Chapter 10

Recommendations and Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter identified and discussed some fundamental trends and issues in management education, particularly MBA education, from the perspectives of educators, employers and students/graduates. Management education is becoming increasingly connected with employer goals, but there is also a widely perceived need for it to be rigorous, relevant and customised to meet the specific requirements of students/ graduates. The acquisition of knowledge from educators in the process of enhancing managerial effectiveness includes skill development (for meeting employer needs) and self-development (for meeting student/graduate needs). The present focus of management education is on enhanced managerial performance and educators are important insofar as they contribute to this focus.

The integration of educators, employers, and students/graduates is therefore essential as both employers and students/graduates also have the intellectual capacity, not just the financial capacity, to invest in the joint venture of MBA education. The initiative for stimulating the development of knowledge, skills and self, required for enhanced managerial effectiveness, lies with the business schools and the employing organisations.

It is within this context that this chapter attempts to present views on the developmental challenges and opportunities likely to confront MBA education in Australian universities. It explores the need for changed value systems and practices of the educators, employers and students/ graduates and the impact such change will have on management education. It highlights a range of necessary modifications and illustrates how these modifications may have critical importance for managerial and organisational effectiveness. The chapter further stresses that, if a purposeful development of MBA degrees is to be maximised as appropriate for Australian managers, all three parties concerned must collaborate in

addressing some of the fundamental and micro issues regarding management education.

Within the chapter, the following main sections form the framework of presentation:

1. *An Observation Derived from Research Findings;*
2. *Recommendations for Change;*
3. *The Karpin Report and the Role of Government;*
4. *Implications for Future Research in MBA Education; and*
5. *Conclusion of Research and Addressing the Research Questions.*

AN OBSERVATION DERIVED FROM RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study on MBA education in Australian universities has highlighted the country's scarcity of business leaders (see, for example, Chapter 7, pages 189 and 192). It also reflects that the MBA programmes currently provided by the business schools of the universities have not produced such leaders. If anything, management education appears to be in urgent need of a driving purpose. Critics of management education, among them an increasing number of educators, demand that it promotes both knowledge and skills in managing business and people. This demand echoes what many business and management commentators have been saying for several decades. The data from this current research indicate that business schools, in response to market pressure, are increasingly moving away from the traditional MBA model of quantitative knowledge and paying more attention to the qualitative aspects of skills, in addition to pedagogical reviews or other piece-meal improvements. However, in the midst of these changes, the MBA qualification itself appears to be in a state of aimless drift without any clear direction for development. While there are expressions of concern from all three groups of respondents for a break-through, a specific framework for change appears to be significantly lacking.

This research also emphasises the fact that the field of management education is a complex and diverse one. Inputs, such as assumptions, values, needs and expectations, of educators, employers, and students/graduates, hinge on the outputs from such education and, in turn, upon the effectiveness of managerial performance. For example:

- <u>MBA Educators</u> are concerned with the importance of maintaining their role and reputation as innovators in management education. They acknowledge a need to extend MBA education to serve a very large potential market of students who aspire to a managerial career or are committed towards managerial effectiveness of their organisations. There is an acute awareness that to achieve this, educators must build a close alliance with business organisations on pedagogical issues and seek opportunities in research and consultancy for cross-fertilization of ideas and practices, together with mutual exchange of facilities for managerial education and development.

- <u>MBA Employers</u> are concerned with the importance of active and, where appropriate, equal participation in pioneering their own managers' education and development. They see a need to develop an MBA education which delivers value to the organisation, at the same time enhancing managerial skills and knowledge, so that graduates are recruitable and that sponsorships of the education serve as a means of retaining ambitious managers within the organisation. To achieve this, these employers must have a share in the control of MBA education – for example, its design (which must be relevant to the enterprising needs of the company), its structure (which must offer a minimum absence of staff from their posts), and its future development (which must be a fully integrated part of the corporate management training and developmental programmes). They must also build close alliances with business schools and their educators, and share with them their management development experience and facilities.

- <u>MBA Students/Graduates</u> are concerned with the importance of securing a management career through opportunity for self-development, skill-acquisition and knowledge-assimilation. They agree that there is also a need for an MBA education which can be tailored to specific individual and organisational requirements, and to organisations with supervisors whose knowledge and understanding of management education enhances their support in the career development of graduates. To achieve this, these students/graduates will need to build close alliances with both educators and employers, seeking to explore their strengths and weaknesses, and be prepared to fill the gaps in their relevant business skills and knowledge essential to sustain a management career.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

The Need For Change

The complex relationships between MBA educators, employers and students/graduates are well reflected in the above observation. More important, *these research findings reveal a significant lack of agreement between the three major stakeholder groups of the MBA education.*

First, it transpires that business schools and their educators have in fact two customers for their MBA degrees, the students/graduates who take the courses and the companies who then employ them. Currently, while the students are still keen, the companies are dissatisfied with the quality of the product they are buying through sponsorships or recruitment. If the MBA education is to be of real use to these two groups of customers, it will have to undergo radical restructuring and a great deal of modification in teaching and research development will have to be done to make management education relevant to them.

For example, among employers and student/graduate respondents, and despite the quantitative emphasis of a large number of educator respondents, there is a strong feeling that while management may be an application of different scientific fields of knowledge, (such as in economics, sociology, psychology, and mathematics), it is *not* a science. Perceptions of these two groups of respondents in particular reveal that management has much to do with people and value systems and backgrounds. To them, the emergent management style

- is people oriented;
- stresses the importance of interactions and negotiations;
- acknowledges and incorporates cultural diversity, made necessary by the cultural differences across functions, organisations, businesses and nationalities;
- emphasises the stakeholders rather than the shareholders; and
- takes both a short-term and long-term perspective, through continuous adaptation to customer needs.

However, the style of management education perceived as appropriate (and currently conducted) by the educator respondents implies quite different value systems. To them, management:

- is functionalistic;

- is strongly competitive;

- is individualistic, through personal achievement and professional mobility;

- places emphasis on shareholders' gains; and

- is product orientated rather than customer orientated.

Indeed, the very management style currently replicated by business schools and their educators in their MBA programmes.

Such extremes between perceptions naturally create a strong but negative impact on the MBA education. Up to the present, the degree has been designed to provide solutions in all areas of business – finance, sales, management, accounting and so on – as though all problems are of the same importance, the same nature, the same complexity. As a result, educators tend to become analytical, rational, financially oriented and bureaucratic. The graduates are standard products to be assimilated for standardised jobs, and as their entrepreneurial spirit and adaptation skills are almost non-existent they tend to over-manage and under-lead.

Employer respondents, when asked to list the qualities and attitudes they require in an MBA graduate, frequently offered a list of desired attributes which, in reality, would require many years of a manager's career to develop. There are obviously different and even opposite concepts of the MBA education. The educators' concept is a singular-model of generalist management education. The employers' concept is (as is that of students and graduates, many of whom are practising managers) an all-purpose, multi-specialist management education. It may be argued that both concepts of the MBA degree are illusions as no curriculum, no matter how elaborate, can provide satisfactory results across the full spectrum of needs.

It transpires, then, that what is needed for the MBA education is much more than just fulfilling industry demands through adding employer-required topics to the curriculum, seeking qualified staff, improving teaching techniques, broadening research and consultancy interests, or even initiating an active integrative treatment of the MBA curriculum. In fact, by accommodating employer demands in this way, educators have implicitly let employers believe that an expanded MBA curriculum can solve all management education problems.

However, within these pedagogical changes lie a few fundamental questions which educators, employers and students/graduates should ask themselves. Do they want to continue MBA education in the same manner? Are they successfully serving

the changing needs of *all* of their stakeholders and of the Australian society as a whole? Why is it so difficult for the individuals within the three groups to recognise that the world has changed and that they must therefore change either their institutions or themselves? Through MBA programmes, educators are expected to teach, employers are expected to effect and students/graduates are expected to learn how to implement changes in Australian business and management. Yet, they themselves do not seem able to implement changes in their operations and practices relative to the MBA programmes. While answers for these questions are not always clear, this research suggests as being imperative that educators, employers and students/graduates be willing to remodel the process of MBA education so that it fits into the complex and interactive environment of Australian business today and tomorrow.

Underlying the will to change the MBA process lies, perhaps most important, the will to remodel one's *values*. In turn, remodelled values will effect behavioural changes or *practices*.

The following sections illustrate recommendations for change for MBA educators, employers and students/graduates, first in value systems and then in practices.

Remodelling MBA Value Systems

Change in educators' values

A switch of priorities, for example, naturally implies a significant attitudinal change on the part of many MBA educators. The data point to the need to remodel at least three current value groups:

1.   A customer-centred MBA education. This focus alone necessitates a whole range of cultural values to be tackled and demands the recognition and acceptance by the educators, if greater effectiveness of the MBA programmes is to be achieved. Educators, instead of focusing on themselves, will have to direct their focus to managerial performance and accept that a starting point for an MBA programme is an understanding of current or future performance demands which confront both the organisations and the managers who are undergoing the educational process. The quality of an educator's performance will have to be defined by the 'customer', which is no less than the current practice of effective organisations.

Unavoidably, educators will have to commit themselves to seeking support and approval about quality and view change as constant.

This means that adaptations to change will have to be built into the way the business schools and the educators operate and that learning needs, body of knowledge of business and management, learning process and various other MBA-related issues are being continuously examined to ensure consistent, relevant and effective education for managers. Educators must also realise that expert authority is based on competence in the educational process. They must appreciate that the business schools' claim to be *the* appropriate provider of management education is dependent on the educators' expertise and ability in designing and facilitating effective approaches and resources for managerial learning, rather than on the traditionally recognised image of academic authority.

2.   View change as beneficial. Attention to the above values alone will result in very different behaviours on the part of the MBA educators and subsequent outcomes of the business schools and the MBA degree. To the educators, it is necessary to view change as beneficial, not something to be feared and avoided - and to understand that continuous review and curriculum development are essential to academic excellence. In meeting the demands of the ever-expanding business world and, in turn, the demands placed upon the MBA graduates, all educators have to be aware of current trends such as entrepreneurship and globalisation, and respond accordingly by implementing needed changes and even 're-tooling'.

MBA programmes also have to provide the skills and tools to meet today's technological and human resource challenges. The MBA product - the graduates - equipped with global perspectives, with well-founded ethics and values, and with technical and people skills that will assist them as they move into the next century, are then able to progress into the leadership world, adequately prepared for the needs of management.

3.   Significant shift of priorities. Indeed, viewing change as beneficial will create a very different image of the MBA degree in contrast to its current, apparent lack of developmental focus. To the educators, this new image will demand a significant shift of priorities. Not only will such a change take time, (such as time away from discipline-oriented research and other traditional career-enhancing activities), but it will necessitate the formulation of different rules concerning the way they operate as business academics

Under the new image of the MBA degree, they would teach only what senior managers, or a current group of management students, need to know, not what they themselves are interested in. They will be responsible not only for the design and delivery of their functional specialities, but also for the effective learning of those particular areas. In view of the need to integrate the different learnings in an MBA curriculum to the greatest extent possible, rather than relying on a capstone course at the end of the programme - such as in the format of a dissertation (the traditional and current practice) - they will have to work together as a team throughout the curriculum. Their own effectiveness will therefore be open to scrutiny by their colleagues. The content and delivery approach for their functional specialities may have to be restructured, the material used needing justification and approval by the team. The grading system, the way topics are interwoven into the daily class schedule, their choice of methods, activities, assignments or projects, practically every facet of their MBA-related work will be open to discussion and the opinions of their colleagues. They will have to give greatly increased time to working together rather than on their own and they will have to accommodate the decisions of the group. All in all, they will have to surrender part of what they normally hold very dear, almost sacred - their academic autonomy and individualism.

Change in employers' values

Traditionally, employers expect management educators, through research and consultancy activities and through teaching, to raise questions and arrive at solutions which address the needs of the business and other organisations in the community. This expectation is indeed a tall order and one that often ends in many employer disappointments. More often than not, there are more questions raised than answered and even then there is seldom one or even a best answer. This is, however, the purpose of management research or education.

1.   Expectations of business schools and educators. It appears that employers, dependent on the MBA education to provide an answer for every aspect of their managerial problems, have been expecting too much; and the higher the expectation, the more critical they are of the educators. While it may have been established that management education has a function to satisfy industry needs, and educators have a responsibility to ensure that these needs are met, it appears that a rethinking of priority is necessary.

Employers perhaps need to ask a more fundamental question - "Who is in a better position to identify and realise the unique requirements of business and

management *before* an appropriate course of action or tools (could be in the form of a business education, a developmental programme, a group of educators or consultants, or others) can be devised and utilized to fulfil these requirements?"

2.   Initiative in management education. Employer respondents often claimed that the world of business is rapidly changing but management educators have remained static, living in an 'academic bubble' and, as a result, the management education offered is largely irrelevant – it lacks quality in addressing the needs of modern business. However, there is little indication that the employers have made any concerted effort to communicate the business changes, the implications, the impact, the modern needs, or other related issues to the educators.

In fact, management literature of the past decade at least also reveals the same state of affairs. There have been repeated emphasis on and calls for communication of this nature, from both educators and employers – but there is little evidence of employer initiatives or any structured approach to improve or 'ignite' communication. Whose role it is to identify modern management requirements is largely unclear. In this research, employer respondents frequently stated that they lack the time, that it is the role of the educators and that academic complacency is in the way.

3.   Part-ownership of problems in management education. Academic complacency can certainly represent a true deterrent to effective communication, but the crux of the matter is who can do a better job in identifying what the problems really are, their scope, the relevant environment, the type of knowledge or expertise required, or the best ways by which to solve the problems than the owners of the major problems, that is, the employers? Decades of academic and management research might have uncovered some criteria and measures in addressing management needs, such as the need for enterprising and interactive managers. However, despite the demand for business and people skills clearly emphasised in this research, educators are singularly unconvinced that these skills will guarantee organisational profits or effectiveness.

The question as to what makes successful business and management still looms large. It may be argued that without concerted input from employers, business educators (or researchers) being 'outsiders' or 'inactive practitioners' of business and management will remain dysfunctional as identifiers of business needs or creators of management solutions. It appears that while many employers have willingly adjusted to new business and organisational changes, they have neglected to pursue those changes which are essential for them to realise managerial excellence

Change in students'/graduates' values

The popularity of management careers among students entering MBA programmes is reflected in their efforts to prepare for the competitive managerial job market. Interest in MBA education remains high, despite widespread employer criticism and a perception that such education is inadequate for a career in management. This research indicates that for many of the thousands of technically trained professionals in Australia, the MBA degree is perceived as being an opportunity to shape or redirect their careers into business and management. For example, the engineer who is interested in management, the teacher seeking other opportunities, the sales representative eager to advance in the organisation, the aspiring entrepreneur who recognises that a good idea alone cannot grow a business or create a new industry.

These potential managers have come to learn that, to protect themselves from economic uncertainty, they have to engage in building a portfolio of business and management skills, contacts, experiences and credentials. They engage in personal strategic planning which focuses on anticipating the future, minimising unknowns, controlling risks and obtaining goals. It is not surprising that many students with this background are motivated and view the MBA degree as an opportunity to learn new skills, study new concepts, experience new modes of analysis, and are more determined than ever to pursue the degree with passion and commitment.

1.   <u>Self-serving need and expectation of an MBA education.</u> Data indicate that currently MBA students are being prepared for the managerial world through advice imparted to them by management educators. Increasingly, however, the advice of their corporate employers is exerting a stronger influence on their education. While the educators stress the importance of core knowledge, the employers stress the importance of application skills. It is true to say that the needs and expectations of the students often reflect these foci of the educators and employers. However, the overwhelming concern for career and security ensures that student/graduate respondents have a distinct self-serving priority of renewal for the purpose of career advancement.

The data and literature of this research reveal that MBA students/graduates appear to have the smallest voice regarding the development of MBA education. It is unclear if this small voice is the result of lack of interest in the common good of management education. What is clear, however, is that their expectations of the MBA

degree and their corporate experience as graduates will become increasingly a major challenge to both educators and employers. For example, together with the educators, they will play a vital role in exploring the core knowledge in key management areas of concern to MBA students/graduates, now and in the next century, and how this core knowledge will change in five, ten, or twenty years' time. Together with the employers, they will be important in exploring the technical skills which MBA students/graduates find essential for success in the managerial job market, and the life expectancy of these skills. Students/graduates, educators and employers may need to foster together an MBA experience, ensuring total quality as well as a capacity for sustainability in a rapidly changing world of knowledge and skills.

2.   Responsibility for self-development. This research confirms that managers are increasingly taking responsibility for their own development. There is a genuine interest in the whole idea of better management. Not only do individuals wish to improve their personal performance, but the whole business would now widely accept that good management is a major key to organisation survival in the increasingly competitive markets. Customer service campaigns, product development, cost control and quality maintenance, are only some of the vital ingredients of success – activities which cannot be effected without expert management performance from concept on to implementation and beyond.

Although employers in general appear to encourage individuals to identify their strengths and limitations and build on the former, the research indicates that most employers, because of a scarcity of resources, concentrate on their higher-potential employees, directing them and supporting them (in terms of organisational time, cost and energy) towards specific forms of development. To many individuals and potential managers, seeing their selected colleagues being groomed for managerial success only convinces them that participation in business and management-related education is a necessary prerequisite for higher office and can suitably prepare them for that office.

Among the student/graduate respondents interviewed, 77% of them had self-funded their MBA programmes, 50% had interrupted their careers in order to give full time attention to the study, 46% are between 31-40 years of age and another 46% are between 41-50 years of age. It appears that self-development is no longer a concept which is only talked about but not pursued and to many aspiring managers, it has become an imperative, regardless of age or experience. There will be a growing number of individuals from a variety of organisations and from a greater

variety of age range than is the tradition, who, not wishing to be left out by their employers, will seek direct assistance from the business schools in order to prepare themselves for managerial success.

3.   Proactive stance with respect to own educational experience. Student/ graduate respondents have emphasised that in the MBA programmes experiential methods such as syndicate work and team projects adopted by some of the educators provide them with opportunities to develop insight, skills in self-analysis and practice in exercising the managerial function. These activities have enabled them to learn about their own managerial talents and potential and develop specific personal aspirations.

However, students need to be encouraged to take a central role in the whole system and process of the MBA education. To help shape their managerial career, they have to exert influence on management education. They will also need to assume more significant leadership responsibility, an essential element which characterises a managerial career.

Seeking the opportunity and taking pride in raising standards should be regarded as a new educational paradigm. MBA students/graduates, with their strong education and work experience background, are well placed as a powerful and cohesive group for identifying areas needing change and for improving their own education. As they practise the principles of continuous improvement, respond to a changing environment and to customer satisfaction, as well as develop a positive attitude to the life-long process of learning and development, not only will they see firsthand the kind of managers needed to operate successful businesses, but they will actually shape their own future. The involvement of students/graduates is another way of ensuring that the outside world is brought into the workings of the business schools and their educators.

Remodelling MBA Practices

Change in educators' practices

Changed practices required of the educators do not stop at a changed pattern of interaction between important stakeholders. The pursuit of strategies to meet customer needs has generated the need for a holistic understanding of, among other things, what the employers' organisations are, what they value in MBA graduates,

what qualities they require, and how graduates are expected to work in their managerial jobs.

1.   Recognise the gaps in customer understanding. First of all MBA educators may have to recognise that they have failed to understand correctly what their customers need and expect. Overcoming this first step will not be an easy task, as evidenced by the data. The majority of educators firmly believe that they know what employers and students want from management education. Nevertheless, there are gaps between what educators are doing and what business and organisations expect of them. These data are consistent with what employers have been saying for a long time, that is, that MBA programmes need to include fewer technical and analytical skills and more people skills - an understanding of organisational reality and a better perception of the integration of organisation functions.

The gaps also reveal that many educators lack sufficient business experience to address the pressing issues facing today's managers. Instead, they over-emphasise function-specific knowledge with insufficient or little regard for developing the cross-functional aspects of management. This lack of business and cross-functional awareness further discourages development of those broad insights necessary for management, but encourages development of analytical skills while sacrificing interpersonal, organisational and system-building skills.

2.   Partnership with employers and students/graduates. Recognition of the above impediment to current MBA programmes has a significant impact on educator practice. It means that the nature of academic leadership (which traditionally lies in business schools and its educators) must inevitably change to a partnership with industry, employers and students/graduates. The theme of such a partnership is not new, but this current data reveal that many educators adopt a very simplistic view of it. Educator respondents have given the distinct impression that it is easier to state the principles of partnership than to have them delivered and that maintaining academic independence is essential to their role. Not only have they neglected to address the specific problems which business and its organisations are facing, but they have also failed to recognise the far-reaching consequences of their neglect for their schools.

This research reveals that Australian organisations are increasingly 'growing their own' top managers without utilising MBA programmes. Some organisations have designed alternate post-graduate status programmes that are company-focused, through incorporating parts of the MBA education in their executive programmes. These alternate programmes usually offer a broad mix of education and experience.

It appears that the line between business education and executive development, between provider and user, and between expert authority and ownership of knowledge or skill, has become blurred. What is distinctly clear, however, is an emerging trend, or need, for close co-operation between educators, employers, and students/graduates.

It also appears that MBA educators can gain as much as their customer organisations from close collaboration, f not more. If MBA education is entering an era of industry or company-specific courses, the resultant close collaboration with industry will provide educators with valuable exposure to real business problems for incorporation into their teaching programmes. Even more challenging is the prospect that the focus of management education is likely to move away from educating individuals to educating whole organisations - away from concentration on business school experience to a variety of school and on-the-job experience. To do this effectively, educators will have to work far more closely with these organisations.

3.   Serve the life-long educational needs of managers. One can't help but wonder if the resistance of some of the educators for the sake of preserving academic independence is sustainable. In view of the ever-changing nature of business and organisations, and as a consequence, management education, it appears that business schools will have little choice but to offer ever-increasing variety. If not, the organisations which would otherwise have been their customers will fill the gap with their own in-house programmes.

Can educators afford to regard this emerging trend as a minor threat? The need for a new generation of internationally competent managers to take Australian organisations into the next century is becoming increasingly obvious - a fact which is reflected in some of the plans that business schools have for the development of their MBA programmes. For example, one of the three schools in this research has planned a series of programmes for its MBA graduates. The school hopes that students will come for the MBA course, then return at intervals throughout their careers for courses of varying length, tailored both to their individual needs and to those of their company. The MBA co-ordinator of this school stated that many of the school's MBA alumni are already taking executive courses at other schools for the sake of variety. This school will need to offer an even-wider variety of programmes if it is to cater for the future needs of most of its MBA graduates. Certainly this strategy will open another market niche for the school, but more importantly it underscores an issue often overlooked in current MBA programmes, that in the

pursuit of relevance and quality, business education should also aim at serving a life-long educational need of the managers.

4. <u>Help managers to help themselves.</u> The majority of educator respondents repeatedly emphasised that MBA education should not be seen as a 'quick-fix' solution for organisation problems. The argument appears to be that educators are a resource whose function is to help management students to take responsibility for their own development. In other words, the MBA degree, like any other form of education, has a purpose of empowerment, of 'helping managers to help themselves'. Some of the educator respondents have insisted that the broad-based MBA education is designed to help managers to look into the future, to identify and analyse problems, to cope with change and, above all, to develop a continued ability to learn. "Learning to learn is probably the most single quality success factor" (Ed:11) for MBA graduates - the educators 'open' their minds so that hopefully they will go on learning for the rest of their lives.

However, the data demonstrate that this notion of the MBA degree has been largely discarded by employers, who regard that as a by-product, rather than the goal, of the education. Hopefully, employers' increasing demands for managerial education which encompasses the expertise and experience of both business schools and organisations will endorse the view that management career development is a life-long experience of learning to learn.

5. <u>Effect quality cultural change in business schools.</u> What all these changed practices indicate is that underneath all the emerging trends concerning the MBA degree, there is an immediate and deep-seated need for cultural change in management education. Increasingly organisations are having to market their culture, not simply their products, in order to compete successfully. The most common current image organisations attempt to sell is 'quality', but it is only successful if the appropriate quality culture thrives throughout the organisation.

Perhaps the real challenge to business schools and educators lies not only in changing what they teach, but in the image they seek to project to employers and students. More progressive educators are attempting to project an image of more sensitivity to and active learning from businesses, accepting that mutual learning is crucial in reshaping the education and development of managers. As they introduce their students to team learning, international thinking and the concept of life-long education, they must encourage them to work in close collaboration with industry, learn from their colleagues and international counterparts, engage in a continuous, even life-long, process of examining and perhaps modifying their own values and

attitudes, to become open minded and develop personal strategies to deal with resistance to change.

By claiming quality in MBA education and its product and by claiming to teach quality to their students, educators have to personally demonstrate that they too pursue quality. This research indicates that business schools and their educators have a way to go in ensuring that their operations are of real quality value to their customers. This may well encompass the remodelling of educator selection, motivation, career-orientation and professional development processes. While it could well take a decade or more to change practices, in the process turning the educators' world up-side down, the alternative is to rest on their fast-fading glories and allow the world of business to pass them by.

It may be true to say that only through such fundamental cultural change will educators earn the reputation as innovators in business education, and serve effectively the very large potential market of managers who are committed not only to their personal career success, but also to the success of their organisations – a commitment of great significance to the health and competitiveness of the Australian economy.

Change in employers' practices

This research has revealed an emerging trend of employers 'abandoning' the MBA model and seek alternative routes for educating and developing their managers. This reaction is understandable as decades of calls for improvement to MBA programmes to satisfy their needs have not been heeded. Regardless of that past experience, it is imperative that employers play a more positive and active role in developing the suitability and success of MBA education.

Employers must:

1. clarify what is required from a manager of business and organisation. The data revealed that too many organisations fail to invest enough time in order to understand and define precisely the type of new managers they want. Organisations are prepared to spend many months with teams of experts in engineering, production or marketing, determining exactly what is needed in the components of certain products. The same organisations seldom devote more than a cursory discussion to what they need in their new managers. Even then, the discussion is rarely detailed

Employer respondents have frequently expressed the need for a new breed of managers, leaders who have a greater appreciation of business-wide issues as opposed to function-specific details and strong abilities to work in cross-functional teams. Yet, the importance of this generalist perspective is emphasised often as much as the need for various functional specialities such as in marketing, finance or entrepreneurialship. But then the same respondents indicated that they require a type of manager who excels at only a limited set of skills which the organisation really needs! This reveals a situation of confusion and mismatch.

For decades, MBA educators have been turning out generalist managers believing that this is what the market needed. Yet, apparently, that product is inadequate to meet the employers' demand.

2. formulate an expert team of practising managers to investigate the broad and specific issues of modern business. Research data indicate that currently educators *assume* that employers seek the following proficiencies in new managers: *primarily,*

- the ability to integrate the many facets of business and organisation, based on a strong knowledge of functional areas, within the broader context of overall objectives and major systems of the organisation;

- the awareness of current business issues and the ability to interact with the environment, design and conduct effectiveness experiments;

- the familiarity with theories underlying systems development, quantitative tools and experience in application, concepts of problem-prevention and problem-solving;

- the global awareness of world-class competitions, politics and cultures;

- the knowledge of new technologies, including managing information and basic understanding of new processes, products, services and other new technologies;

- the understanding of social responsibility and the ethical dilemmas within and outside the organisational environment, and clear articulation of values and concepts of personal integrity; and

less important,

- the skills in dealing with organisational realities, taking risks, getting things accomplished, influencing changes, and dealing with frustrations;

- the commitment to improving interpersonal skills on communication, team-building, negotiation, leadership and valuing cultural diversity.

This set of assumptions appears to have been used as the basis for an expanded MBA curriculum and a changing approach to teaching and learning. For example,

educator respondents reported more out-of-class activities and elective courses, amended co. e curricula, action learning and different approaches to assignments, projects and grading systems.

Are the assumptions correct and the changes appropriate? Widespread criticism, reported in the literature and revealed from research data, directed at the MBA degree and the graduates indicate that the answer to this question is negative. How many of these assumptions are founded on concrete ideas, derived from those business and management needs identified and realised by employers? Data reveal that educators, in their attempt to satisfy employers' demand for change, have taken charge to develop their assumptions, but based more on employer criticisms than anything else. Employer respondents, when asked to articulate their needs and how these needs could be met were, most of the time, unclear about their own requirements and the appropriate course of action to take, being more ready to describe organisational and managerial problems. Few of them were able to identify the causes of the problems, not to mention a structured approach in realizing what and how solutions could be found. Most of them seem prepared, however, to leave it to the educators, whom they often regard as 'outsiders' and 'inactive practitioners' of business and management, to present them with the solutions.

It would appear imperative that employing organisations should formulate an expert team of practising managers and recruiters to investigate the broad and specific issues of modern business and describe the exact type of leaders required.

3.	build a mutually beneficial partnership between educators and students/graduates. Business organisations in general invest heavily in time and effort to build partnership relationships with the supplying companies. Buying and supplying organisations meet at each other's facilities regularly, detailing what each can offer the other. There is a great deal of exploratory discussion about what the future should hold for the partnership and considerable effort is made to link the success of one partner to the success of the other.

However, the relationship between employing organisations and the business schools and their students/graduates is often strained, or at best at arms-length. Some employer respondents reported that they have sought collaboration with selected business schools and educators, pursuing the need to design and accredit an alternative management education more suited to their organisations. Most of these respondents knew little, if anything at all, of the operations and products of the schools from which they often recruit their managers, to which they often entrust and sponsor the education of their managers, or to which they make generous

endowments! The majority of those who have sponsored or recruited MBA students/graduates appear to have never visited any business schools or educators to gather information about students, or to assess the quality of the management education.

These employers have obviously failed to take advantage of the many rich opportunities that a business school may offer in a manner similar to other supplying organisations.

4.   be committed to holistic and long-term involvement in the MBA education. Business organisations also actively seek alliance, if necessary around the world, with suppliers who can deliver the right service at the right price and at the right time. This includes identifying those who are able to collaborate with an organisation in a long-term partnership to continuously upgrade its final products. Each organisation looks for suppliers who have a corporate culture which complements their own, particularly those who regard them as important customers and do not seem to reserve their best service for only the largest organisations in the industry.

This research indicates that employers' efforts in selecting an education programme for their managers are far less selective. While some employers gather printed information and others make telephone enquiries, extremely few of them appear to have conducted serious comparisons of the MBA programmes offered. Furthermore, it appears they tend to select programmes based on the perceived reputation of the business schools, even though they have reservations about certain aspects of these schools and their programmes.

One employer respondent (a vice-president in human resource management, whose organisation is committed to a strategy of total quality management, and who has expressed high dissatisfaction with the MBA programmes and the graduates) indicated that as there is little knowledge about the capabilities of his company's MBA recruits, most of whom have been company-sponsored, there is a policy to deliberately and actively include these recruits in the in-house executive development programmes although these programmes may duplicate some components of the MBA degree. Not surprisingly, this company does not have any structured approach to assess the managerial potential of these recruits. The resulting high turnover rate has become another source of disappointment about the MBA employees.

It appears that considerable training resources and disappointment can be saved, and the holistic characteristics of the total quality of an organisation can be maintained, if employers establish the same type of specific and demanding relationship with the business schools as the partnership they secure with their other suppliers. In so saying, it should be noted that some employers already have short-term partnerships with business schools in which they act as guest lecturers, sit in advisory committees, fund research and consultancy contracts, involve themselves in internship programmes and other projects for MBA students, or co-author papers with educators. All of these serve to provide an ideal foundation for much needed, comprehensive and long-term partnerships.

5.   initiate meaningful dialogue with and feedback from the educators. Business organisations usually work diligently at being good customers in order to harvest full advantage from their purchase. This entails providing their suppliers with candid and constructive feedback on the goods and services bought. As a result, these organisations benefit from improved products and services, and their suppliers benefit from maintaining their customers.

However, such open communication appears to be seldom sought or achieved between employers and MBA educators. Employer respondents who frequently indicated that they 'do not have a voice' in management education and that business school educators are 'intimidating', also admitted that they rarely approach the schools directly to offer any sort of feedback, negative or positive, on the MBA programmes. None of the employer respondents had conducted any sort of systematic study of the effectiveness of their MBA recruits to the organisation. The majority appear to rely on the reports from management commentators or researchers who have indirectly expressed their concerns through media publications.

This seemingly 'polite' but passive and reactive attitude towards business educators is surprising, as it is unimaginable that the same employers are easily intimated by their other suppliers, or that they would hesitate or be any less rigorous in evaluating any other services they buy. Among the employer respondents, there is an acute awareness of the damaging effects of this silence – the sense of powerlessness to change the situation is overwhelming and there is also a strong sense that they are 'victims' rather than customers' of MBA education.

The major problems are lack of mutual and active contacts between employers and educators, lack of specific information about MBA education and lack of expertise in suitably appraising the products of management education. Employers are the obvious source of constructive feedback. For the MBA education to

be effective, continued employer input is imperative. Employers have to change their current ineffective interaction with educators and, as with their other suppliers, work more closely and openly with them. Given the importance of good management to an organisation, the relationship with business schools and educators should be among the strongest relationships employers have with any of their suppliers. Only with the combined experiential and innovative input of both employers and educators can positive results be achieved for the Australian business sector and MBA programmes alike.

6.   good management practices relative to MBA programmes. However, such partnerships and relationships with business schools and educators are unlikely to flourish unless employers are willing to be committed to them - in the form of support, encouragement and participation. Employers must be honest enough to admit that it is both unrealistic and impossible to credit all the deficiencies and problems of MBA education to the educators. They too have to invest in the education if they wish to thrive in it, draw on it and benefit from it, just as they need to invest in various business, organisation or their own in-house staff development projects in order to yield future pay-offs.

It is interesting to note from this research that some senior human resource management officials of employing organisations have expended substantial corporate time, effort and finances in planning and ensuring the effectiveness of in-company executive training and development programmes. They have also incurred comparatively large expenses in sponsoring MBA students or recruiting graduates. However, they have not given the same serious attention or offered similar input to MBA programmes.

These in-house executive learning programmes exhibit sound management and education principles and strategies. As described by a Training Manager among the employer respondents, he would first seek the advice and experience of the learner-manager's supervisor in identifying learning needs, such as specifying the types of work situations the learner-manager have encountered, the types of work skills to be required, or the strengths and weaknesses of the individual. Then jointly they determine the learner-manager's development needs and goals and develop mutual expectations in terms of learning outcomes. For the transfer of learning to occur, opportunities are provided for the learner-manager to apply what has been learned. The supervisor and learner-manager develop an action plan based on the learner-manager's plan for implementing new knowledge, and on the supervisor's and the organisation's goals. Information and feedback from the supervisor on the

success of this application allows the learner-manager to adjust his/her actions accordingly, and the supervisor to identify new learnings or further reviews to check progress. Not only are work related problems being addressed, but a revised relationship has evolved between learner-manager and supervisor.

Often, the final step is a an extensive follow-up discussion between this Training Manager and the learner-manager's supervisor on how the supervisor has perceived the learning programme, if the learning objectives have been met, whether the learner-manager has successfully integrated the learning into his/her work, and how the programme could have been improved. In working through these questions, the two parties cement a partnership which creates and reinforces a learning environment in the work setting. This relationship sets the stage for future organisational successes.

Clearly, this research indicates that these good management and education practices have not been applied to MBA education. Among the employer respondents, there is a distinct attitude that MBA degrees are business school programmes and therefore it is the business schools' and their educators' responsibility to identify the problems and seek effective solutions, on the assumption that if the problems are not solved the employers would abandon the degree and look for alternative management education. Frequently student/graduate respondents reported that they attended the MBA programmes, experienced the new knowledge and then returned to the work environment where that learning was not reinforced or encouraged. At the same time, however, their supervisors or employers complain that graduates lack implementation or application skills!

While acknowledging that not a large number of employer respondents have adopted the good management and educational practices relative to their in-house programmes and that the majority of these respondents appears to have little knowledge about the MBA programmes, the real challenge to employers is to accept that they too have a vital role and responsibility in the success of the MBA education. They need to change many of their attitudes about the MBA programmes, the schools, the educators, and the graduates and that they need to, at every stage of the education, whether it is prior, during, or after the programme, exert a strong influence upon graduate learning outcomes and performance. Only when employers involve themselves in the MBA process, and their work environment and climate are geared to support and reinforce MBA learning, will the effective transfer of MBA learning to the business and management setting be strengthened. In fact, employers are in a unique position to reinforce graduate effectiveness in their own organisations.

Change in students'/graduates' practices

Currently, the relationship between MBA students/graduates and their employers seems to be in a state of mutual-disaffection, each party claiming that the other has not fulfilled its role and responsibility in managerial performance and organisational effectiveness. One way for MBA students/graduates to enhance their managerial performance and, in turn, organisational effectiveness, is to participate in detailing those organisational and societal changes which have affected them as managers and which are likely to influence the direction of management and MBA education. This might be effected in the following ways:

1.	By pursuing continuous and meaningful management education and development. Many managers among the student/graduate respondents of this research frequently stated that the MBA programmes, compared with their employing organisations' in-house executive programmes, met more of their developmental needs. Time is a significant factor. While it is often difficult to find the time, particularly in mid-career, to pursue a full-time MBA course (or even a part-time course in view of the demanding nature of the programme), the one or two years needed to complete an MBA course which systematically provides a comprehensive range of management knowledge and analytical skills, is seen as a 'short-cut' compared with the in-house programmes which are planned intermittently according to organisation schedules and objectives.

In-house programmes, of course, are developed within the organisation and for the organisation and therefore tend to reflect immediate needs rather than long-term potentials. Whereas in-house management training programmes in particular are aimed at identifying and discovering key personal issues, such as interpersonal communication or conflict resolution issues, that need to be overcome for a person to become a better manager, most MBA programmes are designed to broaden a functional specialist to prepare for wider responsibilities. An MBA programme also offers opportunities for managers to step outside their current organisation and, in the course of the structured one or two years' full-time or part-time studies, compare and contrast themselves with contemporaries in other companies. Managers with international responsibilities, for example, participating in an MBA programme with multinational focus can gain an intensive exposure to the style and culture of different organisations and parts of the world and learn something from interacting with their fellow participants which they may not necessarily learn in their organisation or market place experience.

It appears that in-house management training or development programmes do have limitations and are unlikely to meet all the needs of all individuals. It is probable that education for managers needs to be brought outside the organisation and, more importantly, fitted into the developmental needs of the individual. This research reveals that aspiring managers find it most rewarding to be exposed to a sophisticated educational process which constantly stimulates intellectual activity. Student/graduate respondents reported that in the MBA programmes, long hours become the norm. In addition to full days of scheduled activities of absorbing new knowledge, syndicate teams meet late into the nights to prepare for formal presentations. On these occasions, they review new knowledge, discuss it and seek ways of utilising it. Teamwork becomes crucial for survival in the course. They have to learn to co-ordinate effort and work together as colleagues. In diverse teams, they have to learn and handle real or imagined prejudices.

These challenges are similar to those that most of them face in their work world, such as co-ordinating and organising major projects while keeping up with regular work, handling conflicts between individual and group needs, changing direction after investing many hours on a plan, and keeping a positive attitude when the team's enthusiasm starts to decline. Some student/graduate respondents believe that such experience of intensity has been purposefully cultivated into the MBA programme by the educators to test their capabilities as real-world managers – surviving the on-going pressures within the short time frame of the course better qualifies them for senior management positions.

2.   By establishing a partnership with employers. Employer respondents, in acknowledging their lack of information and understanding of both MBA education and its graduates, have overlooked these benefits of this type of management education. Little or no effort has been made to explore the potential of the MBA graduates or to systematically direct this potential towards organisational effectiveness. More often than not, MBA education is seen by employers as serving self-developmental needs rather than organisational needs or objectives.

While it is not easy to quantify the benefits of management education, or for that matter any type of education, it is difficult to imagine that an employee's improved managerial performance will not impact on the improvement or success of the organisation. Despite employers' criticism about the relevance or absence of implementation skills, there is a strong case for claiming that the depth, contact and overview of MBA education, whether self-serving or not, does heighten managerial confidence, knowledge and business-orientation. The educational process of treating

management as an individual expertise appears to match the way organisations are developing. It may not add much to those rare gifted individuals who are 'born managers', but for the majority of individuals it gives that extra dimension which helps to achieve maximum performance

There is clearly a need for partnership between MBA students/graduates and employers, if only to rectify the perceptions of employers about the lack of managerial excellence of MBA graduates. As evidenced in the data, student/graduate respondents enter a wide variety of managerial occupations. There are project managers, staff managers, general managers, entrepreneurs, self-employed business people or owners, and consultants. The MBA experience has helped sharpen their awareness of the changing needs of the extremely varied worlds of managers.

They are well placed to help employers understand these changes and impact on the design for business and management education. They can define more clearly the type of managerial resources needed by employers. What is the full range of managerial occupations? What is the nature of these different kinds of managerial work? How are the various kinds of managerial work likely to change? What are the implied technological, economical, political and socio-cultural realities of each change? What is the knowledge base needed, that is, the underlying core of all management processes which every manager needs to know?

Only when these dimensions are clearly understood can the MBA curriculum be determined as relevant or not. In this event, judgements of the MBA students/graduates are clearly required, perhaps even more so than those of the educators or employers.

3.   By establishing a partnership with educators. This research shows that MBA student/graduate respondents often considered themselves sophisticated consumers of the education. The majority were practising managers while pursuing the MBA degree and knew what they wanted from it. They have been presumably well selected for the programme. Most of them are realistic about the education they seek for their management career. They do not believe that an MBA education would completely change them overnight, but they are certainly excited to be part of what many of them consider as a 'cutting-edge' educational programme.

Some educator respondents, stimulated by the enthusiasm of these mature students, appear to be more ready to seek and act on student feedback - much more than they do with employers. They involved students in curriculum decisions, conducted student evaluations or periodical reviews and actively soliciting student

input. An opportunity has therefore presented itself to capitalise on the one organisational experience that both educators and students/graduates share, that is, the experience of being in an MBA programme. Students/graduates examining and taking action on matters of concern to themselves as members of an MBA programme, is regarded by some educators as an exercise of institutional action. However, some student respondents reported that such experiments have at times encountered opposition from the educators, who view suggestions by students on teaching approaches, programme design or management as an 'attack', rather than a 'constructive challenge', to their traditional authority.

If encouraging students to accept a more proactive educational experience is seen as violating the traditional standards, perhaps there is a real need that these standards should be violated. But students should also meaningfully participate in programme or pedagogical decision-making and not regard such efforts as burdensome. When educators continue to adopt the role of managers and controllers of MBA education in true authoritarian fashion, rigidly deciding on learning and curriculum, it is likely that students will adopt the same pattern of behaviour in their own managerial careers. While student participation may mean that the educators would have less power, it should also be noted that the younger doctorally qualified faculties may frequently have less business experience than the MBA students. Educator respondents often emphasised that MBA education has a long-term purpose, that they open students' minds and develop in them both the concept of life-long learning and the ability to learn. A significant, if rhetorical, question at this point must be – are students being prepared to change the world, to change themselves in a changing world, or are they just being prepared to accommodate to the world as it exists?

Success In MBA Education Through Educator, Employer, Student/ Graduate Collaboration

It appears that from teaching to curriculum, from content to evaluation, or from design to process, students and graduates also occupy a central place in practically every facet of the MBA education. They can no longer afford to remain as the traditionally silent party in the development of management education, having their values and needs often imposed upon and, at times, pulled to opposite extremes, by the educators and employers.

MBA educators, employers, students/graduates have a great deal to learn from one another. Through greater interaction around the various educational

issues, they may well discover many common interests while at the same time developing a clearer understanding of those areas which distinguish their individual functions.

Data of this research clearly show that a business management education demand for the 1990s and beyond is to teach managers about fundamental competitive strength, to be concerned with encouraging and using the knowledge and skills of individuals, to encourage understanding of attitudes and freedom to innovate, as well as to highlight the value of solving problems democratically and of teamwork. However, for this approach to teaching to be effective requires major changes not only in management education itself, but more essentially changes in values and practices among educators, employers, students/graduates – a decision to work together and practise all that management education is attempting to teach.

Is Collaboration With A View to Achieving Consensus Desirable?

It is possible to conclude that the researcher's recommendations for change appear to be based on the 'Happy Family' approach to higher education, that is, on the assumption that differing views between stakeholders is dysfunctional and that consensus, through collaboration, is imperative. It may be argued further that MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates are not organised groups but rather, individuals who have attachments to different organisations. As there will always be a certain amount of disagreement between stakeholders, is it realistic to expect that they endeavour to achieve consensus? Shouldn't a strategy for change include a move to achieving greater diversity, particularly between MBA programmes and between the practices of the business schools?

Does MBA education require consensus, uniformity, homogeneity? The researcher believes not and attests that findings of this research support her view.

The different perspectives of educator, employer and student/graduate respondents on management education in Australian universities suggest that there is, in fact, no one best way to educate managers. Given the great variety of individual and organisational needs that are evident today, it would seem unreasonable to limit the preparation of managers to one type of provider, one programme of course work or one structure of instruction. These present data indicate that among the ingredients for an effective MBA education is a greater need for diversity, flexibility, experimentation, initiative and creativity. Perhaps, for a long time,

educators have implicitly let employers believe that they alone can do everything to change the MBA education effectively. This research suggests that the answer to the problem of producing the best MBA graduates does not only lie with the business schools or educators, or in specialising the MBA curriculum. Rather, it also lies in first identifying and realizing the unique requirements of business, organisations and managers and then cultivating a suitable course of action to address those requirements. Educators, employers and students/graduates appear to have many more positive and active roles to play than traditionally thought.

Furthermore, while data indicate a high degree of conflict between the perceptions of the three groups regarding the purposes, objectives, practices and outcomes of MBA programmes, no assessment has been made of the differing opinions of the groups. It is, therefore, essential that the parties share and utilise these data and confer over the expectations of MBA education, with a view to monitoring, improving and developing the programmes. The research data suggest that diversity in MBA programmes is essential as far as the market place is concerned. The findings do not suggest that all business schools be the same, but rather be different from the others – through taking the initiative to approach the market place and share their views of management education with the stakeholders. The schools and their educators can maintain their identity and diversity and, at the same time, satisfy the particular needs of their clientele.

However, as shown in the foregoing sections on recommendations for change, there is no simple answer.

THE KARPIN REPORT AND THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Arguably the role of government in the development of MBA education in Australian universities has been strictly marginal – because the education and development of staff is traditionally viewed as the employer's responsibility, whether or not those members of staff are managers. As previously indicated, over the past decade or so, a number of government commissioned studies and initiatives on management education in Australia have been effected – the Ralph Report (1982), the Training Guarantee (Administration) Act (1990), the Interim Report on the Benchmark Study of Management Development in Australian Private Enterprises (1990), the Australian Mission on Management Skills (1991), and most recently the Report of the Industry Task Force or Leadership and Management Skills (1995)

or the *Karpin Report*. All of these studies have been principally concerned with analysing problems of and opportunities for managerial education, from the national value perspective. Analytical studies of this nature have been constructive in attempting to influence attitudes of the major players in business and management education so that they may develop a more common perception of both positive and negative features and define appropriate responses in various parts of the system.

The Karpin Report

For the purpose of this research, the Karpin Report (1995) has been selected to illustrate the role of Government in enhancing changed value systems and practices associated with MBA education, as it is the most recent large-scale government-commissioned study on Australian management and leadership skills. The scope of the Report is wide-ranging from leadership and management needs, management competencies, work-based management development, business school-based management education, to small business training needs, strengths and weaknesses of Australian managers, community attitudes, managing for diversity, international models, best practices on enterprise culture, life-long learning, and the like. Practically every facet of potential improvement in the performance of Australian managers has been examined

The study itself took three years of consultations, research projects, study missions and analysis by a team of experts and, on completion, provided a comprehensive insight into the way Australia prepares its managers for work and leadership (Stickels, 1994; Richie and James, 1997). The Report identifies five key challenges facing Australian management, including:
- a need to develop a positive enterprise culture through education and training;
- a need to upgrade vocational education and training;
- a need to harness the challenges of diversity;
- a need to achieve best practice management development; and
- a need to reform management education

In particular, the study's policy recommendations and options concerning better educated and trained managers have some direct and significant bearings on this current research, especially in the way that government commissions can enhance the future development and success of MBA education.

The Report's policy recommendations concerning *best practice management development* were significant and stressed the need for:

- frontline manager programmes,
- structured industry-based study tours,
- benchmarking and best practice materials,
- management competencies framework, and
- people and quality.

But of most significance to this research were some of those recommendations dealing with *reforming management education:*

- fees and funding mechanisms for management schools,
- information and quality control for management schools,
- drive for improved quality for management schools,
- research funding and supply of quality academics,
- industry linkages for management schools,
- international links for management schools,
- curricula in postgraduate and undergraduate management education,
- international business skills programmes,
- MBA students consulting with small business owner managers,
- communication/teaching technologies for management schools,
- human resource management of academics, and
- an Australian council for management development.

Where the recommendations from this current research about the educational and developmental needs of MBA programmes are *micro*, in that they deal with the need for changing values and expectations and, hopefully, resultant changed practices of MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates, the Karpin Report's recommendations are more *macro* in nature.

For example, with regards their recommendation about the need for a Management Competencies Framework, Karpin and his team state that there must be definition, development, maintenance and promotion of flexible management competencies for use in all industries, including small business, by managers operating at all levels. Implementation strategy of this recommendation includes building core generic competencies; strong industry influence and coordination via industry bodies or training boards; an ongoing research/development process to ensure that competencies reflect world best practice; incorporation of existing small business management competencies and development of relevant qualitative competencies such as entrepreneurial skills; and preparation of a flexible software

package for merging generic competenc / material with industry and enterprise specific management competencies.

With regards their recommendation concerning the establishment of an Australian Council for Management Development, Karpin and his team stipulate that this council develop and maintain a high profile national focus on excellence in leadership, management performance ard management development. The implementation strategy for this recommendation includes gathering initiatives of high profile leaders from key stakeholder groups; having strong support from both government and industry at highest levels; being independent of government and a not-for-profit body; providing a national focus for improving management development and performance, as the major policy advisory body promoting Australia's international competitiveness, encouraging world best practices, allocating funds, supporting major initiatives, networking with key stakeholders and implementation agencies; and, last but not least, building on the findings and recommendations from the significant work of consultation and research of the Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills and, where appropriate, of other relevant government and industry bodies.

The Role of Government

It is at this *macro* level that Karpin and his team, with their recommendations and options, can represent the role of government in the enhancement of changed value systems and resultant practices of MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates. Three major facilitating roles have been identified. These are:

1. The Leadership Role. This research indicates that there is far more conflict than consensus among MBA-related educators, employers, and students/ graduates. The response of each of the three constituent groups to the development of the MBA degree has been varied and has been challenged by one or more of the other parties. Disagreement appears to have separated them even further. The 'tug of war' continues as these players effect changes on the MBA education in different directions and with separate objectives. There is no unified or co-operative search for a shared vision and there is no overall framework for change.

There is obviously room for government influence, possibly represented by Karpin and his team, to improve the present state of the MBA education in Australian universities. Leadership in the development of management education, and in

providing a clear vision of where and how that education should develop, is a major area for government input. It is in this area that some long-term aims of management education, both at national and individual levels, need to be set. More specific guidance in shaping a framework of management and educational development is imperative.

Perhaps Karpin and his team could initiate a strategic framework for MBA education to be developed collaboratively by educators, employers, and students/graduates, with all these constituents to be guided by the strategic objectives of co-operative participation. This framework should provide a clear focus for activity, so that the many interests of educators, employers, students/graduates are represented, linked and monitored. There is also a need for government to define the style of management to be applied to the organisation and deployment of management education and developmental resources.

The aim of these leadership functions should not be to exert control over management education, but to involve the major interest groups and provide a genuine dialogue on what should happen and how it should happen, so that individuals and institutions are given opportunities to act responsibly towards one another's needs and interests.

2.   The Accelerator Role. The government could also serve as an accelerator in the development of MBA education. More often than not, reports of commissioned studies have been published and then left for individual or organisation reaction. The most the reports appear to achieve is unsustained interests, or to serve some advisory purposes.

As an accelerator, the Karpin Team could play an active and concerted role. For example, it can enthuse or at least challenge groups of educators, employers and students/graduates to participate and present their ideas – by identifying and publishing their importance and benefits, by establishing various measures to achieve commitment from the groups to adopt appropriate attitudes and practices in relation to MBA education. The Team could initiate activities or projects to develop a wider understanding of key concepts like the evaluation of MBA education, relating management development to business problems, the management of learning styles, the management of innovation and others

By using such a Team, the government would enable these constituent groups to better understand the links between MBA education and business sector realities and, perhaps more important, enable the groups to realise the inadequacies of strong

individualism and the positive effects of team effort on the development of the MBA education.

3. The Regulator Role. Data collected in this research show that currently in Australia there are no protection agencies in the field of management education. All three constituent groups of educators, employers, and students/ graduates are increasingly concerned with the lack of regulation of the standards of MBA education.

Over the cecades of development of management education in Australian universities, reviews and surveys conducted by public or private agencies mostly point to the deterioration of standards and the ineffectiveness of that education. Even now a regulator of standards has not been established for MBA education. In many other types of development, the government responds to demand and establishes infrastructure and systems. It is also a traditional role of government, once various systems have been established, to regulate operations so that standards are publicly acceptable. The Karpin Team, in their recommendation to establish an Australian Council for Management Development, have argued for the need of such a regulatory body on management education as a whole.

The reasons for the long-time absence of such a regulatory role are not clear – perhaps it was perceived as a restriction on development and innovation rather than enhancing them. However, in view of the increasingly high demand for the MBA education and the potential state of proliferation of programmes, there seems little doubt that nationally accepted standards (of curriculum, teaching and product) be established in order to reach and maintain a high quality of management education, thereby ensuring consistent and high quality performance of Australian managers.

The government's potential role is significant. For example, as suggested in Karpin's recommendations, the government is well-placed to undertake developmental work on ascertaining the standards of performance of managers in the areas of dealing with people or utilisation of technology; to sponsor investigative studies on establishing criteria for measuring the performance of managers, thus providing a comprehensive guide to good practice; or to pioneer a greater variety of business and management education providers and specialised curricula, including the use of open and distance learning routes through which managers can pursue various additional qualifications.

Perhaps more urgently, the government should rationalise, rather than increase, the number of managerial qualifications, by reviewing the precise

coverage of the MBA degree which is claimed to be *the* prerequisite for a business and management career. Additionally, government surely has the role of establishing appropriate mechanisms for certification and the appropriate bodies need to be given the necessary authority and resources to ensure the protection of consumer interests. But to do so, it is necessary for the government to solicit the support of MBA educators, employers, and students/graduates, involving them more formally in the regulatory systems, through assigning to them the responsibility of raising standards and performance.

Government functions in MBA education

It appears that government functions in enhancing changed values and practices of MBA educators, employers and students/graduates and, in turn, the development and improvement of the MBA education, should not be seen as a purely marginal issue. From research and development type activities, spreading or speeding up the acceptance of good practice, defining and maintaining appropriate educational structures, overseeing ratification bodies and standards, the government can play a critical role in directing the future of management education.

In fact, in 1996, in response to Karpin's stand on the accreditation of management education, the Higher Education Council (requested by the National Board of Employment, Education and Training) advised on viable options for improving quality in Australian business schools through the development of a professional accreditation system. In preparing its advice, the Council consulted a wide range of private and public sectors as well as business schools' interests.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH IN MBA EDUCATION

In so far as three major Australian Business Schools can be said to be representative of all of them, it is evident from this research that there is an urgent need for change in MBA education provided by Australian universities. Simply increasing the number of schools and programmes will not provide any improvement to the current situation. Recommendations for change discussed in the foregoing have established that quality changes are needed and should be centred on the principal stakeholders – educators, employers, students/graduates – and the interwoven relationships among them.

However, the kind of quality changes required have implications beyond the three constituent groups and impinge on the systems and designs of organisations and environments with which individuals in these groups are involved. For example, the study on the nature and extent of the provision of the MBA education does not only affect the work of the managers, it also affects changes in the patterns of employment of managers, together with patterns of behaviour and development of other groups of employees with whom the managers come into contact in their daily functions.

Quality change in MBA education implies internal attention to cultural patterns, business practices, career planning, reward structures, learning processes on or off the job; and externally, attention to the international outlook, the role of the wider educational system and, increasingly significant, the role of the government. All these associated issues are part and parcel of managerial education and the effectiveness of its impact upon Australian organisations, community and economy. These issues extend beyond the scope of this research, but efforts of other researchers in addressing them would add light to current developments and the future success of management education in Australian universities.

Whatever pattern MBA education may utilise in the future, the development of a rich theory and research base cannot be neglected. Nor can successful implementation and transfer of learning occur without the skilful use of teaching methodology, including experiential techniques, appropriate assessment and feedback regarding both learning and performance. The current strategy in many organisations of downsizing of managerial staff, together with the growing complexity and interdependence of organisational units, has created a need for managerial conceptual and interpersonal skills, as well as a capacity at all levels to build lateral and vertical relationships and communication networks.

The development of such complex skills to meet managerial demands will also require educational models which incorporate relevant and usable management knowledge, strong experiential applications and accurate feedback processes. Research is urgently needed in content studies specific to the level and practical preferences of management; in ways to integrate skill-based teaching and in motivating educators to use it; in linking MBA programme quality not only to graduate learning outcomes, performance and behavioural change, but also to external criteria for organisational effectiveness, thereby measuring learning outcomes from various combinations of content, experience and feedback; in alternative development strategies for the future direction of MBA programmes; and

in corporate career development of MBA graduates as an integral component of lifelong learning and human resource development.

CONCLUSION OF RESEARCH AND ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Management education literature of the past decade repeatedly suggests that current MBA programmes in Australian universities, although in high demand by students, are no longer appropriate in meeting the needs of modern managers. Much criticism, particularly that originating from employers, centres on the lack of relevance to business practice, over-emphasis on business knowledge and under-emphasis on managerial action skills in most MBA programmes. Calls for change from both employers and students have been continuous for several decades and years of adjustment by MBA educators have not negated the criticisms. Rather, they have increased the disaffection of members of the business community and industry with MBA programmes. The significance of this literature-based criticism has been endorsed and emphasised by this current research.

This research aimed to canvass and examine the experience of educators, employers and students/graduates associated with MBA degrees offered in Australian universities. The perceptions of these three groups of stakeholders were heavily influenced by individual assumptions, values, needs and expectations, as well as by the interaction and relationships between the groups. The data have highlighted both consensus and conflict between the perceptions of the three groups regarding the purposes, objectives, practices and outcomes of MBA programmes. There is a high degree of conflict among the groups. These data have generated fundamental information and suggested approaches for planning and developing more relevant and effective content, process and practices of management education delivered through the MBA.

A total of 75 (out of 90 targeted educators, employers, students/graduates associated with the MBA programmes of three Business Schools in Sydney responded to the research. The essential research question raised was: *How well do the MBA programmes offered by Australian universities satisfy the needs and expectations of Educators, Employers and Students/Graduates involved in the management education enterprise?* - the exploration of which was facilitated by seven focus questions:

1.   What assumptions underlie the values and convictions
responsible for perception differen:es between Educators, Employers and
Students/Graduates with regard to the purposes, objectives and outcomes
of Australian MBA programmes?

2.   What perceptual consensus and conflict exists between
Educators, Employers and Students/Graduates with regard to the purposes,
objectives and outcomes of Australian MBA programmes?

3.   How do these perceptions influence the satisfaction of needs
and expectations of these three groups?

4.   What are the needs and expectations of these three groups
relative to the management education enterprise?

5.   What are the implications of these needs and expectations to
the modification and/or justification of MBA degrees in Australia?

6.   To what extent is MBA education critical to the achievement
of short-term and long-term managerial and organisational effectiveness?

7.   What is needed for the MBA degree to be accepted industry-
wide as the most desirable and appropriate formal programme for
management education?

In addressing these questions, the data of this research have demonstrated the following conclusions:

- The *MBA programmes offered by Australian universities are inadequate for today's organisations* as much of their current educational and development process is obsolete. Managers of today, and in the future, must acquire and develop a range of new skills and competences, which will enable them to solve new problems, to anticipate and adjust rapidly to change, as well as to manage the process of their employees' learning.

- It is evident that there is a gap between what MBA programmes provide and the needs of industry. This research also highlights the fact that *educators, employers and students/graduates differ in many of their assumptions* about the purposes, objectives and outcomes of MBA programmes which, in turn, has given rise to *more perceptual conflic than consensus* - illustrated in Figure 8.4 of Chapter 8. For example, educators assume the importance of business knowledge, employers assume the importance of business experience, whereas students/ graduates assume the importance of both knowledge and experience of business.

- Consequently, there is a *significant perceptual mismatch* among the three groups about their understanding of the management process, in addition to how management improvement in general (as in critical areas, methods and measurement) and MBA programmes in specific (as in content, structures and teaching) should be developed; about the appropriate utilisation of MBA graduates; and about the future outlook for the overall process of management education.

- The overwhelming perceptual conflict relative to the purposes, objectives and outcomes of MBA programmes *significantly influences the satisfaction of individual needs and expectations.* A strong case has been presented that educators are more inclined to value and protect their traditional authority over the design, content, approach and evaluation of MBA programmes, than to meet *many of the changing and urgent needs* of the employers and students/graduates – such as the 'soft' action skills of decision-making, communications, problem-solving, leadership or wealth-creation. For educators to meet these market demands will require the reduction of 'hard' content – but it will also require that business schools adopt facilitative approaches towards educators' work practice and careers through such areas as integrated teaching, research orientation, career development, and evaluation of performance.

- Such approaches may represent a clear departure from the traditional values of educators and their need for academic autonomy, a factor which appears to have been the *major source of much of the perceptual conflict* between the three groups of stakeholders in the MBA programmes. To improve the MBA programme will require greater consensus about the content and goals of the programme, knowledge about how students learn, a positive educator-effectiveness base, quality assessments of graduate effectiveness and a suitable base for building MBA models.

- There is *little evidence that short-term or long-term managerial and organisational effectiveness has been achieved* by the current MBA programmes provided through Australian universities. Educators' emphasis on specialist business knowledge in the programme has been cited as a source of long-term effectiveness. However, to managers and organisations faced with everyday short-term problems associated with long-term viability and sustainability, the acquisition of business knowledge alone, without implementation skills and techniques, tends to be so theoretical as to serve little practical purpose. Both educators and employers are responsible for the development of practical skills in students/graduates.

- This research thus indicates that a range of options should be taken up to enhance the MBA degree and for it to be accepted by industry as the most desirable and appropriate formal programme for management education. In particular, if MBA programmes are to positively affect the nation's business community, *urgent modifications to the values and practices of educators, employers and students/graduates are essential.* Any significant improvements to and developments in the programmes can be achieved only as a consequence of changed values and practices. In addition, the role of government is vital in leading, accelerating and regulating the collaboration between educators, employers and students/graduates.

- In *remodelling the value-systems* relative to the MBA education, each of the three constituent groups of the research plays an essential role. For the educators, it is necessary that they direct their focus to a customer-centred MBA education through viewing change as beneficial and shifting priorities. For the employers, it is necessary that they recognise that their expectations of business schools and educators to satisfy industry needs also require their part-ownership of, and initiative in, addressing the problems in business and management education. For the students/graduates, to protect themselves from economic uncertainties, it is necessary that they too take responsibility for their own future and a proactive stance in their own educational experience and career development.

- Only with such modifications of individual values would the *practices of educators, employers and students/graduates be remodelled.* Each of these constituent groups of management education will then have many positive and active roles to play, in providing greater diversity, flexibility, experimentation, initiative and creativity. For the educators, to serve the life-long educational needs of managers, it is necessary that they recognise and fill the gap in customer understanding of management education, establish partnership with employers and students/graduates, help managers to help themselves and effect quality cultural change in the business schools. For the employers, to commit themselves to holistic and long-term involvement in management education, it is necessary that they clarify what is required from a manager of business and organisation, formulate an expert team of practising mangers to investigate the broad and specific issues of modern business, initiate meaningful dialogue with and mutual feedback from the educators, build a mutually beneficial partnership with educators and students/graduates and cultivate good management practices relative to MBA programmes. For the students/graduates, it is necessary that they pursue with

determination meaningful managerial education and development through securing continuous partnerships with educators and employers.

In closing this report, the following comment of one of the employer respondents who stressed that 'the value of management education depends on ability to change' is most self-explanatory of the contributions of educators, employers and students/graduates to the future and development of the MBA education offered by Australian universities:

> We look for individuals who have the capacity to contribute to the organisational learning, demonstrate their own commitment to continually change their own behaviour and who have an on-going ability to re-invent themselves.
>
> (Em.18)

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Appendix A

CONSENSUS AND CONFLICT IN STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: VIEWS OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATORS, EMPLOYERS AND STUDENTS/GRADUATES ABOUT MBA PROGRAMMES IN THREE AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

MBA Educators

(name) ....

(business school) ....

1.   WHAT IS YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

2.   PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE (INDUSTRY AND RESEARCH) FOR THE POSITION YOU HOLD IN THE M.B.A. PROGRAMME. THAT IS, WHAT HELPS YOU TO GET TO THIS POSITION, TO HELP YOUR TASKS IN THE M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

....

SECTION 1   OPINIONS ON NATURE OF MANAGEMENT

1.   WHAT TASKS DO MANAGERS PERFORM?

2.   WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SKILLS THAT MANAGERS DRAW ON TO DO THIS KIND OF WORK?

3.   WHAT DO YOU THINK MANAGERS NEED TO KNOW IN ORDER TO APPLY THESE SKILLS?

4.   WHAT CHARACTERISES A GOOD MANAGER?

5.   DO ALL MANAGERS NEED THE SAME SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND CHARACTERISTICS?

6.   HOW AND WHEN ARE THESE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND CHARACTERISTICS BEST LEARNED BY MANAGERS?

7.   WILL YOU SUM UP THE NATURE OF MANAGERIAL WORK?

SECTION 2   OPINIONS ON ATTITUDES TO MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT

1.   WHICH ARE THE MOST CRITICAL AREAS WHERE THE TYPICAL AUSTRALIAN MIDDLE/SENIOR MANAGERS NEED TO IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS SIGNIFICANTLY?

2.   IN THIS RESPECT, WHAT ARE THE APPROPRIATE METHODS OF MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT?

3. WHAT SHOULD BE DONE BY THE ORGANISATION AND/OR ITS MANAGERS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT?

4. HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE VALUE OF MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MANAGERS?

SECTION 3   OPINIONS ON CURRENT M.B.A. PROGRAMMES

1. HOW SUITABLE IS THE CONTENT OF YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

2. HOW APPROPRIATE IS THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

3. ARE THE CORRECT PEOPLE ATTENDING YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

4. HOW EFFECTIVELY TAUGHT IS YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

5. HOW APPROPRIATE IS THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE IN YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME FOR POST-GRADUATE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION?

SECTION 4   OPINIONS ON USEFULNESS OF M.B.A. PROGRAMMES

1. WHAT IN YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME IMPRESSES PEOPLE MOST?

2. ARE EMPLOYEES WHO HOLD M.B.A. QUALIFICATIONS SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM NON-M.B.A. EMPLOYEES?

3. IS THE M.B.A. THE BEST WAY TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE AND PRACTICE OF MANAGEMENT?

4. TO WHAT EXTENT IS YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME SERVING THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY BY REFLECTING THE CURRENT AND FORESEEABLE NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY?

5. HOW ELSE DO YOU THINK MANAGEMENT CAN BE IMPROVED IN AUSTRALIA?

SECTION 5   OPINIONS ON FUTURE M.B.A. PROGRAMMES

WHAT CAN BE PROVIDED IN FUTURE M.B.A. PROGRAMMES FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS? :

1. WHAT SHOULD AN M.B.A. PROGRAMME CONSIST OF?

2. WHAT STRUCTURE SHOULD AN M.B.A. PROGRAMME BE LIKE?

3. WHO SHOULD ATTEND AN M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

4. HOW SHOULD AN M.B.A. PROGRAMME BE TAUGHT?

5. WHAT WOULD YOU INCLUDE IN THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE IN POST GRADUATE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION?

6. WHAT INFORMATION AND ADVICE WOULD YOU APPREICATE RECEIVING FROM M.B.A. EDUCATORS/EMPLOYERS/STUDENTS & GRADUATES?

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CONSENSUS AND CONFLICT IN STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: VIEWS OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATORS, EMPLOYERS AND STUDENTS/GRADUATES ABOUT MBA PROGRAMMES IN THREE AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

SECTION 1   OPINIONS ON NATURE OF MANAGEMENT

1.   WHAT TASKS DO MANAGERS HAVE TO PERFORM?

> A day in the life of a manager?
> What exactly do managers do?
> What aspects of activities present most challenge?
> Any significant events help shape managerial experience?

2.   WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SKILLS THAT MANAGERS DRAW ON TO DO THIS KIND OF WORK?

> Most important skills?
> What exactly about these skills that helps to manage well?

3.   WHAT DO YOU THINK MANAGERS NEED TO KNOW IN ORDER TO APPLY THESE SKILLS?

> Specialised functions?
> > (production/marketing/finance/personnel/economics/
> > accounting/statistics/mathematics/computing/etc)
> Other contributory streams of knowledge?
> > (psychology/sociology/anthropology/philosophy/politics/
> > law/etc)?
> How much is necessary? Why necessary?
> Other characteristics looked for in managing self and others?

4.   WHAT CHARACTERISES A GOOD MANAGER?

> Characteristics of those who will learn to manage effectively?
> How are these skills and characteristics identified?

5.   DO ALL MANAGERS NEED THE SAME SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND CHARACTERISTICS?

> Universal?
> > (in organisations large/small, private/public,
> > manufacturing/service)
> Similarities/differences?
> > (up/down organisational pyramid, across functions, in
> > content, in emphasis)
> Why?
> Necessary that all managers need to understand organisations in these
> > terms?

6.   HOW AND WHEN ARE THESE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND CHARACTERISTICS
      BEST LEARNED BY MANAGERS?

            Is there a planned approach?
            How enduring is the approach?
            What situations may be more efficient or less efficient? Why?

7.   WILL YOU SUM UP THE NATURE OF MANAGERIAL WORK?

            What is management?
            What do managerial jobs really entail?
            What commonalities are appropriate as basis for management
                  knowledge? Why ?

SECTION 2   OPINIONS ON ATTITUDES TO MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT

1.   WHICH ARE THE MOST CRITICAL AREAS WHERE THE TYPICAL AUSTRALIAN
      MIDDLE/SENIOR MANAGERS NEED TO IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS
      SIGNIFICANTLY?

2.   IN THIS RESPECT, WHAT ARE THE APPROPRIATE METHODS OF MANAGEMENT
      IMPROVEMENT?

            How can middle/senior managers improve systematically?
            Strategic plan? To what extent it also supports other strategies?
            Different forms of management improvement?
            Costs and benefits?
            Operated/taught effectively?
            Different from MBAs? How effective?
            Possible barriers in management improvement? Why?

3.   WHAT SHOULD BE DONE BY THE ORGANISATION AND/OR ITS MANAGERS TO
      GET THE MOST OUT OF MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT?

            Before improvement:
                  Who are selected? How are programmes/managers matched?
                  How are managers prepared? How are programmes selected?
                  Who select the managers? Selection criteria?
            After improvement:
                  Expectations of organisation towards managers returning from
                  programme? What do managers do differently? How are
                  manager's responsibilities changed to incorporate what has
                  been learned? What can be done by business schools and/or
                  organisation to facilitate use of what has been learned? Why?

4.   HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE VALUE OF MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT TO THE
      PERFORMANCE OF THE MANAGERS?

            What changes are to be expected in short and long term?

SECTION 3   OPINIONS ON CURRENT M.B.A. PROGRAMMES

1.   HOW SUITABLE IS THE CONTENT OF YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

            Are you producing generalists/specialists? Why?
            Are you providing wide/narrow choice of subjects? Why?

Are you emphasising on hard/soft areas? Why?
What is it that you are not teaching in the MBA?

2. HOW APPROPRIATE IS THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

Right for Australian managers? In what way?
Responding to expectations/needs of business community?
In what way?

3. ARE THE CORRECT PEOPLE ATTENDING YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

Does it really matter who attends? Why?
What are the motivating factors for MBA students?
What are the major challenges students encounter in the MBA?

4. HOW EFFECTIVELY TAUGHT IS YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

How well matched are the educators/students in the MBA?
What are educators attempting to achieve with MBA students?
What educational theories support teaching of the MBA curriculum?
(eg question of 'theory' and 'practice'; 'vocational' and
'liberal')
Are MBAs too closely tied to the universities? Reliant on professors?
Too much theory?
What are the consequences of poor teaching?

5. HOW APPROPRIATE IS THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE IN YOUR M.B.A.
PROGRAMME FOR POST-GRADUATE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION?

a) What sort of knowledge? Where from? True? In what sense true?
Status of knowledge? What does it mean?
Is it of any use? Worth all the time/money/effort?
b) Difference from body of knowledge in undergraduate management
education? Is a first degree not helpful to management
tasks/responsibilities? Would a first degree in business yield
sufficiently useful knowledge to managers, in a way relevant to needs
of practising managers?

SECTION 4   OPINIONS ON USEFULNESS OF M.B.A. PROGRAMMES

1. WHAT IN YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME IMPRESSES PEOPLE MOST?

How relevant is your MBA? Why?
How different is it from the others? Why?
What best describe your MBA? Why?
What factors can be used to assess value of your MBA as path towards
good management?
Roles/missions of business school? Objectives of your MBA?

2. ARE EMPLOYEES WHO HOLD M.B.A QUALIFICATIONS SIGNIFICANTLY
DIFFERENT FROM NON-M.B.A EMPLOYEES?

Why should organisations recruit your MBA graduates? Starting
salary too high/low?
Effect of MBA graduates on operations of organisations?
Which skills of MBA graduates most obviously used? How frequently?
To what extent do MBA graduates contribute more than non-MBAs?

Faster promotion for MBA graduates? Higher salary?
MBA graduates have unrealistic expectations? Less loyal? Over-
bearing? Abrasive? Why?

3.   IS THE M.B.A. THE BEST WAY TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE
AND PRACTICE OF MANAGEMENT?

MBA graduates still lacking in some skills? Which skills?
Views on formal qualifications and work experience in achieving
managerial competence?
Is experience really valuable, more so than knowledge? Why?
Can very much really be learned from experience of other managers?
(eg from MBA educators' experience)

4.   TO WHAT EXTENT IS YOUR M.B.A. PROGRAMME SERVING THE AUSTRALIAN
COMMUNITY BY REFLECTING THE CURRENT AND FORESEEABLE NEEDS OF
THE COUNTRY?

Quality of MBA education?
Anything specific for Australian managers? Why?
How can MBA educators get informed comment from business
community about what it wants, needs and expects?
Attitudes of industry towards your MBA and your graduates?

5.   HOW ELSE DO YOU THINK MANAGEMENT CAN BE IMPROVED IN AUSTRALIA?

SECTION 5   OPINIONS ON FUTURE M.B.A. PROGRAMMES

WHAT CAN BE PROVIDED IN FUTURE M.B.A. PROGRAMMES FOR THE ENHANCEMENT
OF MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS:

1.   WHAT SHOULD AN M.B.A. PROGRAMME CONSIST OF?

Which subjects should be emphasised more? Why? To what extent?
How can content be adjusted to take account of diversity in
management jobs? Why?
What else would you like to see included in the MBAs?

2.   WHAT STRUCTURE SHOULD AN M.B.A. PROGRAMME BE LIKE?

How, when and for how long should MBA be carried out? How shaped?
In tandem with other formal education, eg general, technical, or
other?
Or after? Why?

3.   WHO SHOULD ATTEND AN M.B.A. PROGRAMME?

Who should attend?
To what extent should adjustments be made to students'
background/age/personal qualities/
knowledge/experience/skills/
occupation/aspirations/etc?
Why?

4.   HOW SHOULD AN M.B.A. PROGRAMME BE TAUGHT?

Appropriate teaching/learning approaches?

Take place in academic or non-academic settings?
What should be the role of academia?
Who is best qualified to teach the MBA? Why?

5. WHAT WOULD YOU INCLUDE IN T HE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE IN POST
GRADUATE MANAGEMENT EDUCA" ION?

What factors should determine the rationale for management education
at post-graduate level?

6. WHAT INFORMATION AND ADVICE WOULD YOU APPRECIATE RECEIVING FROM
M.B.A. EDUCATORS/EMPLOYERS/ STUDENTS & GRADUATES?

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INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO DEANS OF BUSINESS SCHOOLS

Dear   ,

I am writing to seek your help in a research project.

I have been a lecturer in management studies at the Northern Territory University for the preceding five years. During this period, I have developed a research interest in the ways in which the Master of Business Administration (MBA) programmes in Australian universities satisfy the needs of both industry and managers. To explore this further, I am currently pursuing a doctoral study investigating the experiences of those who are closely associated with this degree. My supervisors of this study are Professors Grant Harman, Chairman of Academic Senate, and David Teather, Dean of Faculty of Education, Nursing and Professional Studies, of the University of New England.

To date, I have already collected a considerable amount of information from published sources. However, an essential part of the project depends on inviting the views of the MBA-related educators, employers, and students/graduates. I would like to seek your consideration of including your business school in this study. My intention is to study three business schools and their MBA degrees in considerable depth and I am hopeful that your's will be one of the three that I shall study. Please be assured that any answers given to this research will be treated in the strictest confidence.

This study is concerned with the consensus and conflict in stakeholder perceptions of management education in Australian universities. I am interested in gathering individual perceptions which relate to the needs and expectations of the industry, the practices of the business schools, and the overall effects of formal business administration programmes. In particular, the underlying assumptions that construct such perceptions will be sought. This approach of enquiry is directed towards exploring the causes and the nature of differences and similarities among the various groups associated with this type of education. It is likely that study of some of the fundamental differences, for example, will have direct benefits for each group.

I would like to have an opportunity to explain to you further about this request. If I may, during the next few days I shall telephone in order to arrange for an appointment. I hope to occupy no longer than forty-five minutes of your time.

I shall be most grateful for your co-operation in this venture.

Yours sincerely,

(Agnes Lau)
PhD Candidate
Department of Administrative and Higher Education Studies
University of New England