

Management Learning & Education

AMLE Call for Special Issue Papers: Rethinking Business School Structures, Standards, and Success for Neuroinclusive Management Learning and Education

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Guest Editors:

Miriam Moeller (she/her), University of Queensland (Australia) Dana L. Ott (she/her), University of Otago (New Zealand) Matevž (Matt) Rašković, (he/him) University of Technology Auckland (New Zealand) Sophie Hennekam (she/her), Audencia Business School (France) Timothy J. Vogus (he/him), Vanderbilt University (USA) Joy E. Beatty (she/her), Eastern Michigan University (USA) Judith Clair (she/her), Boston College (USA)

AMLE Editor Katrin Muehfeld (she/her), University of Trier (Germany)

Call for Papers

Business schools around the world are undergoing rapid transformation, reflecting questions about their social license (Starkey & Tempest, 2025; University Chancellors Council, 2025), legitimacy and identity (Alajoutsijärvi et al., 2015), changing student demographics (Zhang et al., 2016), technological developments (Clegg & Sarker, 2024; Hughes & Davis, 2024), and evolving understandings of social justice, equity, inclusion, and belonging (Fiset et al., 2025). Amid this period of re-evaluation and change, recognition is growing that an estimated 15-20% of the global population is neurodivergent (Doyle, 2020). With more than half of Gen Z (1997-2012) now identifying as neurodivergent (Palumbo, 2025), it underscores the urgency of advancing theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical conversations about whom business school systems of teaching, assessment, and professional formation are designed to serve – and how they might evolve to achieve greater neuroinclusion.

Neurodiversity, a term collectively developed by neurodivergent individuals (Botha et al., 2024), refers to the full spectrum of natural variation in human cognitive functioning. Individuals who diverge from dominant neurocognitive norms are often described as neurodivergent, encompassing cognitive profiles such as Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, Tourette Syndrome, and other forms of neurodivergence (Doyle et al., forthcoming; Quigley & Gallagher, 2025). These forms of neurodivergence are not deficits to be 'fixed' but reflect different patterns of perception, attention, memory, and communication, which may entail both distinct

challenges and unique strengths in educational and workplace settings (Kersten et al., 2025; Shaw et al., 2024). ADHD individuals, for example, may excel in high-energy, fast-paced problem-solving (Doyle, 2020) but face difficulties with sustained concentration during lengthy case discussions or traditional assessments. Dyslexic learners often demonstrate strong visual-spatial reasoning and creativity (LeFevre-Levy et al., 2023) yet may encounter barriers when coursework relies heavily on time-pressured reading and written tasks.

There has been a marked increase in the number of neurodivergent learners entering higher education in recent years, driven by rising awareness and improved access pathways (McDowall & Kiseleva, 2024). In the UK, for example, up to 2% of university students may meet diagnostic criteria for ASC, with an additional 2-8% potentially being ADHD (Ahmann et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2019). Dyslexia is also widespread, with approximately 5% of higher education students being dyslexic (Clouder et al., 2020). Nonetheless, these figures likely underestimate the true prevalence of neurodivergence in business and higher education as many learners remain undiagnosed or choose not to disclose their neurodivergent status (Clouder et al., 2020; Kennedy et al., 2025).

Business schools traditionally tend to privilege narrow forms of learning, expression, and social interaction (Clouder et al., 2020; Hennekam et al., 2025; McDowall & Kiseleva, 2024) that assume neurotypicality and place the burden of adaptation on neurodivergent individuals (Milton, 2012; Milton et al., 2022). This approach fails to recognize that the challenges of neurodiversity are fundamentally breakdowns in mutual understanding between neurodivergent and neurotypical people grounded in differences in their patterns of attention, communication, and interpretation of social information (e.g., Williams, 2021)—a double empathy problem (Milton, 2012; Milton et al., 2022) rather than one party's mind blindness or lack of empathy. Failing to see the double empathy problem produces pedagogical expectations that can disadvantage those whose strengths and needs do not align with these implicit norms, limiting their ability to fully participate and succeed. For example, a neurotypical academic staff member may misunderstand a neurodivergent student's lack of eye contact or neutral facial expression as signs of lack of preparation or disinterest rather than intentional strategies to effectively manage sensory input and attentional resources.

Pedagogically, group work, a core element of many business schools, similarly assumes strong relational and communication skills, which may not align with all neurocognitive profiles. Similarly, particularities of neurodivergent students, such as hyperfocus among those with ADHD or monotropism, referring to the tendency to focus one's attention on a small or singular number of interests, common among autistic students, are often ignored or positioned as irrelevant (Wood, 2023). Moreover, challenges faced by neurodivergent learners are intensified for postgraduate students, mature learners, and those diagnosed later in life, who often encounter disbelief, inconsistent support, or are completely overlooked by institutions (Butcher & Lane, 2024; Coneyworth et al., 2020).

Even when available, neurodivergent learners may be unaware of available support or may refrain from requesting accommodations to which they are entitled due to the fear of stigmatization (Clouder et al., 2020). These students often attempt to conform to neurotypical norms, masking their difficulties or distinctive traits (Hennekam et al., 2025). They consequently tend to manage their challenges by themselves (Mirfin-

Veitch et al., 2020), a strategy that may prove unsustainable over time for them and their support groups (Hennekam et al., 2025). As a result, and despite being academically capable, degree completions remain low (Chown et al., 2018). For many, the consequences extend beyond poorer academic outcomes to diminished access to meaningful employment (Bury et al., 2024), an issue particularly stark for autistic individuals whose employment rates remain among the lowest of any disability group (ABS, 2022; Alemany & Vermeulen, 2023; Austin & Pisano, 2017; Ezerins et al., 2024; Moeller et al., 2021).

While several excellent special issues have advanced the conversation on neurodiversity in management and organizations, this special issue offers a fundamentally distinct vantage point. Whereas prior collections—such as those in the *Journal of Management & Organization* (2019), *Human Resource Management* (2025), and the forthcoming issues in *Academy of Management Discoveries*, *Personnel Review*, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, and *Group & Organization Management*—center primarily on neurodiversity in relation to employment, inclusion practices, and organizational systems and outcomes, this *Academy of Management Learning & Education* special issue uniquely foregrounds the importance of reimagining management learning and education to better serve all minds and to develop neurodiversity-informed managers who are equipped to make organizations more neuroinclusive.

For this special issue, we encourage conceptual and empirical work that envisions business schools as models of neuroinclusion. Our call also shifts the focus from 'accommodating and managing difference' to 'learning through difference' and understanding how difference, as a form of diversity, enhances learning and group capabilities. In doing so, it extends the dialogue beyond workplace adaptation to examining how neurodiversity both challenges and enriches the processes through which management knowledge is constructed, taught, and understood by learners, and how this also impacts emergent group functions (i.e., decision-making and morality). We therefore invite a more inclusive understanding of learning and knowing in management education, one that values diverse cognitive styles and experiences as integral to the co-creation of knowledge and practice.

In this vein, we invite contributors to explore diverse perspectives that enrich and expand conversations on neurodiversity in management learning and education. In particular, we encourage submissions that move beyond single-diagnosis approaches recognizing the breadth within and across neurodivergences, including: developmental (e.g., ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia), acquired (e.g., traumatic brain injury, epilepsy), mental health (e.g., anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder; Edwards et al., 2024), and physical health conditions (e.g., chronic fatigue syndrome, hearing or vision impairment). These categories are not mutually exclusive and neurodivergent conditions often co-occur. For example, those who present with ADHD and anxiety, or those who are dyspraxic and autistic, may experience both distinctive challenges and synergies in learning and workplaces.

Furthermore, this special issue welcomes contributions that embrace conceptual plurality, engaging with alternative or adjacent conceptualisations of neurodiversity – whether framed as natural variation and ecology (Chapman, 2021) or through disability (Brown & Leigh, 2020), misfit (Billsberry et al., 2023), being 'different' or other evolving terms that capture the complex ways individuals experience (mis)alignment with institutional learning environments and how this also impacts

emergent group functions and group-level outcomes. Embracing such plurality also requires turning the lens toward academic and professional staff who shape these environments. Doing so exposes a broader empirical and theoretical blind spot in understanding the attitudes and experiences of academic and professional staff with disabilities (Anderson, 2006; Brown & Leigh, 2020; Little et al., 2023) and, in particular, those with neurocognitive conditions (Alexander, 2024).

Of interest in this special issue also are how inclusive pedagogy, constructive alignment, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and learner partnership models can transform educational design and practice to better serve the full spectrum of learners (CAST, 2024; Rose & Meyer, 2006). For example, a management educator might offer students multiple ways to demonstrate learning, such as a written essay, an infographic, or forms of digitalization (Walkowiak, 2024), or a recorded presentation, thereby valuing diverse modes of cognition and communication. Similarly, predictable course rhythms and clearly scaffolded tasks can reduce cognitive load and anxiety for neurodivergent students while increasing engagement and clarity for everyone. Finally, incorporating learner partnership models—where students collaborate with educators to co-design learning activities, assessment criteria, or feedback processes—can cultivate a sense of shared ownership, agency, and belonging across the entire student cohort. For business schools, this will result in very real considerations of workload models, academic and professional staff training, and the redistribution of institutional resources to ensure that inclusive pedagogical intentions are supported by genuine structural and financial commitment.

Attention should likewise be directed to an intersectional perspective on neurodivergence (Gottardello et al., 2025), which acknowledges that intersecting identities—such as gender, race, and culture—interact and fundamentally shape how neurological differences are understood and enacted. For example, the experience of a dyslexic woman of color in academia or that of a neurodivergent international student navigating an unfamiliar education system may reveal unique intersections of cognitive, cultural, and structural differences (Crenshaw, 1991; Lewis & Arday, 2023; Rivera, 2022), which offers an opportunity to explore the interactions of dispositional and circumstantial diversity. In particular, we encourage research and reflections from diverse cultural and national contexts which support and extend ecological understandings of neurodiversity and challenge dominant epistemological assumptions. Consequently, we provide a space to decenter Eurocentric and Anglophone paradigms of management learning and education, enabling more culturally grounded understandings of neurodivergence (Atherton et al., 2023; Bernier & McCrimmon, 2022; de Leeuw et al., 2020; Felix & Hennekam, in press; Ott et al., 2025; Tupou et al., 2024). These perspectives will ultimately challenge dominant Western deficit discourses and offer novel pathways for pedagogical and institutional inclusion, as well as opening promising frontiers for the application of institutional theory (Cook, 2024) and intersectionality research (Gottardello et al., 2025).

At a theoretical level, management learning and education continues to be informed by approaches that presume and privilege neurotypicality and associate neurodivergence with medicalized deficits rather than as part of a natural ecology. We posit that institutions that implement inclusive teaching practices often do so without interrogating the deeper epistemic assumptions that define what counts as legitimate knowledge, effective pedagogy, or "good" learning. To illustrate, efforts to

engage neurodiversity in practice and management learning and education research have largely been narrow and at the individual-level, overlooking a more ecological perspective that focuses on the interplay of factors at micro, meso, and macro levels (Chapman, 2021). Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (2000) ecological systems theory—which posits that individual development is shaped by multiple, interrelated environmental layers—may offer a valuable lens for examining how business schools can become more inclusive. For this special issue, we therefore encourage pursuing the above-mentioned ideas and contexts from various theoretical perspectives, epistemological assumptions, and levels of analysis.

In conjunction with the ecological systems view, a range of theoretical lenses, such as social identity theory and identity work, critical race or critical disability theories, queer theory and power lenses, but also decolonial perspectives may be pertinent to studying intersectional identities, forms of oppression, and co-occurring conditions (Mallipeddi & Van Daalen, 2022). Social learning theory and especially self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997), learned helplessness (Kapp, 2022), and the internalization of negative beliefs about their competencies or stigma (Hennekam et al., 2025) might likewise be relevant to studying educational outcomes as well as the school-towork transition of neurodivergent students in business schools (O'Byrne et al., 2019). This is supported by empirical research showing that neurodivergent students often report lower self-efficacy than their neurotypical peers, which may hinder confidence and career readiness (Buckley et al., 2024).

In sum, we encourage contributions that critically examine how insights from neuroscience and neuro-ethics can inform, but should not uncritically determine, approaches to neuroinclusive management learning and education (Cavanaugh et al., 2016; Lindebaum et al., 2018). We invite scholars, educational practitioners, business school leaders, policymakers, and even practitioners from across inclusive education, disability studies, critical management studies, organizational behavior and theory, and other fields to enrich neurodiversity discourse and contribute to a more expansive, socially just, and humanizing vision of management learning and education.

Illustrative Themes and Research Questions

In the context of the **Business of Business Schools**, the following questions could be explored:

- How does neurodiversity help reimagine social justice and DEI in business schools?
- What tensions emerge between performance metrics and inclusion for neurodivergent students, academic and professional staff, and how are such trade-offs effectively managed?
- How do policies on reasonable accommodations align (or conflict) with institutional objectives and wider institutional logics?
- How is neurodiversity effectively addressed in non-WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) environments and institutional settings in higher education contexts?
- How does a country's legal context shape the expectations, obligations, and opportunities for business schools to develop and deliver more neuroinclusive pedagogy?

- How can existing practices and processes within business schools be adjusted and/or redesigned to be more neuroinclusive (e.g., recruiting and selection, onboarding, networking, and organizational culture)?
- How can business schools attract and retain neurodivergent talent (learners, academics and professional staff)?
- How can business schools support neurodivergent academic and professional staff and challenge ableism as an organizational paradigm?
- How do business schools address the neurodiversity of learners, academic, and professional staff at different levels (i.e., undergraduate, postgraduate, executive education) and in different cultural and institutional contexts?

In the context of management learning, the following questions could be explored:

- How do neurodivergent learners, academic and professional staff experience management learning processes differently and what unique challenges do they face?
- What are the experiences of learners and academic and professional staff with intersectional social identities involving neurodiversity?
- What is the role of institutional logics/culture, pedagogy, peer learners, and academic and professional staff in the way neurodivergent individuals and groups experience and navigate their management education, including from an intersectionality perspective?
- What insights can be gleaned from the experiences of neurodivergent learners and academic and professional staff regarding neurotypical norms in management education? What role do visibility and representation specifically play in this?
- How can cross-neurotype (between neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals) collaboration and connection be fostered and leveraged in the classroom and outside it (i.e., bridging the "double empathy problem," Milton, 2012)?
- How do neurodiverse groups of learners (i.e., those with neurotypical and neurodivergent members) work together (e.g., the biases experienced or avoided, the interpersonal challenges) and perform (e.g., task performance, creativity)?
- How do neurodivergent individuals experience the transition into the workforce as well as from secondary school into management education? What practices, supports, and tools aid more successful transitions? How do these transitional practices vary across global cultures?
- What role does executive functioning, sensory processing, or divergent social cognition play in shaping reflection and feedback loops within learning processes?
- In what ways can experiential learning or study abroad be adapted for neurodivergent learners and educators?
- How does neurodiversity inform alternative models of learner identity and transformation?
- What is the impact of educational support on academic achievements and the employability of neurodivergent individuals?
- What role do internships and mentoring play in the academic achievements and work-readiness of neurodivergent management learners?
- How can business schools foster neuro-inclusion as a leadership and management capability?

In the context of **management education**, the following questions could be explored:

- How can universal design for learning and inclusive pedagogy reshape management education?
- How can constructive alignment more effectively incorporate the needs and experiences of neurodivergent learners and educators across different levels and contexts?
- What can we learn from neuro-inclusive education in other fields? What best practices, policies, and procedures can be identified?
- How do assessment and participation norms impact neurodivergent learners' educational outcomes?
- How does neurodiversity intersect with other (potentially) stigmatizing attributes or sources of social identities, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other disabilities among management learners?
- How do individuals with multiple co-occurring neurocognitive conditions navigate higher management education?
- What teaching innovations have emerged in neurodiversity-informed business courses and programs?
- How important is visibility and representation among academic and professional staff?
- How may internalized ableism and embodied pedagogy affect neurodivergent academic and professional staff?
- How do inclusive pedagogies engage with issues of masking, disclosure, and psychological safety?
- How can technology, and in particular artificial intelligence, be meaningfully leveraged to support neurodivergent learners in management education? How can such technologies be used to enhance cross-neurotype collaborations and relationships?
- How are higher education institutions and educators adapting Al-driven educational technologies to support neurodivergent learners in management programs?

Submission types

For this special issue, we invite submissions to all of the *Academy of Management Learning & Education's* peer-reviewed sections, including Research and Reviews, Essays, and Book and Resource Reviews. We particularly welcome research studies based on extensive data—qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method—using any well-executed and rigorous methodology and strong theoretical framing. Finally, related to the issue of representation, we especially encourage submissions from neurodivergent authors and author teams. Submissions will be subject to the normal editorial decision-making and peer-review processes. All the journal's standard formatting and peer review guidelines will apply.

Inquiries

If you have any questions or would like to discuss a possible submission, please contact Miriam Moeller m.moeller@uq.edu.au and Dana L. Ott (data.ott@otago.edu.au). Please note that such consultation is not a precondition,

requirement, or guarantee of acceptance for any submission. Authors who have not consulted with the Guest Editor Team are equally welcome to submit.

Submission details

We invite special issue submissions to occur between 1 November 2026 and 14 December 2026 through the <u>AMLE's manuscript central system</u>.

Prior to submission, we will hold an optional virtual professional development workshop at the end of May 2026, for interested authors to receive feedback on their ideas. Those interested in participating in the workshop should e-mail a 3,000-word proposal (including references) to Miriam Moeller (m.moeller@uq.edu.au) and Dana L. Ott (data.ott@otago.ac.nz) by 13 May 2026.

We also plan to offer workshops to discuss this special issue at the European Academy of Management in June 2026 (Kristiansand, Norway), the European Group of Organisational Studies in July (Bergamo, Italy), the Academy of International Business conference in July 2026 (Manchester, UK), the Academy of Management conference in August 2026 (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) and the Brazilian Academy of Management in October 2026. We will share more details about these and other opportunities when available via the AMLE website and various listservs.

While we encourage interested contributors to participate in these opportunities, they are not a prerequisite for, or a guarantee of, eventual acceptance in the special issue.

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