

BSA President writes to Leicester VC on the proposed closure of Critical Management Studies and Political Economy

Susan Halford, BSA President
11th May 2021

Dear Professor Canagarajah

Subject: The proposed closure of Critical Management Studies and Political Economy

I am writing on behalf of the British Sociological Association, to express our very deep concern about the proposed closure of Critical Management Studies and Political Economy in your Business School. We are in no doubt that this will have profoundly negative consequences for sociological education and research, at the University of Leicester, in the UK and internationally.

Business Schools are inherently interdisciplinary. Indeed, the creative and innovative combination of disciplines from across the Social Sciences, along with specific areas of professional expertise, has been key to their success. Over the years, many Sociologists have contributed to this success, bringing a range of perspectives and substantive expertise that are now part of the lifeblood of the Business School. Much of this is closely tied to the development of Critical Management Studies and Political Economy. These perspectives provide essential theoretical, methodological, and empirical strands of investigation within Business Schools. Without them, for example, it is hard to imagine how the incisive and effective examination of gender and race in business and management would have taken place.

Without sociological insights, business education and research will be irreparably damaged. The sociologies of work, occupations, professions, law, economy, and organisations are all central in the development of graduates who seek employment in a diversified and globalised corporate world. The BSA journal *Work Employment and Society*, established in 1987, provides the intellectual space for exactly this kind of sociological engagement with business and management. Its continued growth and worldwide success over the past 30+ years is a testament to precisely the value and reach of research in this area.

We are not the first to express these concerns. It is quite remarkable to see the range of voices articulating opposition to the proposed plans, from the British Academy of Management and Fellows of the British Academy to a range of professional journals, alumni of the Business School and a petition of over 2500 individual academics that provides a global 'Who's Who' of scholars in the fields of labour market, organization and management research. The recent resignation of your External Examiner and the University and Colleges Union's decision to implement a global 'grey listing' of the University of Leicester begin to demonstrate the very serious impact that the proposed plans may have on the future of the Business School and the University more widely. As the professional association representing British Sociology and British Sociologists, we call on you to reverse this deeply damaging decision and reaffirm the University's unequivocal commitment to academic freedom.

Yours sincerely

Professor Susan Halford
President, British Sociological Association

Letter sent via email to:

Professor Nishan Canagarajah, Vice Chancellor, University of Leicester c/o: Pritty Moman

Cc

Council of the University of Leicester c/o:
Gary Dixon, Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council
Neil Cox, Assistant Secretary to Council and Court