cohesion. Indeed, it could be argued that the case study of the two graduates, commenting on their experience of problem-based learning, provides an illustration of the challenge inherent in the dynamics of inclusion more generally—the unwilling learner; the free rider is identified. It is not evident that the challenge is resolved.

Success and entrepreneurship are two words which permeate discussion of the outcomes of university education. In the UK, the level of salary on graduation is now one of the indicators in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) scores. Moller et al. (Chap. 14) explore aspects of success in entrepreneurship, consider on the basis of the survey study which they have undertaken that success is determined by what they refer to as 'meaning', which might be rephrased as personal motivation and self-awareness. While these are interesting perceptions, it is not clear how they may be generalised in terms of the curriculum content and development for potential entrepreneurs. Indeed,

this is a further area for more detailed research, multi aspects of which are examined by Reilly (2018).

Baldock (Chap. 4) injects a new concept of change in writing about UK Higher Education and provides a counter to the argument that change is dictated by informed policy or ideology, maintaining that the driver of change has been almost accidental 'incrementalism'. He concludes that 'the main driver of these changes have been a shift from a system of capped student numbers with funding allocated by government and civil servants, to a market and price driven system in which funding follows student choice and universities…. This change took place slowly and incrementally over fifty years. It was not driven by neoliberal or populist values, but by governments seeking to control public expenditure and university leaders seeking extra income.' While he writes persuasively, his conclusion might be seen to partially undermine his thesis. 'Competition, marketization, price driven' seem remarkably neoliberal and match the political philosophy of the Conservative party in power since 2010 (it should be acknowledged that the Labour government of Mr. Blair initiated the first significant increase in the student fee level). While students may not see themselves as consumers, the vocabulary has a populist tone and denotes a populist attitude to the objectives of higher education, which is reinforced by the measures of successful outcomes that include salary on employment. Baldock uses the 'success' data (indicators) on quality and performance to assert that UK universities 'are doing very well' but the indicators are 'market' and 'consumer' type and reinforce our concern that even if it is in part event driven the result has been, as Baldock recognises, to undervalue qualities of mind or as he expresses 'intellectual values'.

Turcan (Chap. 16) reiterates concerns expressed in the introductory chapter, suggesting that we 'often turn a blind eye on inter-related, mutually reinforcing events or liquid states in all levels of daily life'. He argues that 'newness' brings with it uncertainty and ignorance, and alarmingly that 'ignorance can be negotiated through the exercise of power'. In other words, people can be kept in ignorance and, as he points out, Orwell predicted such a world.

The concept of 'power negotiated ignorance' is perhaps the most disturbing of all those explored in the book. It is evident in that ignorance is

the basis on which orchestrators of the populist movements base their success. It seems otiose to state that ignorance is manifestly dangerous and harmful in all spheres, whether in medicine, health, vaccination, quack cures, housing, building with flammable materials, climate change, closed cognitive circles. To say it, is to assume that it is self-evidently clear that ignorance is disastrous but it is pervasive and actively encouraged. Popular culture is inimical to serious analytical enquiry; indeed, it is designed to block this out in much the same way as the Romans recognised that bread and circuses were a means to keep a potentially troublesome population occupied. Notwithstanding overwhelming evidence from the past and the present, the curriculum does not appear to be addressing these issues. It is not sufficient to argue that the methodology of problem-based learning is an antidote to populism, post-truth, fake news, denialism and the multitude of other isms. Potentially, it is a powerful antidote, but if it is not actually engaging learner and teacher in the realities of the issues of the day, it will simply produce graduates who are 'oven-ready' for the labour market.

Many of the authors identify an interdisciplinary formation (knowledge and understanding) and approach to problem solving as a prerequisite for a contemporary graduate. As argued by Gregersen, whose exploration of 'broad' interdisciplinarity is circumscribed within a social science perspective, disciplinary silos are an obstacle to effective problem-based learning. Concepts of the interdisciplinary vary from narrow to broad. Future research is needed to explore the extent to which the humanities can contribute a deeper understanding and insight, history, literature, art, philosophy, all have considerable potential for enlarging intellectual horizons and actually providing deeply understood experience of the human condition and insights into contemporary issues such as integration, peace negotiation, scientific disputes. STEM subjects are now placed in a sort of reverence silo, whereas it could be argued, that all graduates should have an understanding of developments in science, technology, engineering and maths, and that STEM graduates for their part need insights provided by the humanities and the social sciences. Of course, it is easy to say this but, in practice, to achieve these interdisciplinary goals means challenging discipline silos and academic career paths, institutional structures, management and resource allocation

models. The prospect of this type of change potentially undermines the confidence of the teacher who is inevitably a subject specialist. True interdisciplinarity requires a radical re-appraisal of the way in which curriculum teams are composed and, in the case of problem-based learning, the way in which problems are constructed and tackled.

Although it is difficult to see it in a populist perspective, an example of an interdisciplinary topic, which has soared up the agenda, is the implementation of the UN Sustainability Development Goals. Jorgensen and Boje (Chap. 15) tackle this topic. They do so at a conceptual level. Although the 17 goals have a conceptual dimension, they are designed to address real-life concerns in the world. Insofar as they have not entered the populist rhetoric, they are oddly out of place in this book and yet because they relate to key global issues, they are highly relevant to all the themes discussed. They require interdisciplinary approaches and are eminently appropriate to the problem-based learning methods because they relate to real-life problems. Indeed, the UN sustainability development goals offer a comprehensive interdisciplinary curriculum agenda for a new world order requiring students to learn how to be responsible and answerable, an ethical purpose often overlooked by PBL apologists. It is an agenda which will require considerable work to achieve their integration in cross-faculty curricula.

Populism and Politics of PBL: A Way Forward

In its rawest form, history offers manifest examples of the way in which opinion can be manipulated. On Palm Sunday, the crowds acclaim 'Alleluia', the following Friday the cry is 'Crucify'. Shakespeare understood this perhaps most effectively in Julius Caesar—while Brutus is speaking the crowd proclaims 'Live Brutus, live, live' but, within a short space under the influence of Mark Anthony, the tune has changed to 'Burn the house of Brutus'. Perhaps Shakespeare also has advice, which might aptly apply to the academic community in the words of Cassius: "Men at some time are masters of their fates. The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves (that we are underlings)". We do not need to rely on literary or religious insights for examples of the way in

which populations may be manipulated. Recent history provides ample illustrations, but we do not seem to have profited from the lessons.

As we maintained earlier, our aim was to stimulate research, discussion, debate on the extent to which populism and its manifestation in all areas of human experience needs to be addressed by the curriculum utilising problem-based learning to prepare graduates to cope with the new world order. We hope that the range of contributors and their insights have gone some way towards this goal. Perhaps inevitably they have revealed, sometimes explicitly and sometimes incidentally, that realising the objective is easier said than done. We feel confident that the virtues of PBL are amply demonstrated, but utilising the strengths to develop an effective curriculum engaged with addressing populist agendas needs further work. The tendency to concentrate on the innate value of PBL may be interpreted as evidence for the view that PBL engenders an attitude of mind, which is necessary to cope with the new world. This is a legitimate position. On the other hand, the focus on the values of PBL itself may reveal a reluctance to engage with the issues, which we have identified, including those highlighted in the first part of Turcan's chapter, challenges which graduates today and tomorrow will encounter. It emerges that the extent to which curriculum content might be shaped and even dominated to address powerful non-academic and non-accountable forces is of less relevance than the methodology embodied in problem-based learning. This leads to a perception that the very methodology of problem-based learning prepares graduates to address societal challenges.

Unfortunately, there is little evidence to support this view. Indeed, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the majority of today's and tomorrow's graduates may be as vulnerable to populist rhetoric as non-graduates, precisely because they are not engaged in a process of consciousness-raising through their curriculum.

If this is a contentious assertion, it nevertheless points to an area for further research, namely the attitude and engagement of academic staff in all disciplines to the wider political, economic and social context in which they are operating and the extent to which they are engaged themselves and/or are engaging or failing to engage their students in this wider

agenda. The questions are relevant at a time when paradoxically governments and society seem to expect universities to provide solutions to the myriad of contemporary challenges and yet shelter behind empty slogans to persuade us all that answers are simple and can be delivered. Through all the current national and global turmoil, it seems that the individual academic, to use the words of one of the authors, 'seeks to remain in the cocoon of their subject and their career'. This reinforces our view that the Vienna Rectors (Vienna Declaration) will have great difficulty in persuading colleagues in all disciplines of the need to combat manifestations of populism and 'strive to prevent and work against': 'post-truth explanations – increasing inequalities, nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, intolerance, polarisation, and radicalisation as well as pseudo-science and pseudo-facts and other threats to democratic and scientific culture'.

Advocates of the PBL methodology would argue that the very virtues which are nurtured through problem-based learning are those which will help combat the populist 'isms'. However, unless these ('isms') are explicitly addressed in the curriculum and openly discussed and debated, the suspicion remains that, in general, their objective is simply to prepare graduates to be effective in their future workplace, which responds to a strong populist theme in relation to the purpose and objective of university education. In that context, perhaps, it is appropriate to remind the academic community of the argument by Zuboff (2019), that Surveillance Capitalism relies on algorithms and censors, machine intelligence and platforms, but it is not the same as any of these, but depends upon undermining individual self-determination, autonomy and decision rights for the sake of an unobstructed flow of behavioural data to feed markets that are about us but not for us. This is a challenge not simply for social scientists and Business Schools, but for all fields of knowledge.

Populist politicians find universities an easy target. Depending on their location on the political spectrum they label the academic community as right wing or left wing but our suspicion is the reverse of this that the academy exception has, for the most part, effectively opted out of active engagement with the current economic, social and political environment. Since this is of fundamental importance to the direction of

curriculum and the outlook of graduates, this view requires further discussion, debate and research to establish its validity. It may be attributed to the new public management profile, which focuses on the individual academic and their delivery of what is required in terms of performance indicators. It may stem from the career and promotion profile, which is not supportive of political engagement. Finally, it may reflect an attitude, which may be encapsulated by the Chorus of the women of Canterbury in *Murder in the Cathedral* (Eliot 1943, 2001), who wish simply to avoid the terror of engagement: *King rules or barons rule; We have suffered various oppression, But mostly we are left to our own devices, And we are content if we are left alone*.

The problem about this attitude, which needs further investigation to discover its truth or not, is that ultimately opting out leaves the terrain wide open for a populist onslaught in which ignorance becomes the weapon of control. With these reflections, we are keen to initiate debate and our strongly held view is that the full engagement of the academic world, learners and teachers, is the only way to ensure a better, inclusive, open, fairer and sustainable society. Committed engagement will mean that the qualities of mind developed through intellectually challenging problem-based learning will be applied to the role of responsible citizenship in the workplace. “In my end is my beginning” (Eliot 1943, 2001).

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