Chapter 3
Research Methodology

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the overall research design and methodological approach of this study. The chapter includes an overview of the qualitative paradigm and a discussion of its practical implications to this research. In particular, the chapter deals with a number of qualitative approaches to conducting research - Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Symbolic Interactionism. In writing this chapter, recent work on these approaches has been reviewed and the researcher has drawn on those critical concerns which have particular relevance for this study of management education.

The inclusion of a range of approaches, rather than just one, is mainly due to the researcher’s concern that a single approach is inadequate in reflecting, holistically, the nature of the research, which aims to examine the perceptions of individuals and therefore demands an understanding of both the context and process of examination. In this regard, the approach of Phenomenology has provided the process, Hermeneutics has provided the context, while Symbolic Interactionism integrates the process and context, as well as allowing meanings attached to the social phenomenon of management education to be employed, managed and changed. Altogether these approaches illustrate different ways of effecting this research, particularly in data collection and data analysis, within the framework of qualitative methodology.

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

1. The Conceptual Framework;
2. The Qualitative Research Paradigm;
3. Methodology Approach of This Research;
4. The Qualitative Research on Management Education;
5. Limitations of the Selected Research Designs;
6. The Researcher’s Role, and
7. The Ethical Considerations.
The Conceptual Framework

The Rationale To Conceptualise

According to Swoden and Keeves (1990:515–516), the use of a conceptual framework in research is invaluable and they have suggested some basic characteristics which lend themselves to conceptual framing. For example, such a framework:

......... first identifies who and what will be examined. Second, it postulates relationships between the persons and the factors being investigated.

......... serves to focus and restrict the collection of data as well as to guide the reduction and analysis of the evidence collected.

......... also provides a map for the research worker of the field being investigated;

......... at least in rudimentary form, has commonly been employed to guide an investigation, and that with little effort, previous research could be found that would account conceptually for the phenomenon under investigation, even if it could not be classed as an established theory.

This research is a qualitative study (which will be illustrated in the following sections of this chapter). It does not begin with a theory to test or verify, as ‘theory or hypothesis are not established a priori’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba also suggested that the intent of qualitative studies was to develop a ‘pattern theory’ - that is, the researcher begins by gathering detailed information and forms categories or themes until a pattern emerges. This pattern becomes the culminating aspect of the entire study. When theories of this nature are found early in the research, they can be viewed as a ‘theory in development’ which is not to be tested (as one would find in a quantitative study), but rather to be modified in the research. This model of thinking is inductive as it also seeks to establish a ‘grounded theory’ - a theory grounded in the data (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) which may emerge relatively late in the research process after the data collection and analysis phases.
The Conceptual Framework Of This Research.

In other words, the conceptual framework of a qualitative study, apart from aiming at structuring the thinking about the research and identifying key categories and concepts for assisting data analysis, should also represent patterns of culminating aspects of the entire study of management education. In this research, these patterns have been formed after an extensive literature search in which the researcher reviewed global and, in particular, Australian management education development over the past decade or so. Detailed information about management education and its many related issues have been noted and themes of the development have emerged. From this, rather than imposing a priori hypothesis on the experience of the research, the researcher seeks to develop a picture which depicts the essential structural characteristics of management education interaction, thus paving the way for identifying research variables and collecting and analysing data.

Figure 3.1 presents the Conceptual Framework of this research and Figure 3.2 the Research Focus. Together, the figures serve to illustrate the proposed dimensions of this qualitative research and the key factors or variables between perceptions of the focus groups and the presumed relationships between them (Miles and Huberman, 1984). In particular, the figures explain what is to be studied, how it is captured, and in what contexts and ways it is analysed.

Figure 3.1 first acknowledges that a major need of the managerial enterprise is for its managers to be appropriately equipped with knowledge, skills, insight, commitment, sound judgement and mature attitudes. It is assumed that current and potential managers are expected to acquire these talents and characteristics or individual goals through one or more relatively unco-ordinated routes, most of them in the non-university area:

- **Experiential learning** - where the expectation is that aspiring managers learn their skills as a survival mechanism, that is, on-the-job, 'seat of the pants', unplanned and situational response, trial and error processes. Such learning is non-directed, non-formal, non-credentialled and is never specifically focused on satisfying the needs of the organisation.

- **In-house training** - where the management initiates on-the-job development exercises. There is, therefore, some direction as management is endeavouring to concentrate on those skills which are important to the organisation's effectiveness. These are often erroneously called staff-development programmes.
Figure 3.1  The Conceptual Framework

A major need of the managerial enterprise is for its managers to be appropriately equipped with knowledge, skills, insight, sound judgement and mature attitudes.

1. Experiential learning
2. In-house training
3. Consultancies
4. Part-time work release - TAFE

Implications

1. Experiential learning - "on the job", "seat of the pants", "trial and error"
2. In-house training
3. Consultancies - contracted short courses; in-situ or neutral venue
4. Part-time work release

MANAGERIAL ENTERPRISE DISSATISFACTION - WHY?

No universal recognition between one another or by tertiary institutions. Not standardised. Inconsistent intellectual vigour; discontinuous; either highly localised or transplanted from the USA.

THE MBA

MANAGERIAL ENTERPRISE DISSATISFACTION/ DISSAFFECTIO

THE LITERATURE SUGGESTS AN AWARENESS OF THIS SITUATION BUT DOES NOT GIVE EVIDENCE OF REASON - WHY?


WHAT ARE THE PROBABLE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE PERCEPTIONS FOR THE MANAGERIAL ENTERPRISE?
They are non-formal, their curriculum varies with the individual enterprise and they do not attract any paper credentials.

- **Consultancies** - by which management contracts short courses largely from private sector providers. These courses may be offered *in-situ* or at some neutral venue. They are usually of short duration and have a 'packaged' or pre-set curriculum often deriving from non-Australian sources. The courses are semi-formal in presentation - certificates of attendance, performance or completion are the only credentials given, their value being dependent upon the reputation of the provider.

- **Part-time formal study** - undertaken through technical and further education (TAFE) or equivalent college programmes, often by block release, evening studies or distance education. The programmes are formal, have pre-set curricula, sometimes with industry input and agreement. Credentials are in the form of certificates, diplomas or advanced diplomas which are recognised (and may be articulated between programmes) by most educational institutions including, over the past two years at least, the universities.

Regardless of these efforts by providers there is, and has been for some time, considerable dissatisfaction and disaffection, on the part of the management enterprise generally, with the quality and value of management education programmes. In general terms, this disaffection is largely due to a lack of universal recognition of courses between tertiary institutions. As the awards are not standardised in terms of focus, content, length and performance expectation, there is no consistency of intellectual rigour between programmes. Often, the programmes tend to be discontinuous, their content and their purpose are either highly localised or have been transplanted from the United States without reference to the uniqueness of the Australian managerial scene.

Figure 3.1 also shows another provider which comprises the university sector and its graduate schools of managerial education. This sector has come into prominence because of the failure of the other providers to satisfy the demands and expectations of the managerial enterprise. The implications of that failure are that the universities should be well aware of the needs and demands of the managerial 'market place', and of the reasons for the failure of the other providers to satisfy those needs and demands.

- **Universities and graduate schools of business education** - the tradition of graduate schools of business is epitomized by Harvard, which was among the earliest in the field of business management education. Its emergence in the
United States was due to the same pressures which have been discussed in the foregoing. Australia entered 'the scene' a few years later and has subsequently produced many business management education programmes, the most prestigious being the Master of Business Administration (MBA).

In fact, there are currently over 38 individual MBA programmes offered in Australian universities (The Australian Financial Review, 1996). Not only are these the most prestigious of the business management programmes, but they are also the preferred benchmark for selection and/or promotion of managers in both the private and public sectors. It must be assumed that the reputation of MBA programmes is a consequence of the universities’ attention to the needs of the total management enterprise and their cognizance of the reasons for the failure of other providers to satisfy the market. There are other university programmes in management and administration education, ranging from diplomas to degrees and graduate diplomas and other master’s degrees. However, they all share the essential characteristics of the MBA in that they are highly structured, formal and demand intellectual rigour. They may be offered on a full-time or part-time basis and their credentials are nationally accepted by the public and private sectors, their standards being largely determined by the MBAs. With high performance expectations, the credentials are consequently recognised nationally and internationally.

In this context, the MBA can be considered as the exemplar of management education. However, the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 indicates that those to whom such education has the highest significance, are as dissatisfied and disaffected with university-designed and presented programmes as they were with the non-university providers of management education. While the literature of management education clearly indicates an awareness of the situation, there is little or no agreement between the individual commentators and researchers as to the causes of this deficiency, or of the most appropriate curriculum for training and development in the management enterprise. Why is this so? Why, after all these years of delivery of and research into management education, to say nothing of the experiences of non-university providers, is there no apparent consensus between providers as to the management market needs and the satisfaction of those needs?

What is the nature of the disaffection? While the literature indicates that the disaffection is generally extensive, it resides within three specific groups of people for whom management education has the greatest significance. These are university graduate school educators, employers and students/graduates. Furthermore, the
disaffection is directed at different levels of knowledge, skills and practices within the management enterprise.

This research aims at obtaining a comprehensive view of the nature of the disaffection. To do so, it is necessary to elicit specific data about the perceptions of each of those three stakeholder groups and highlight the relationship and interaction between them — a process singularly absent from the literature. If these perceptions could be collected, collated, compared and analysed across the groups, thus consolidating a total perception of the educational needs of the management enterprise, implications for provision and implementation of management education programmes should become evident. *The current research focuses upon this process.*

**The Research Focus**

Figure 3.2 diagrammatically expands the research focus, drawing attention to the disaffection associated with postgraduate management education, typified by the Master of Business Administration provided by the university graduate schools of business. Essentially, the research compares the *perceptions* of providers (educators), users (employers) and practitioners (students/graduates) of the MBA programmes, drawing upon their individual and group perspectives, their assumptions of what is required of an effective manager and their value frameworks regarding management education.

Hughes, (1990:89-114) describes 'perception' as reality which is not 'out there' but in the minds of people, and that:

> Reality is internally experienced, is socially constructed through interaction and interpreted through the actors, and is based on the definition people attach to it. Reality is not objective but subjective, reality is what people see it to be.

Endorsing this view, Sarantakos (1995:35) expands its understanding as follows, that:

> [Perception]...... occupies a central position; reality and the social world is created by the actors through assigning meaning systems to events. ...... subjective meanings, patterns and regularities of behaviour emerge as a result of social conventions, established through interaction. [Perception] has the task of searching for the systems of meaning that actors use to make sense of their world.
Figure 3.2  The Research Focus

MANAGERIAL EDUCATION PROVIDED
BY UNIVERSITIES

POST GRADUATE
AWARDS

The M.B.A.

USER

PERCEPTIONS

EXECUTIVE MANAGERS

Questions relevant to:
* Nature of Management
* Attitudes to Management Improvement
* Current M.B.A. Programmes
* Usefulness of M.B.A. Programmes
* Future M.B.A. Programmes

PRACTITIONER

PERCEPTIONS

GRADUATES & STUDENTS

Questions relevant to:
* Nature of Management
* Attitudes to Management Improvement
* Current M.B.A. Programmes
* Usefulness of M.B.A. Programmes
* Future M.B.A. Programmes

PROVIDER

PERCEPTIONS

EDUCATORS

Questions relevant to:
* Nature of Management
* Attitudes to Management Improvement
* Current M.B.A. Programmes
* Usefulness of M.B.A. Programmes
* Future M.B.A. Programmes

CONSENSUS & CONFLICT

IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT EDUCATION
It is assumed that MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates, in their interaction within the management educational process, would have developed different or similar perceptions which directly influence the development of this type of education. Motives, needs and expectations, together with the underlying assumptions in values and convictions, form these individuals’ perceptions of reality (Gardner, 1987; Gordon, 1991; Ivancevich, 1990). That is to say, an MBA educator’s perceptions about why students favour a particular MBA programme, what a suitable MBA curriculum is, how MBA programmes are taught, or an MBA employer’s perceptions about the purposes, objectives and outcomes of Australian MBA programmes, the needs and expectations of the three groups relative to MBA education and the effect of MBA programmes on managerial and organisational improvement, are all part and parcel of the complex, diverse and multi-faceted nature (or ‘reality’) of the current and future state of the management education enterprise.

It is the intention and focus of this research to explain, interpret and understand these perceptions; to explore, below the surface, beliefs, ideas, real relations, myths and illusions; and to predict, if possible, how MBA programmes should be structured and effected, how to achieve goals, or how to change the management education enterprise for the better.

To reflect the central issues (of which questions are asked of respondents) of this study on MBA education, five categories of research variables are employed, as depicted in Figure 3.2. These categories are suggested by the literature review as representing the most critical issues of current MBA education, that is, the issues being constantly debated among management commentators but which remain largely unresolved to date. The following shows a detailed breakdown of the categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1</th>
<th>Nature of Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- management tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- management skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- management knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- characteristics of a good manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- different level of managerial requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- learning of management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Attitudes to Management Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- most critical areas requiring management improvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- appropriate methods of management improvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- how organisations/managers can get the most out of management improvement
- assessing value of management improvement

Category 3 Current MBA Programmes
- content
- structures
- participants
- teaching
- body of knowledge

Category 4 Usefulness of MBA Programmes
- the impressiveness
- difference between MBA and non-MBA employees
- MBA the best way?
- MBA serving Australian community?
- how else can management be improved?

Category 5 Future MBA Programmes
- content
- structures
- participants
- teaching
- body of knowledge

Data analysis of this research focuses on these variables. For example, on the content of current MBA programmes (Category 3), analysis focuses on exploring the reasons and rationale for the design, suitability, relevance, demand and usefulness of the content, as perceived by the respondents. Through subsequent data analysis of the variables, evidence of consensus and conflict between the groups regarding issues such as management educational needs and expectations are identified and highlighted. It is anticipated that clear implications for the future direction of management education will emerge. Consequently a 'grounded theory' is developed from the patterns of interaction between the MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates and, in the process of continuing comparison with relevant literature, serves to advance directional hypotheses about the future of management education in Australia.

THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

The qualitative research paradigm has its roots in cultural anthropology and
sociology. The intention of qualitative research is to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group, or interaction (Locke, et al., 1987). It is largely an investigative process whereby the researcher gradually makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the object of study (Miles and Huberman, 1984). Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggested that this entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for the study. The researcher enters the respondent's world and through ongoing interaction, seeks the respondent's perspectives and meanings.

Other scholars argue that qualitative research can be distinguished from the traditional quantitative methodology by numerous unique characteristics which are inherent in the design. In this regard, this researcher has synthesized the views of Eisner (1991), Fraenkel and Wallen (1990), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Merriam (1988), Locke, et al. (1987), and Marshall and Rossman (1989). The following are characteristics commonly articulated by these researchers:

- qualitative research occurs in natural settings, where human behaviour and events occur;
- qualitative research is based on assumptions that are very different from quantitative designs. Theory or hypotheses are not established a priori;
- in qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument in data collection rather than some inanimate mechanism;
- the data that emerge from a qualitative study are descriptive. That is, data are primarily reported in words (for example, the respondent's words) or pictures;
- the focus of qualitative research is on participants' perceptions and experiences and the way they make sense of their lives. The attempt is therefore to understand not one, but multiple realities;
- qualitative research focuses on the process that is occurring as well as the product or outcome. Researchers are particularly interested in understanding how things occur;
- ideograph interpretation is utilized in qualitative research. In other words, attention is paid to particulars, and data are interpreted in regard to the particulars of a case rather than generalisations;
- qualitative research is an emergent design in its negotiated outcomes. Meanings and interpretations are negotiated with human data sources because it is the respondents' realities which the researcher attempts to reconstruct;
- qualitative research design relies on the utilization of tacit knowledge (intuitive and felt knowledge) because often the nuances of the multiple
realities can be appreciated most in this way. Therefore, data are not quantifiable in the traditional sense of the word; and

- objectivity and truthfulness are critical to both quantitative and qualitative designs. However, the criteria for judging a qualitative study differ from quantitative research. First and foremost, the researcher seeks believability, based on coherence, insight and instrumental utility and trustworthiness through a process of verification rather than through traditional validity and reliability measures.

In addressing the qualitative assumptions, Merriam (1988:19-20) presented a clear focus based upon the perspective of the qualitative researcher that:

1. Qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with process rather than outcomes or products.

2. Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning - how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world.

3. Qualitative research involves fieldwork. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, site, or institution to observe or record behaviour in its natural setting.

4. Qualitative research is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures.

5. The process of qualitative research is inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details.

The characteristics described serve to reiterate that the qualitative paradigm encompasses both theories and method of research. Creswell (1994:1) defined the paradigm as:

.......... an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.

This definition suggests that the paradigm provides a variety of methods for the research process, such as data collection, analysis, report writing, or overall presentation which include all phases in a research process. Merriam (1988) identified data collection and data analysis as the two most important phases of any qualitative design. These methods are commonly termed as designs
or approaches within the qualitative paradigm. Smith (1987) categorised the qualitative research into the interpretative approach, artistic approach, systematic approach, and theory-driven approach. Jacob (1987) discussed qualitative designs in human ethology, ecological psychology, holistic ethnography, cognitive anthropology, ethnography of communication, and symbolic interactionism. Lancy (1993) also noted anthropological perspectives, sociological perspectives, biological perspectives, the case study, personal accounts, cognitive studies, and historical inquiry as some of the qualitative approaches. However, the more commonly known qualitative designs frequently found in human and social science research appear to be Ethnographies, Grounded Theory, Case Studies and Phenomenological Studies (Creswell, 1994).

The qualitative paradigm has been identified as the overall design of this research. The remaining sections of this chapter present the reasons and criteria for selecting this design.

**METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH OF THIS RESEARCH**

**This Research On Management Education**

In examining consensus and conflict in the preparation and training of business administrators and managers in Australia, this research focuses upon the Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme, the prime exemplar and currently the dominant model of the highest level management education in Australia, charting its past and present directions. To obtain the most comprehensive view of the MBA, it is necessary to understand the motives, needs and expectations of those who are most involved with it, viz 1) MBA educators, 2) MBA employers, and 3) MBA students and graduates - their individual aspirations should directly influence the development of this type of education. In particular, the different perceptions of the three groups, together with the values and underlying assumptions which give rise to those perceptions, are sought as the current and future state of management education in Australia should reflect their influence.

As evidenced in the literature and in the popular press, the current state of management education is a matter of serious concern. There have been societal pressures and government inquiries seeking to improve business and management practices and the type of education required, the effect of which is said
to influence Australia's economy (Kerin, 1995). There seems to be widespread dissatisfaction regarding quality, and among these the voices of the educators, employers, and students/graduates associated with the MBA education are the loudest heard as they experience the direct impact caused by critics. It is the intention of this research to investigate the underlying reasons for such dissatisfaction; and that by seeking to evaluate systematically both conflict and consensus in the perceptions revealed by the three groups, it seeks to generate a better understanding of the long-term developmental needs of management education.

Apart from being both investigative and evaluative in nature, this research is educational research, the characteristics of which are well placed for the qualitative research design.

Educational Research

Educational research in the twentieth century has seen the conflict between two main paradigms: one is modelled on the natural sciences with an emphasis on empirical quantifiable observations; the other is derived from the humanities with an emphasis on holistic and qualitative information, using interpretive approaches (Keeves, 1990). The humanities paradigm has its roots in social sciences which regard the natural sciences as having no awareness that in educational research the 'social scientist is part of a process of social self-understanding'. To the humanities advocates, educational research is 'not a well-defined, unitary discipline but a practical art' (Husen, 1990:17). A further difference between natural sciences and humanities is that the former tries to explain, whereas the latter tries to understand. Husen maintained that:

In the long run the [sociologist's] study of human beings would map out the social reality and provide a knowledge base for vastly improved methods of dealing with human beings, be they pupils in the classroom or workers in the factory.

Consequently, it would appear that the investigation of education connotes the study of social problems, at least relate to social problems, and that the scientific approach of the quantitative educational researchers, while highly successful in many areas of inquiry and enjoying a short-lived bloom during 1960s and 1970s (Husen, 1990), is now widely recognised as being incapable of taking into account either the many aspects of human behaviour or the influences of the social context on that behaviour. Keeves (1990:4) appeared to be in support of Husen, but in choosing a middle stance, he cautioned that.
There is normally a common ground within the [educational] problem being investigated, and the two approaches are complementary to each other in the search for knowledge which involves both an explanation in terms of causes and an interpretation or understanding in terms of motives and intentions.

Nevertheless, Keeves conceded that the core of the concern did not lie with procedural differences, but with the kind of problem being investigated.

So exactly what kinds of problems are intrinsic to educational (and socially related) issues being pursued by the social and humanistic researchers? What are the contexts of these problems? How are these problems addressed? Popkewitz (1984), in discussing the characteristics of educational research, indicated that the range of problematic situations encountered in the field of education has multidisciplinary implications. There are likely to be perspectives and perceptions of psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, history, political science, law, linguistics, economics, and demography. As a result, educational problems are extremely complex in nature. In general, many variables are necessary to describe forces of events, mediating conditions, and the products or outcomes of an educational process. The procedures employed in educational research therefore must be capable of examining these many variables at the same time. The social and humanistic researchers deliberately and specifically address these variables within the domain of human activity and help to give educational research an identity of its own in that:

A plurality of views about society, about the bodies of knowledge that can be brought to bear on educational problems, and about the methods of investigation that can be employed, is necessary to provide flexibility to tackle the wide range of educational problems that are open to investigation.

(Keeves, 1990:5)

Keeves was undoubtedly pointing to the qualitative paradigm of research. Borg and Gall (1989) indicated that the adoption of the qualitative paradigm by educational researchers was only a relatively recent phenomenon. Many researchers in the field have long since become disenchanted by quantitative researchers reducing the original 'intent' of respondents into statistical data, mathematical relations or other abstract parameters and ignoring the social context in which educational practices occur and where that original 'intent' becomes disembodied in the discourse of research presented through reports, articles, and books. As a consequence, many disturbing aspects representing the individuality of human cognition in the domain of educational practices have been suppressed. Increasingly, educational researchers
have begun to suggest that a broader view of the social reality in their research is essential if understanding and improvement of educational practices is to be achieved. This has led researchers to break with some of the established conventions of objectivity, reliability and validity. Many of them believe that less scientifically grounded approaches have to be developed if researchers are to get beneath the surface of everyday educational activities and the institutional structures, and allow the emotive qualities of individual respondents to penetrate the research process (Borg and Gall, 1981). Only in this way can they change pedagogical knowledge.

As described briefly earlier in this Chapter (page 70), the objective of this research is to seek better understanding of the developmental needs of management education in Australia. In order to achieve this objective, a quantitative educational researcher may choose to statistically evaluate the performance of the business schools. Evaluation of this nature has often been understood as a matter of merely measuring a school’s academic output, say, for example, MBA student performance. Seen from a ‘systemic’ perspective, however, this product-oriented view is very limited, as it neglects all the processes which account for the shared understanding of the larger picture of institutional cultures associated with the MBA educators, employers, or students and graduates. Limitations of this nature were stressed by Ribbins et al. (1988:157) almost a decade ago:

‘Academic’, ‘pastoral’ and other structures of roles (‘subject departments’, ‘house’, etc.) in schools and colleges are all too often taken at face value, and the tensions involved in the dynamic relationship between different dimensions of the institutional structure, and between the formal role positions and the unique individuals who fill them, are ignored. To explore these tensions it is necessary for the researcher to delve into the meanings which teachers attach to the roles, structures and practice which constitute different aspects of the educational provision of particularly institutions. However, it is easier to recognise this as necessary for an adequate analysis of the life of a school or college, than it is to say precisely how it is to be done.

Guided by Ribbins, this research is conducted with qualitative emphasis and seeks to address the apparent tension, repeatedly referred to in the literature, which exists among and between the educators, employers, students/graduates associated with management education. This tension may have directly interfered with the development and quality of this type of education. The research seeks to explore any relevant consensus and conflict between the perceptions of these three constituent groups relative to the state of the business education, their motives, values,
prejudices, likes and dislikes, and any other underlying assumptions which might 'colour' perceptions. In particular, this research seeks to identify and understand the meanings which the three groups attach to their roles, their social processes, their institutional structures, as these meanings have undoubtedly impacted upon their practices within the various dimensions of management education. Through these underpinnings, this research seeks to identify the current and future needs and expectations of the groups. Subsequently, through exploring the levels of fulfillment of those needs and expectations, their impact and implications, the research seeks to chart a future direction for management education.

The underlying assumptions and meanings which underpin the perceptions of the three groups are in fact emotive characteristics of individuals, some of which (for example, fears, disaffections, hostilities, anomalies, and others) can be disturbing. However, these characteristics, disturbing or not, are the essence of this research as they relate to the everyday world of the MBA-related educators, employers, students and graduates, creating a specific educational setting to be explored. It is within the context of this setting that data are collected and analysed.

An immediate question now is which qualitative design best suits this educational research setting which encompasses the complexity of a research environment, particularly in terms of objectivity, reliability and validity, and this researcher's investigation of the everyday world of her respondents?

Within the sociological and humanistic paradigms in education research various methods or designs have been employed. Among these are ethnographic studies, critical theory, naturalistic enquiry, symbolic interactionism, historical materialism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, case study methods; and the more recent and emerging method of action research, participatory research, biographical analyses, profile studies, and meta-cognition which bridges the humanistic and scientific approaches and is concerned with the study of the understandings acquired by individual human beings as the result of both formal learning and experience (White, 1990).

For the purpose of this research, the following approaches have been selected and reviewed in order to contribute to an overall research methodology which would facilitate all phases of the research process:

1) Phenomenology,
2) Hermeneutics, and
3) Symbolic Interactionism

In each of these, there are characteristic cs which bear significant relevance to the qualitative paradigm. The following sections record this researcher's review of the three designs.

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenology, a philosophy developed in Germany by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), has its roots in psychology. It emphasises the importance of:

......... taking a widened perspective and trying to get to the roots of human activity. The phenomenological ............. approach is holistic, it tries by means of empathy to understand the motives behind human reactions. By widening the perspective and trying to understand human beings as individuals in their entirety and in their proper context it tries also to avoid the fragmentation caused by the positivistic and experimental approach that takes out a small slice which it subjects to closer scrutiny.

(Husen, 1990: 18)

In particular, Husserl emphasised that people are active creators of their world and have a consciousness that communicates to them everyday experiences and knowledge. Furthermore, this consciousness does not reside in people's heads, but in their relationships with others.

This philosophical base, although briefly described, demonstrates very clearly how much qualitative methodology owes to phenomenology. The perception of the world as being created by people, the notion of natural attitude, the process of getting down to the essence of people and the perception of reality through the minds (consciousness) of the respondents are a few examples. Phenomenology, as a research design, examines human experiences through the detailed descriptions of the people being studied (Nieswiadomy, 1993). The research procedure may involve the process of studying a number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Diller, 1986). In phenomenology, no preconceived notions, expectations, or frameworks guide the researcher as she analyses the data (Field and Morse, 1985). Through this process the researcher 'brackets' her own experiences in order to understand those of the respondents (Nieswiadomy, 1993). Hamersley (1990:31) suggested that this free exploration, or getting close to the people involved, seeing a variety of situations they meet, or noting their conversations and watching their life as it flows along, is 'naturalistic' to social research.
These assumptions of phenomenology appear to have significant 'qualitative' relevance to this research. Listed below are examples of the phenomenological process carried out in this research.

1) Dukes (1984) contended that in phenomenology the steps for data collection and analysis are less structured and more open to alternative procedures, suggesting that the researcher looks for 'structural invariants' of a particular type of experience - the patterns - and then submits these patterns to a different researcher for confirmation.

In this research, interview is the tool for inquiry. The decision to utilize interviews is also based on Spindler and Spindler's (1993) anthropological view on interviewing for a cultural perspective. The MBA-related educators, employers, and students/graduates represent three cultural perspectives (or patterns). Interviews conducted as an inquiry into personal perceptions of their own (and others') situation within the field of management education, and the assumptions revealed in reflections about these perceptions, are directed at capturing the cultural 'worlds' of these respondents. For example, the MBA educators may interpret their practices with clearly different assumptions about what they expect of students and what their purposes as business educators are. These assumptions are cultural. In addition, the interviews are reflective in depth as individuals of the groups talk about and interpret their own practices and other operatives. These 'cross-cultural comparative reflective interviews', according to Spindler and Spindler, give the researcher clear evidence of the ways in which position affects shared or divergent perceptions. Spindler and Spindler (1993: 107-8) also stressed that:

The experience represented in the [data] must be that of the dialogue between [researcher] and informants, where textual space is arranged for informants to have their own voices.

Furthermore, Spindler and Spindler's cross-cultural interview model does not neglect the researcher who also has a position in the cultural system as she analyses the perceptions of the informants. Figure 3.3, adopted from Spindler and Spindler, further illustrates the possible effects on this research by utilizing cross-cultural interviews as a tool of inquiry.

Another example of the characteristics described by Dukes is that, in this research, transcripts of interviews are verified by the respondents over time.
Figure 3.3  The Cross-Cultural Comparative Reflective Interview
(Adopted from Spindler and Spindler (1993:108)

THE RESEARCHER ALSO HAS A POSITION IN THE CULTURAL SYSTEM AND BRINGS ALIEN THEORY, ASSUMPTIONS AND PERSONAL HISTORY TO THE SITUATION.
Selected transcripts with patterns of experience which are distinctively different from others are drawn to the attention of the respondents concerned. Where possible, further verifications regarding interpretation are sought. At the same time, this researcher also sought alternative interpretations of these patterns and others from her colleagues who are educators and researchers in either the business and management or education field. As a process of triangulation, consultations with colleagues are extremely fruitful. Apart from benefiting from and incorporating three parties' points of view, a process which helps establish the validity of data analysis, the "world" (i.e. dynamics) of this research is expanded as the researcher constructs the worlds of her respondents.

2) More recently, Creswell (1994: 60) stated that, in phenomenology, the outcome typically consists of a descriptive narrative, a synthesis of knowledge about the phenomenon under study.

The descriptive outcome of this research includes clusters of themes common to all of the management education descriptions as well, no doubt, as contrasting themes. These are matched with the themes appearing in the literature before any conclusions are drawn. Typically this comparison is made in narrative form.

3) Nieswiadomy (1993:151) suggested that in phenomenology, the research questions may be stated broadly without specific reference to the existing literature or a typology of questions. A typical phenomenological question begins with the words what or how, telling the reader that the study will describe the experiences.

For example in this research, a typical phenomenological question among the interview questions is:

"What is it like for an MBA graduate to work as a management consultant rather than as a manager in an organisation?"

Hermeneutics

Associated with the phenomenology research design is the hermeneutical approach. It has been called a 'phenomenology of existence and understanding' in examining human experience (Odman, 1990:66). The most common meaning of the term 'hermeneutics' is that it is the theory and practice of both interpretation and understanding in different kinds of human contexts. This research approach in the field of humanities traces its origin to Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who
focussed on the task of the interpreter, that is the researcher, to unite the past with the present through a process of reconstruction, while at the same time constantly referring understanding to the future, ensuring that 'the connection between expressions, experience, structure of meaning and life are clarified'. This approach also stresses that understanding and interpretation are directed towards the 'world' (i.e. dynamics) of the research, rather than towards the mentality of the author.

As such, hermeneutics is distinctive from phenomenology. Whereas phenomenology is primarily oriented towards the immediate phenomena of human experience, such as thinking and feeling, hermeneutics is more context directed.

In interpreting human 'trace', hermeneutics often tries to go beyond the observable in order to 'read between the lines'. It can therefore be characterized as more transphenomenal. (Odman, 1990:64)

The hermeneutical approach is considered appropriate for educational research. It stresses in this research, for example, the importance of understanding various groups of MBA students and their life-styles. It also accentuates the significance of mutual understanding, say, between the MBA educators and their students or between MBA students with different backgrounec.

This research on management education dwells heavily on interpreting the perceptions of the three chosen groups - MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates - seeking the underlying values or prejudices which give rise to these perceptions. More important, both consensus and conflict which inevitably emerge from the interaction of the three groups, together with their specific perceptions, have to be well understood and interpreted. Interpretation, in this research, is in fact the data analysis. Hence a more coherent picture of the future directions of management education in Australia can be generated, based upon the specific needs and expectations of the three groups. It is transparent that this research is dominated by humanistic perspectives, requiring the understanding of relations between value, interest, action, and power (Keeves, 1990:21).

It appears that research designs of Phenomenology and Hermeneutics, with their psychological intent, are well suited to the interpretative nature of this research.
Symbolic interactionism

Ritzer (1983:306-7) outlined the principles of symbolic interactionism as follows:

1. The capacity for thought is shaped by social interaction.
2. In social interaction, people learn the meanings and the symbols that allow them to exercise their distinctively human capacity for thought.
3. Meanings and symbols allow people to carry on distinctively human action and interaction.
4. People are able to modify or alter the meanings and symbols they use in action and interaction on the basis of their interpretation of the situation.
5. People can make these modifications and alterations because, in part, of their ability to interact with themselves, which allows them to examine possible courses of action, assess their relative advantages and disadvantages, and then choose one.
6. The intertwined patterns of action and interaction make up groups and societies.

The relevance of this qualitative design for research on management education is more than obvious. Management education is a social phenomenon, maintained and changed by the basic meaning attached to it by those who interact — such as the MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates — on the basis of the meanings they assign to their world. Such a social state and objects become significant when they are assigned meanings. The interaction of these three groups of stakeholders is expressed through symbols. The purpose of this research is to study the structure, functions and meaning of symbolic systems such as motives, needs, expectations and the underlying assumptions in values and convictions. These systems, which represent 'what the individual stands for', form the perceptions of 'reality' of individuals within the groups as they regard the offering of management education by Australian universities. Exploration studies (Turner, 1982; Sarantakos, 1995) in detail of various aspects pertaining to these perceptions and examination, below the surface, of beliefs, ideas, real relations, myths and illusions should offer a clearer understanding of the future direction of management education.

Furthermore, as this researcher interpreted the data, she too depended on the process and context of interaction with the respondents and attempted to attach meanings (or symbols) to the perceptions collected. Phenomenology, as a process of interaction, and Hermeneutics, as a context of interaction, help to verify her own perceptions and the interpretation of that of others.
In summary, each of the three qualitative approaches discussed above - 1) Phenomenology, 2) Hermeneutics, 3) Symbolic Interactionism - has had practical implications for this research. The encompassing nature of studying the perceptions of individuals demands an understanding of both the process and context of interaction and its examination. Phenomenology provides the process, Hermeneutics provides the context, while Symbolic Interactionism allows meanings attached to the social phenomenon of management education to be employed, managed and changed. Any single approach may be inadequate to reflect, holistically, the characteristics of the research. The chosen methodology for this research therefore uses none of the approaches specifically, but a combination of appropriate elements of the approaches.

The remaining sections of this chapter describe the methodology adopted by the researcher in conducting a qualitative research on management education.

THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

The Research Plan

A research plan is a detailed presentation of the research steps to be followed in collecting and analysing required data. A well-developed plan saves time, reduces the probability of costly mistakes, and generally results in higher-quality research (Gay and Diehl, 1992).

Figure 3.4 presents the plan for this research process. Depicting the data collection and data analysis processes, it commences by piloting the questionnaire and interview questions and ends by drawing conclusions from the research. Stages 1 to 5 represent procedures involved in the data collection process and stages 6 to 11 are those of the data analysis process. The remaining illustrations in this section detail these processes.

The Data Collection Procedures

Deciding on the setting

This study focuses on the comparison of perceptions among the Australian
Figure 3.4  The Research Plan

4. Process results

5. Follow with individual interviews with respondents

6. Analysis of individual responses

1. Pilot the questionnaire and interview questions

7. Clarification of responses

2. Target Groups/Individuals
   - Educators
   - Employers
   - Students & Graduates

8. Modifications of questions and/or procedures

9. Group the analyses by target groups

3. Implement questionnaire to individuals in each group

10. Compare analyses results with relevant literature

11. Subject preliminary findings to professional scrutiny through seminars and individual discussions

12. Draw conclusions and relate to research aims and questions
MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates. These three groups represent two major settings for the research. The **academic institutions** where the MBA educators and students can be located and the **organisations**, public or private, where the MBA employers and graduates can be reached. For ease of accessibility, it was felt that, first, a choice of which Australian academic institutes operating MBA programmes to be included in the study had to be made, so that the employers and graduates of their programmes can be more readily traced. It was felt that not less than three MBA schools would provide an adequate sample size for study.

The choice for the three business schools was essentially geographical and demographical. First, which city in which state? Early considerations had been concentrated on the states of New South Wales and Victoria. Statistically, 60% of Australia's population live in these two states and approximately 40% of this population live in Sydney and Melbourne, the capital cities and business centres of New South Wales and Victoria. Some of the MBA schools in these states are among the country's longer established, resourcefully developed, nationally and internationally renowned MBA providers. The University of Melbourne in Victoria founded Australia's first graduate school of business administration in 1957 and in 1963 commenced the degree of MBA. This was followed by the Australian Graduate School of Management, of the University of New South Wales in Sydney, which offered its first MBA programme in 1965. Sydney, in New South Wales, was subsequently chosen for this research, because the researcher knows Sydney well and as the majority, at least five, of the state's MBA institutions are located in metropolitan Sydney, this provided the researcher ease of access to the fields of study.

Second, which schools in Sydney? Among the considerations for making choices were accessibility, recognition, size of faculty, size of student body, type of MBA programme offered, availability of advanced studies in business and management and any special or unique characteristics. The following three business schools were selected for the study:

1) the **Australian Graduate School of Management** of the University of New South Wales:

   - 20 minutes drive from Sydney city centre; MBA programme first offered in 1965 and well recognised by popular press; a faculty of approximately 40; student size of 120; two years full-time programme only, doctoral programme offered; strong research base and affiliations with international business schools.
2) the Graduate School of Management of the Macquarie University:

- 40 minutes drive from Sydney city centre; MBA programme first offered in 1969 and well recognised by popular press; a faculty of approximately 38; student size 160, full-time one year and part-time two or three year programmes, doctoral programme offered, international affiliations.

3) the Graduate School of Management and Public Policy of the University of Sydney:

- 10 minutes drive from Sydney city centre; MBA programme first offered in 1972 and well recognised by popular press; a faculty of approximately 13 plus 30 adjunct; student size of 60; full-time one-and-a-half to two years and part-time two-and-a-half to three years programmes; doctoral programme offered, international focus and exchange programmes.

It was considered that the MBA programmes of these three business schools, positioned in one of the largest business centres of Australia, which are long-established, appear to be popular and competitive, and have been ranked within the top five schools of the country in the early 1990s (Suchard, 1990), were well representative of MBA education in Australia. A study of the perceptions of the educators, employers and students/graduates associated with these programmes should provide a valid indicator of overall management education needs and expectations in Australia.

**Deciding on the actors**

This research studies three exemplars of the MBA programmes in Australia and aims to derive directions for change and development in this type of education. As evidenced by the literature review, currently there is an apparent mismatch among the wants of those who are closely associated with the MBA programmes. It is, therefore, essential to gather the views of these constituents — by tracing the professional involvements of those who design or teach the programmes, by soliciting judgements about the standard of graduate performance in recipient organisations, and by asking those who are undertaking or have completed, the courses about the extent to which they have benefited, or otherwise, from them. In particular, perceptions are recorded, as a primary source for analysis. Specifically, the informants, or target respondents, in this research are:

- the educators: deans, business educators involved in the operation of MBAs,
- the employers: chief executive officers, human resource managers, training managers, recruiting officers of MBA graduates, sponsors of MBA students; and

- the students/graduates: current participants in MBA programmes, as well as those who have completed the programmes.

Ten interviewees from each group of educators, employers, and students/graduates, who are associated with one of the three university business schools identified above, would be selected for this research. Table 3.1 shows the breakdown of respondent groups. Wolf (1990) argued that a sample size of 50 to 100 respondents is sufficient for the research purpose. It was anticipated that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The University of New South Wales</th>
<th>The University of Sydney</th>
<th>The Macquarie University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students/Graduates</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                      |                                  |                          |                          |
|                      | 30                               | 30                       | 30                       |
|                      |                                  |                          |                          |
|                      |                                  |                          | 90                       |

deans of the three business schools would be approached first, seeking their permission for the inclusion of their schools in this study. With the support of the deans and later the faculties, it was hoped that employers, and students and graduates associated with their respective MBA programmes would be identified, and invited to participate in this study.

**Deciding on the events**

The focus of this research is the everyday experiences associated with the MBA programmes - that is, the experiences of the educators, employers and students/graduates. More important, the emphasis is on the perceptions and meaning attached to these experiences as expressed by the three groups of respondents. To
accurately collect this type of data, which is qualitative in nature, tape-recorded, in-person and in-depth interviews were conducted by this researcher with the respondents at their organisational settings.

Above all, this researcher wanted to interact with her respondents with a flexibility not allowed by written-questioning. Although interviewing was much more time-consuming, communicating directly with her respondents was imperative as they represented essential stakeholders of her teaching profession. They were the reality of her everyday working world and communication had to allow that reality to be adequately expressed. Apart from the fact that oral-questioning usually generates more accurate answers (Miller, 1991:8), the experience of interaction, where both verbal and non-verbal expressions could be observed, is much more meaningful. As this researcher’s main concern in the research was to seek rich meanings out of the perceptions of the MBA educators, employers and students/graduates, this method appeared to be ideal. The interviews were intended to be tape-recorded, thus allowing verbatim quotation to be recorded. Rudduck (1993:8), who favoured the power of the direct quotation, indicated that quotations

........... capture succinctly and vividly what could only be expressed dully and less economically in the researcher’s own words. Some statements could carry remarkably rich density of meaning in a few words. ........... Quotations were powerful, as quite often the insight communicated in a comment would offer startling and memorable images which our own experience immediately endorses as presenting a reality that we had not seen so clearly before.

However, ethics demanded that the recording of a specific quotation would not disclose the identification of the speaker without his or her permission and approval.

The disadvantages of personal interviews, identified by Miller (1991:63), had been addressed by this researcher as follows:

Higher costs - The higher cost in terms of time and finance was accepted as inevitable.

Lower response rates - The three selected metropolitan business schools in Sydney are not overly distant from one another, while still maintaining their own catchment areas of students and employers. In this regard, this researcher was confident of satisfactory response rate.

data may be inaccurate and incomplete - This researcher was the sole interviewer. Although an experienced interviewer, her interview techniques were monitored by supervisors and the
pilot interviews also served to refine her interview skills and questions. In addition, each interview question included supplementary (or prodding) questions to ensure that the question was answered.

takes more time — In view of the longitudinal nature of the data to be collected, time and the interaction between researcher and respondent was essential and was limited only by the other commitments of respondents.

human distortion of data — This researcher was the sole interviewer. All respondents were requested to answer the same questions on the interview schedule.

Deciding on the process

Before entering the field, qualitative researchers plan their approach to data recording. What is to be recorded and How will it be recorded? — are two critical concerns to be addressed.

The interview schedule

An Interview Schedule explains what is to be recorded in an interview. It consists of a number of questions which a respondent answers. It should be well-organised with clear questions having a natural ordering or flow which keeps the respondent moving towards completion of the schedule (Wolf, 1990:479). However, Wolfe implied a deceptive simplicity in a well-made interview schedule — the result of a great deal of painstaking developmental work, as this researcher has come to learn.

For constructing this tool of the research, the following considerations were stressed:
- What type of questions should be considered?
- How many questions should be included in the schedule?
- How would the language of the schedule be chosen?
- What were the aspects of MBA education which must be covered by the schedule?
- What was the specific content of analysis which must be addressed by the schedule?
- What elements would be included, for example, in the cover letter of the schedule?
- How long, in terms of time required for an interview, should the schedule be to justify its purpose?
- How would issues such as ethics and objectivity be observed in the schedule?

Each respondent must have a chance to view the interview questions prior to an interview, not only as a matter of courtesy, but also to guide the respondent's frame of reference and reassure him/her of the parameters of the interview.

The researcher was also concerned that, to achieve its purpose, each interview question presented should be 'attractive' to the respondents in layout and presentation, and should give them confidence that there was no hidden agenda. This familiarity with the question, perhaps only vaguely initially, was meant to 'attract' the respondents to think more deeply on the question and in turn provide the researcher with 'richer' answers. Above all, it was imperative that each question be interesting and relevant to the respondents' everyday world, and that they feel at ease with their answers, rather than a subject of strict interrogation or embarrassment, or worse still a sense of being 'tricked' by a question. It was anticipated that each interview would take approximately an hour of a respondent's time, which many of the respondents might neither be able to afford, nor willing to spend on an interview. To encourage their co-operation, means of allowing the respondents to feel a part of the research process had to be sought, means which would also help avoid the fatigue and boredom of lengthy interviews.

For all these purposes, the following details were incorporated in designing the interview schedule. First, the format of the schedule:
- the questions were listed in order, allowing a smooth passage from one section to the next and one topic to the other, with a flow of the content;
- the questions followed a 'focussing sequence whereby they moved from the general to the specific and from the innocuous to the more complicated and sensitive issues; and
- the questions were arranged in logical progression, adequately linked together, implying that specific information was being sought about a few major inter-related issues rather than providing answers to a large number of unrelated questions.

These details, or measures, in designing the interview schedule were intended to maintain the interest and positive attitude of the respondents to this research so that
they would find the interaction through discussion and the intellectual effort required to answer the questions, satisfying.

Second, regarding the content of the questions, the researcher was concerned that the interview schedule should reflect the central issues of this research on MBA education. In this regard, the following criteria were used in organising the content of questions:

- Five specific categories of research variables were employed in addressing the main research question on "How well do the MBA programmes offered by Australian universities satisfy the needs and expectations of Educators, Employers, Students, and Graduates involved in the management education enterprise?". These categories were:
  1) Nature of Management
  2) Attitudes to Management Improvement
  3) Current MBA Programmes
  4) Usefulness of MBA Programmes
  5) Future MBA Programmes

These categories were suggested by the Literature Review, as representing the most critical issues of current MBA education, that is, the issues being constantly debated among management commentators but remaining largely unresolved to date. The categories of variables were formulated into five sections of questions in the interview schedule. A detailed breakdown of these research variables and related questions has been reproduced, and underlined, in Figure 3.5.

- The content of each question was also related to the research problem, with each question addressing one specific variable of the research. These specific variables included, for example, the opinions of each group of respondents on management skills, management knowledge, management improvement, MBA structures, content, teaching, body of knowledge and others.

- The questions were intentionally clear and simple in language and in content; general, ambiguous, vague or embarrassing questions were avoided.

- The questions were also designed to convey a positive attitude about this study, as it was the researcher's intention to establish friendliness and collegiality.

- The questions were mainly open-ended. Care was taken to encourage respondents to fully describe their opinions.
Figure 3.5 Interview Schedule Depicting Research Variables

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 MBA 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 appreciate receiving from MBA educators/employers/students & graduates?
Due to the researcher’s previous experience in the field of management education, she was mindful that questions should 'sound' inquisitive and not evaluative, aiming to maintain a 'correct distance' between herself and the respondents, avoiding any appearance of being too familiar with the research variables.

A function of the interview schedule is to seek factual information through motivating accurate responses (Miller and Carnel, 1990). The interview schedule of this research consisted of factual questions seeking the perceptions of the MBA educators, employers and students/graduates as they regard the state of the MBA education in Australia. The questions generated represented variables to be studied in this research. The answers to these questions were aimed at addressing both the Overall Research Question and the Specific Research Questions previously identified in Chapter 1 (page 12). The schedule sought a well-organised presentation, with clear questions having a natural flow which encouraged respondents to move through expressing their views on management in general, on to management education in particular. In addition, for classification purposes, the interview schedule was preceded by two or three questions which elicit a general description of the respondent.

As can be seen, the categories and associated questions structure the interviews. This researcher sought to gather opinions from the respondents regarding the nature of management, their attitudes to management improvement, the current MBA programmes, usefulness of these programmes and opinions regarding future business administration programmes such as the MBA. Through these questions, the educators, employers and students/graduates were asked to describe their experiences, impressions, concerns, attitudes, beliefs, evaluations, and their aspirations of the past, present, and planned activities associated with the everyday events of the MBA programmes. Their answers, which represent the perception of their own situation, were the basis of identifying differences and similarities of perceptions among the three groups of respondents.

**External scrutiny and modifications of interview schedule**

Following several modifications to the preliminary interview schedule, it was then trialled with the co-operation of senior academics, from the Faculty of Economics, Business and Law which prevents its own MBA programme and from the
Department of Social Science of the Faculty of Education, both in the University of New England (Armidale, Australia) and with practical expertise in the areas of business and social investigation. Their comments were sought on the relevance, clarity, applicability, simplicity and appropriateness of both the questions and the interview schedule. Comments were also solicited from two each of both the MBA employer and the student/graduate groups within the Armidale community.

Apart from the size of the interview schedule and the large number of research variables covered, the respondents emphasised the need to customise the interview schedule for each specific group of respondents, rather than have one schedule for all. Consequently, three interview schedules were prepared for MBA-related educators, employers, and students/graduates. In the MBA educators' interview schedule, the following variations (in brackets) were made in the questions:

- How effectively taught is (your) M.B.A. programme?
- What should be done by (the) organisation and/or (its) managers
to get the most out of management improvement?

In similar questions in the MBA employers' interview schedule, the variations (in brackets) appeared as follows:

- How effectively taught is (the) M.B.A. programme?
- What should be done by (your) organisation and (your) managers
to get the most out of management improvement?

A copy of the interview schedule (for MBA educators) used at the interviews is attached at Appendix A. In addition, a list of additional contingency questions for each interview question was prepared, to be asked if a respondent gave, for some reason, an incomplete or inadequate answer. The list of contingency questions has been reproduced in Appendix B.

**Trial interview schedule questions - pre-test and pilot study**

With the above revisions incorporated into the construction of the overall interview schedule, those who had scrutinised the interview schedule now agreed to be interviewed as a pre-test of the schedule in interviews. In these interviews parts of the schedule were tested on different persons, that is, only one section of the schedule was tested with a respondent in an interview. As there were five sections in the schedule, the five interviewees formed a random mix of MBA-related educators, employers, students/graduates. The main purpose of the pre-test was to check the suitability of the questions in terms of the wording, possible ambiguity and to gauge the approximate time required for an interview.
From these interviews, some concerns were expressed, especially regarding the matter of time. While the questions appeared to generate purposeful answers, the time taken for the five interviews totalled more than three hours! With this alarming discovery, some questions were eliminated, others with similar foci were combined and formed into new questions, maintaining the previously described criteria regarding format and content. At that, the researcher's supervisors suggested that a pilot study of the whole interview schedule should be conducted.

Pilot interviews were arranged with a new sample of MBA-related educators, employers, and students/graduates, 10 in all, within the communities of Armidale and Tamworth. Potential respondents were contacted by telephone. The research, its objectives and social significance, the tape-recording method of interview, the amount of time desired, were discussed and an assurance of absolute confidentiality given. This approach elicited a high response rate and certain degree of interest and co-operation and acceptance was immediately confirmed in writing. The pilot-interviews familiarised the researcher with the research process and enabled her to search out possible weaknesses, inadequacies, ambiguities, and potential problems in all aspects of the research.

From these pilot interviews several issues transpired:
- It appeared that the respondents in general were positive towards this study and, to a certain extent, enjoyed the interviews. They considered the questions relevant to their everyday practices.
- The average time required for an interview was between an hour to one-and-a-half hour. However, a few interviews took more than two hours to complete because the respondents grew particularly enthusiastic about the subject matter. Timing would be better controlled as the number of respondents increased.
- The use of a tape-recorder was well accepted by the respondents, and a little more than one-hour for an interview was not seen as a burden.
- Each question was seen as pertinent and was easily understood. The researcher completed all the interviews and was generally satisfied that most, if not all, aspects of the research topic were adequately covered by the questions.
- However, some of the employers of MBA graduates, while able to reflect on those experiences which are associated with management education in general, showed little or no familiarity with the content of the formal MBA education their employees had received. This deficiency was noted for future reference.
At this point, all precautions to avoid any potential problems in the use of the interview schedule had been taken. The researcher was confident that its design and methods of utilization were suitable for this research and ready to be implemented. The interview schedule at Appendix A is the modified version, being the result of the pilot study.

The interviews

Miller and Cannel (1990:457) identify the following as essential interview components:

1) To introduce the interview to the person, convincing the person to accept the responding role,
2) To administer the questions using standardized procedures,
3) To follow-up responses which are inadequate, and
4) To record the response accurately and completely.

Approaching target respondents

The Deans of the Graduate School of Management (GSM) of the Macquarie University, the Australian Graduate School of Management (AGSM) of the University of New South Wales, and the Graduate School of Management and Public Policy (GSMPP) of the University of Sydney were approached, first by letter, seeking their permission to include their Business Schools in the study. It was anticipated that with the Deans' approval, the Business Schools would also provide a list of names and addresses of MBA-related educators, employers, and students/graduates with whom the researcher could negotiate to compile the respondent groups.

To elicit the respondents' participation and assure them of both anonymity and confidentiality, all preliminary correspondence:
- introduced the researcher;
- explained the main objectives and social significance of the research;
- outlined the research process and the target respondents;
- explained why the interviews were essential to the process; and
- assured anonymity and confidentiality for all who participated.

A copy of an introductory letter to the Deans has been reproduced in Appendix C.

The Deans of both the GSM of Macquarie University and the GSMPP of the University of Sydney expressed interest in the research, requested copies of the original research proposal and consented to interview. While the Dean of the AGSM of the University of New South Wales was unavailable for contact, the researcher
physically moved to Sydney, anticipating a personal introduction and interview. The Deans of GSM and GSMPP were supportive towards this research and afforded their co-operation, the offices of the schools providing lists of potential respondents in the three categories determined. While the Deans did not formally endorse the inclusion of their schools in the research, approval was given to approach the individuals freely on the understanding that participation of these individuals would be entirely voluntary. An introductory meeting with the Dean of the AGSM did not eventuate. However, from the office of the MBADirector, approval was given to approach the faculties and students for their co-operation and a copy of the membership directory of the Graduate Management Association was provided for locating the graduates and their employers.

Individuals of the three target groups were approached, first by letter and then by telephone. The respondents often raised questions, taking the opportunity to clarify some aspects of the request for participation or of the research itself of which they were unsure, before consenting to or rejecting the interview. These exchanges were invaluable in establishing trust, empathy and even a sense of collegiality with the respondents. Furthermore, as pointed out by Sarantakos (1995:188):

> **Qualitative interviews do no**. use a strictly standardised approach. Rather, they employ a readiness to change, to correct and adjust the course of study as required by the research. Interviewers are expected to engage in an open discussion with the respondent, and to maintain a passive and stimulating, but not dominating, role.

As interviews progressed over the next three months, further names of employers, students/graduates and other faculties were readily recommended. Many of these recommendations elicited more ready co-operation and positive response to the research than would have been normally anticipated. It transpired that when a respondent was aware that a 'known person' had participated in this study, or the researcher's approach for inclusion in this study was recommended by a 'known person', interest in and trust towards this research were greatly enhanced. In this way, the researcher was readily accepted into the MBA network. This was evidenced when, on a number of occasions, some recommended respondents extended friendly invitations for interviews to be conducted in their family settings instead of in the more formal work settings. Thus, the researcher was better able to identify the individuals most relevant to her study. For example, during the pilot-interviews, some MBA employers were distanced from their MBA recruits (this Chapter; page 93) and hence the data collected was 'second-hand' knowledge and insufficiently
specific for this study. The continuing provision of additional names enabled the researcher to identify MBA employers having experience most relevant to this study.

Altogether, 75 (from 104 approached) respondents consented to participate in this study. A detailed demographic breakdown of these respondents has been displayed in Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 of Chapter 4. This 72% response rate, as argued by Miller and Canel (1990), was much higher than that usually experienced in research of this kind, but nevertheless lower than anticipated following the intensive efforts made to prevent nonresponse or the loss of respondents. The earlier pre-test and pilot-interviews which helped strengthen the research methods selected and, in particular, identified the reasons which might discourage respondent participation, were useful in approaching the respondents and encouraging them to take part in this research. However, 23% of those approached remained unwilling despite these intensive efforts, for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons, either explicitly or implicitly expressed to the researcher, were:

- lack of time for the interview itself, for verifying the interview transcript, or for preparing the interview after having noted the extensive coverage of the interview schedule;

- problems with the audio-taping approach of the interview (For example, one MBA student expressed nervousness of being tape-recorded, but declined even a non-tape-recorded interview for fear that his perceptions on sensitive issues might potentially jeopardise his achievements in the MBA programme.);

- disapproval of this research study (For example, one MBA educator stated that the analysis of perceptions of those associated with the MBA programmes would in no way enhance management education. Two MBA educators in the field of Accounting and Financial Management objected to the qualitative approach in research.);

- lack of confidence in the researcher and the research (This was expressed by one senior executive of a management consulting company, after agreeing to participate in the study, at the beginning of the interview! This completely unanticipated, negative attitude resulted in the diplomatic termination of the interview by the researcher).

Throughout the process, the researcher continually reviewed her negotiating skills by adopting the following measures:

- re-examining the introductory letter in terms of

  - seriousness, trustworthiness, and friendliness,
- clarity of purpose, nature, and usefulness of this research,
- honesty, directness, and conciseness,
- length, appeal, and attractiveness,
- affirmation of anonymity and confidentiality;
- re-examining the interview schedule in terms of
  - reflection of the rationale of this study and reasons for taking part in it,
  - indication of specific time required for covering all questions,
  - clarity, appeal and impressiveness of format and content,
  - degree of difficulty of the questions,
  - revision of prodding questions; and
- re-examining the follow-up telephone introductions (which by this stage had transpired to be necessary reminders as the majority of target respondents did not response to the introductory letters) in terms of
  - clearer and fuller explanation of the research,
  - more personal and pleasant approach,
  - overall sincerity of the study,
  - elimination of confusion, doubts and ambiguity.

**Conducting the interviews**

Sarantakos (1995) emphasised that qualitative interviews vary markedly from quantitative interviews in theoretical framework, structure, process and orientation, length, intensity, order and type of questions and interviewee participation. For example, some of the important criteria distinguishing the qualitative interviews were:

- only open questions are used (questions without response categories);
- single interviews (questioning one person at a time);
- question structure is not fixed (allowing change of question order, addition of new questions where necessary); and
- more freedom given to interviewer (in presenting questions, changing wording and order, and adjusting the interview to meet goals of the study).

For the purpose of this research, the interviews were designed to explore the 'every-day' perceptions of the MBA-related educators, employers, and students/graduates about management education in Australian universities. The interviews were centered on the critical areas which were being hotly debated among
management commentators, but had remained largely unresolved. In particular, the interviews encouraged the respondents to talk freely about the problems, concerns and interests of MBA education, while the researcher listened empathetically to each respondent without becoming dully-passive and actively encouraged respondents to fully explore their perceptions. The interviews were also intended to identify, if not study, the 'cultures' of each of the three groups of respondents and the manifestation of those cultures on the individuals within the groups. Identifying these cultures and manifestations would help explain the meanings carried within the perceptions of individuals and, in turn, the relationships between the groups. Significantly, the interviews were conducted with 'key informants' such as the educators, employers and students/graduates who possessed knowledge of the situation and related issues of MBA education in Australia. These 'experts' provided a more valid picture of the structure and processes of the perceptions of the MBA education than could have otherwise been achieved.

Previous training and experience in interviewing skills was a definite advantage to the researcher, but she was also able to develop skills for in-depth interviews, touching upon the 'sensitive' issues required by this research, through observation of the techniques of her research colleagues. The essential techniques of persuasion necessary to convince reluctant or cautious, even suspicious, respondents to participate in the study, the skills related to eliciting relevant information and recording the responses accurately, the appropriate manners in establishing a non-threatening interview atmosphere and standards of neutral value, ethics, anonymity and confidentiality, and skills of personal presentation to the respondents were all sharpened in this process. That is, she acquired a new dimension in the psychology of her interview techniques.

Most interviews were conducted at the respondents' work settings - on a few occasions the interviews were conducted at respondents' homes. The three Business Schools were very co-operative, inviting this researcher to make use of their syndicate rooms for interviews with the students. Such interview environments were comfortable and conducive to quiet, private, and relaxed talk between researcher and respondent. Interviews were conducted at times suitable to the respondents, most of whom preferred their office time. On a few occasions when respondents realized that they could not afford an unhurried talk without disturbance for an hour or so, the interviews were conducted after work. In the case of part-time MBA students, interviews were often conducted before or after their classes in the evenings. Most of the interviews occupied between one to one-and-a-half hours
to complete, a little longer than anticipated, but with no apparent negative reaction from or resentment by the respondents. The longest interviews were conducted with some employers through whom the researcher was introduced to their MBA subordinates or recruits, had lunch with them, toured their staff development facilities and/or viewed their management development in operation. At one point, the researcher was invited by an educator to participate in a 3-hour syndicate session conducted by a group of Executive-MBA students. On these few occasions it took up to three to four hours by the time the interview schedule was completely covered.

The interview structure was determined by the interview schedule of questions, in both content and in sequence. All interviews were tape-recorded without any evidence of discomfort on the part of the respondents. The researcher assumed from the outset that every target respondent had 'a story to tell' which would be valuable to this research. The 'stories' were recorded and analysed, without making any personal judgements. For this purpose, she took the role of an informed and interested collector and collator, taking care neither to appear as a wise evaluator nor showing bias towards any types of answers. Written notes were also made on the interview schedule so that, at completion of the interview, the respondent could verify his or her answers. The process usually took five to ten minutes and was welcomed by respondents as a further assurance of the integrity and commitment to the accuracy of the researcher.

The researcher-respondent relationship was friendly and co-operative, due in no small part to the following factors:
- researcher and respondent were from similar backgrounds:
  - making the entry to the respondent's world easier,
  - promoting understanding, co-operation, and mutual trust;
- respondents were regarded and treated as 'experts':
  - providing valuable information,
  - being as important as the researcher and not just a source of data, and
- interviews were natural and communicative situations:
  - allowing respondents to speak in their own words, not in the words of the researcher
  - respondents reflecting on their everyday-life worlds, interactions, and interpretations,
- accepting non-verbal communication, and aspects of personal experience as displayed in everyday-life,
- enabling the researcher to follow the course that emerged through the interview,
- providing a sense of connectedness between researcher and respondent.

The interviews usually ended with the researcher being requested to provide the respondents with more information about her research, particularly on sensitive issues such as ethics, confidentiality, validity, subjectivity, anonymity, and her personal and research background. It appeared that the process of openness adopted in the interviews was greatly valued by the respondents. This was evidenced by some of the comments made by the respondents that on the whole their interviews:
- were interesting opportunities to talk about contemporary issues of the MBA;
- were ‘therapeutic’, demanding them to think of the embedded issues of the MBA that they might not have considered before;
- attracted their reaction to certain concerns of the MBA;
- provided them emotional relief through talking about their own problems, and
- enabled them to feel ‘important’.

**The Data Analysis Procedure:**

Miles (1993) characterised qualitative data as an 'attractive nuisance', and his description still seems to be true. Huber and Garcia (1993) stressed the problem of qualitative researchers having to cope with an already physically overwhelming amount of rich and colourful verbal data, and the real problem of attempting to make sense of all the data collected. Qualitative researchers are required to display 'the uniqueness of specific social sites or the subjectivity of personal world views' from the data. Tesch (1990) distinguished four categories of functions which are necessary for qualitative analysis:

*Preparatory functions* (For example: preparing texts; numbering lines; opening files);

*Basic functions* (For example: connecting units of meaning in the text with codes; searching and assembling coded text segments);
Enhancement functions (For example: detecting sequences of codes, hierarchical structures, multiple coding, particular logical relations between several units of meaning); and

Housekeeping functions (For example: saving, deleting, and renaming for retrieval purposes).

Miles and Huberman (1984) would have agreed that such functions would help make sense of qualitative data through
- reducing the texts to meaningful, comparable units,
- structuring and displaying the reduced items; and
- building theory through drawing and confirming comprehensive conclusions.

However, a common concern is the possibility of intuition entering the process. So interpretations of the data have to be carefully scrutinized for objectivity, reliability and validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Tuckman, 1990).

The process of data analysis is eclectic. There is no 'right way' (Tesch, 1990). The researcher has to be comfortable with developing categories and making comparisons and contrasts and be open to possibilities, contrary or alternative explanations for the findings. Consolidating the advice of Marshall and Rossman (1989), Tesch (1990), Bogdan and Biklen (1992), Schratz (1993), Creswell (1994), Miles and Huberman (1984, 1994) and Sarantakos (1995), the data analysis process of this research adopted the following rationale that it be
- conducted as an activity simultaneously with data collection and data interpretation;
- based on data 'reduction' and 'interpretation'. That is, the voluminous amount of interview transcripts are to be reduced to certain patterns, categories, or themes and then be interpreted by using some schema;
- presented, systematically, in matrices, showing relationship and other possibilities; and
- employed to govern how this researcher goes about sorting through interview transcriptions, observation notes, documents, and visual material. This process involves 'segmenting' the data, developing 'coding categories', and 'generating categories, themes, or patterns'.


Verification of interview transcripts and preparation for data analysis

It was originally planned that verbatim transcripts would be made and verified by the respondents as a triangulation process. This proved to be extremely time consuming, a transcription typically taking six or more hours to complete, resulting in voluminous pages of comments to be verified. Some respondents found being asked to read back word-for-word accounts of their interviews embarrassing and to a certain extent offensive. A modified approach, developed by Sowden and Keeves (1990) was quickly substituted:

1) while listening to a tape, a summary of each answer to a question made by the respondent was made. These summaries involved paraphrasing responses and were sometimes accompanied by transcription of relevant quotations;

2) a set of key words developed from the first half-a-dozen or so interviews was used to summarize and reduce further the evidence held. The structure for the key word system was built around the structure of the interview schedule;

3) in order to access the information held both on tape and in the answer-to-answer summaries, a key word was placed in the left-hand margin of the pages of the summary to provide a reference to the content of each answer made in the interview;

4) in order to access quickly the source material on a tape, the tape counter numbers giving that section of the tape within which each answer was made were recorded in a second column adjacent to each key word;

5) once an interview was coded in the above manner, a summary of the themes occurring in the interview was made. The summary was built around the structure of the interview schedule, and

6) summaries prepared in this manner in steps 1) and 5) of the views and perspectives of each respondent were then forwarded to the respondent for verification.

In this way, the interview information was readily verified by the respondents and ensured that the researcher assimilated thoroughly the views of each respondent, and that the process of reduction had not distorted the data provided by a respondent. Respondents found the verification of summaries of their answers much more meaningful and the tasks of confirmation and correction were made much easier.

Particularly in the early stages, this concurrent process of data collection and preparation for meaningful respondent verification, reduction and coding also
helped identify some gaps in the research. For example, it became evident that *field notes* had to be kept to record the researcher's reflections on a very emotive interview, or on discussions with the wife of an MBA student, the subordinate of an MBA employer, the placement officer of an MBA programme and the president of a graduate management association. The field notes also recorded the progress and 'productivity' of some questions. Consequently, the researcher was able to rephrase many of the interview questions over the whole range of the interview schedule, ensuring that the focus remained upon the objective of the research study.

**Data Reduction**

In this study, key research variables, theories and issues, as identified through the Literature Review and more specifically defined in the pilot scheme, formed the content and sequencing of the interview schedule (refer again to Figure 3.5 of this chapter). The researcher's experience in the delivery of management education gave her a particular sensitivity not only to the facts but also the nuances offered during the interviews, allowing her to dispassionately compare and contrast the evidence suggested by the literature with that provided by the respondents.

The phases of coding adopted were that suggested by Tesch (1990: 142-45):

1) From the pilot scheme, together with the transcripts and field notes of the first six interviews (which consisted of two interviews from each of the three groups of educators, employers, and students/graduates), a broad comprehension or sense of the whole data collected so far was acquired.

2) The interviews were reviewed not in terms of the 'substance' of the information conveyed, but rather their underlying meaning, clustering similar topics.

3) The topics were abbreviated and grouped together, forming categories of related topics.

4) A list of categories of related topics was formed.

5) Topics and topic categories were coded by appropriate words and arranged alphabetically.

This list of key word codes was used in assembling the data recorded in all the interviews and on all the field notes. As discussed earlier, various refinements and modifications were made to topic and category identifications and in coding the data as the interview data and field notes increased.
Data organisation

Data organisation is essentially the systematic display of information in a spatial format for ready understanding and assimilation by the reader (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Displays may be tables or graphs of tabular information. Examples of methods employed in organising the data are:

- A chart presenting, in graphic form, the interrelationship that existed between the educators, employers and students/graduates within the environment of MBA education, how these three groups and their roles made up the context in which behaviour developed.
- An event flow chart depicting the development and different levels of managerial competencies.
- A figure, combining line and curves with verbal comments and indicators, presenting the cross-cultural relevance of the three groups, or the conceptual framework and research focus.
- A table illustrating a list of key word codes, or indicating the strength of the value of skills in the MBA education.
- A matrix summarising the motives of students and graduates towards the MBA, or displaying relationships between the whole and parts, as well as comparisons between the parts of the MBA curriculum.

Other significant data of this research were grouped and integrated in a form that would provide, at a glance, summarised information about the research topic and aspects of it. In simple terms, data organisation converted the raw data into meaningful statements, providing a transition stage from description of empirical data to interpretation of meanings.

Data interpretation

The process of data interpretation involves

........ the study of single cases, which are expected to lead to the establishment of classes of similar phenomena (classification, establishing typologies), and to systematic comparisons; these are in turn expected to lead to identification of factors that influence relationships, or behaviour processes, leading in that way to more integrated answers to the research question.

(Sarantakos, 1995:299)
This process implies making decisions and drawing conclusions related to the research questions. Selectively identifying patterns and regularities and discovering trends and explanations were aspects of this process. This process had allowed the development of firm views to guide this researcher in refining, confirming and testing the validity of the conclusions subsequently drawn.

In general, qualitative researchers appear to agree that qualitative interpretation is based on the notion of subjectivity, where ‘rules and standards were rejected in favour of hints, guides, feelings and subjective interpretations of meanings’ (Sarantakos, 1995:308). However, Miles and Huberman’s (1994:245-262) guidelines appeared to address some of the subjectivity-related concerns of the interpretation process and were followed by the researcher:

- **Counting.** This had been the very first step in the interpretation process of this research. This researcher, on the basis of three respondent groups, namely the MBA related educators, employers, and students/graduates, counted the number of important, significant and recurrent issues, such as intra- and inter-group events and behaviours which happened more often than others, consistently or together with others. This exercise, apart from verifying assumptions and protecting against biases, was intended to compare and weigh the issues and to identify trends such as commonalities or differences, as well as causes and effects of elements of interactions.

- **Noting patterns, themes.** The trends and patterns shown in the data strengthened interpretations, which was a way of drawing valid conclusions of this research.

- **Clustering.** Events such as accreditation and internationalisation of the MBA and processes such as teaching and structuring the MBA, which appeared to have similar patterns or characteristics, were sorted into categories then grouped together. This allowed the researcher to discuss what happened in the research, and to move to higher levels of abstraction.

- **Splitting variables.** There had been occasions in the interpretation process where a research variable did not relate to another variable as anticipated. For example, the research subquestion on how the perceptual differences influenced the satisfaction of needs (Research Question No. 3; Chapter 1; page 12) required more diverse, coherent and integrated descriptions and explanations, in order to bring the elements of the findings closer to the research problem.

- **Factoring.** The need for factoring presented itself when this researcher attempted to reduce data and identify patterns of action, for example the perceptual consensus among the three groups of respondents. Discovering and generating the
factors which underlie the perceptual consensus displayed trends and allowed further interpretation of the findings.

- **Noting relationships between variables.** Studying the interrelationships between parts of the data, for example between MBA teaching and business research, ascertained the relationship between variables. This tactic of establishing valid relationships between variables provided a sound basis for drawing conclusions about the findings of this research.

- **Building a logical chain of evidence.** After relationships between the research variables had been established, evidence supporting certain trends or assumptions began to appear. For example, it was assumed that if the MBA education were to be effective to organisations, close co-operative efforts between business schools and industry would be required. Ascertaining a logical chain of evidence in this way again supported trends and patterns in the research and allowed interpretations.

- **Subsuming particulars into general.** Attempt was made by the researcher to relate (or compare) empirical data to (with) general concepts and categories of the MBA phenomenon which had been identified by the literature. This was a theoretical and conceptual activity which allowed the researcher to reach, or legitimise, valid conclusions.

In addition to the above approaches, Neuman's (1991:419-428) method of cultural analysis was particularly useful in explaining the perceptual consensus and conflicts among the three groups of respondents. For example, on the issue of business research, this researcher looked in the data for a number of points, such as the intention of the business schools, also represented by the MBA educators, regarding the research culture; the way this research culture was received by the employers and the students/graduates; the internal structures, patterns or symbols displayed in the culture; and finally the connection which existed between the research culture and the social world.

This data interpretation method, adopted from Neuman and Miles and Huberman who also developed methods in assuring plausibility, thinking metaphorically, finding intervening variables, and making conceptual and theoretical coherence, had been invaluable to this research. Their methods exemplified the logic and principles of qualitative research, allowed complex sets of relationships among the MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates to surface, helped make sense of the trends, patterns and conclusions and, most important, provided
means of analysing and categorising the perceptions of individuals within the three groups and interrelating their specific needs, expectations, values or assumptions.

LIMITATIONS OF THE SELECTED RESEARCH DESIGNS

It appears that in the history of qualitative research, the social scientists' view of what experience and enlightened empathy can reveal has somehow been regarded as inferior to the knowledge provided by the traditional natural scientists. Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Symbolic interactionism, similar to other qualitative research designs, have been challenged on their objectivity and validity in research (Morse, 1991). One clear limitation is that all three processes, which require understanding and interpretation, can be biased, self-serving, leading to researcher isolation and reliance on idiosyncratic analysis. However:

........... it can be effective only when one understands the setting (e.g., schools, communities); when one has a strong conceptual/theoretical grasp of the phenomena being examined; when the research questions for the study are well-defined.

Miles (1990: 48)

It is also apparent that there are many tactics to guard against bias and shallow conclusions of these approaches. For example, using unobtrusive measures, collecting data from a range of informants, including marginal or deviant ones, in a range of settings; triangulating with different data collection methods, theoretical frames, or respondent roles; looking for negative or disconfirming evidence; using sceptical colleagues to derive alternative interpretations from one's displays; and getting feedback from informants (Miles and Huberman, 1984:230–243). It also appears that documentation, explicitness and collegial sharing are some basic means of ensuring objectively in a research process which strongly emphasises the context of the research and the data collection and data analysis processes. More recently, qualitative researchers have begun to discuss quality criteria such as 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' as viable stances on the question of validity and reliability (Creswell, 1994:157).

In this research, while there are no absolute standards of judging interpretations and understanding, this researcher attempted to adhere to these tactics. Accepting on one hand that both the data collection and data analysis stages can be value-laden, this researcher on the other hand took extra and cautious steps to
ensure that the final outcome would be value-free, at least to the researcher’s own satisfaction. For example:

1. The literature search was extensive and on-going. Annual computer searches was conducted over the years of candidature. These searches were both national and international. Mainly the education and business indexes were the basis of the search. However, the descriptors used to generate appropriate data were wide-ranging in view of the encompassing nature of this research. The descriptors, which also indicated the areas of focus of this research, included administration, management, management competencies, management skills, organisation, organisation effectiveness, organisational change, TQM, leadership, management education, business education, MBA, management development, management training, evaluation, management research, business research, adult education, liberal education, educational research, and others. In addition, MBA brochures and publicity materials were used from selected business schools in Australia, the United States, Britain and some Asian countries.

The literature resource generated from texts, periodicals, government reports, press commentaries and public records was an invaluable source of data for this research. Apart from its obvious purpose of enabling this researcher to review the past and present state of management education, it also bore a qualitative effect in that it helped establish categories, and patterns, of events and experiences which in turn laid the scheme of work for this research. Perhaps, more importantly, the literature searches were also utilized as unobtrusive measures for validating the data whenever negative and disconfirming evidence was apparent.

2. There were other triangulating approaches (other than those already described) carried out in this research. Apart from receiving feedback from target respondents, and knowingly seeking sceptical views from management practitioners, educators and researchers other than the respondents, this researcher also gathered opinions from, for example, wives of MEA graduates, who can describe how their MBA husbands deal with the pressure of the MBA experience and its effect on families; subordinates of MBA-educated senior managers, who can describe the effectiveness, and ineffectiveness, of their superiors’ managerial competencies, the support staff of MBA programmes, who can describe among other things graduate placements and how they help maintain the MBA spirit; and presidents of graduate management and business higher education associations. All of these opinions collected are ‘marginal and deviant data’ in this research, serving again as unobtrusive measures in validating the primary data. In addition, during this researcher’s interstate and overseas travel, where possible, contacts were made to
visit business and academic institutions with the intention of verifying aspects of her research.

While the suggested limitations of qualitative research derive mainly from the traditional natural scientists' point of view, this author is confident that they were addressed in this research.

Currently, we live in a world of quite tremendous social change, much of which has resulted probably not from scientific research and the accompanying technological development, but from research in the social sciences and a greater understanding of the social and educational processes which have served to reshape the world they have sought both to interpret and explain.

(Keeves, 1990:27)

THE RESEARCHER’S ROLE

A researcher should bring to a study a ‘worldview’, an outlook, which favours qualitative or quantitative assumptions. While ‘quantitative’ individuals may be more comfortable with an objective stance using survey or experimental instruments, ‘qualitative’ individuals see reality as subjective and want a close interaction with respondents. In qualitative research, the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study (Locke, et al, 1987). Undoubtedly these personal values, assumptions and biases may have been affected by the researcher’s training and experience.

This researcher’s perception of management and management education has been shaped by her personal experiences. In mid-1970s, she taught in the Department of Business and Management Studies of the Hong Kong Polytechnic (now The Polytechnic University of Hong Kong). Her teaching activities at the time included television and radio broadcasts on management and business English language subjects. After a period of management consultancy work, which involved clients from some utility organisations in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Civil Service, and educational authorities in Shenzhen (one of the four economic zones of China), she spent 5 years as an administrator of The Maxwell Institute of Business in Hong Kong. Over the past 10 years, she has been a lecturer at an Australian university teaching, co-ordinating and researching in management education areas such as organisational theory, organisational behaviour, decision-making and planning, organisational change and development, human resource management and industrial
relations. Her current responsibilities include faculty administration and supervision of students completing master’s dissertations in business and management.

The interest of this researcher in the nature and effectiveness of management education is diverse and cross-cultural. Her experiences have sharpened her awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to many of the challenges, decisions and issues encountered both as a manager and as a management educator, in eastern and western societies. She brings to this research, knowledge of both the structure of business higher education and the role of management and administration. She is accustomed to both management and educational concepts. This no doubt contributes to her interaction with the respondents in this research, who are educators, employers and students/graduates associated with the MBA degrees. Also in this research, strong emphasis is placed on relationship analysis among the three groups of MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates, particularly on understanding and interpreting their perceptions of management education in Australia. The researcher’s experiences appear to be particularly well placed for this aspect of the research.

The researcher has been trained previously in the qualitative design while researching her master’s degree on education administration. This training has developed in her library experience with qualitative journals and texts, which are also important in providing illustrations of literary form of writing. The training has also developed in her the psychological attributes in approaching qualitative research. As qualitative design is one in which the ‘rules’ and procedures are not fixed, but rather are open and emerging this design calls for an individual who is willing to take the risks inherent in an ambiguous procedure. This researcher’s strong inclination towards the qualitative design has established that she does not wish the natural science approach of ‘foreclosing the debate by operating within tight structures of past studies or literature’ (Creswell, 1994:44), but rather she is most comfortable with the lack of specific rules and procedures for conducting research, tolerance for ambiguity, and lengthy time for detailed study. She regards this study on management education as an exploratory research, with variables unknown, little specific theory base on which to work, and significant importance being placed on the context of the subject matter.

It may be asserted that this researcher, being previously experienced, may effect certain biases to the study, thus shaping the way she views and understands the
data collected and the way she interprets them. However, Locke and his colleagues (1987) argued that in this regard the researcher's contribution to the research setting can be useful and positive rather than detrimental. As it is pointed out by qualitative researcher Firestone (1987:16):

Realism is socially constructed through individual or collective definitions of the situation.

This researcher's perception of 'reality' shaped by her experiences is also as essential as the respondents' in constructing a 'situation' for management education in Australia. Furthermore, to this researcher, the mere awareness of the negative effect of being biased not only prompts every effort to ensure objectivity in the research, but also serves as a challenge to continuously explore the positive effect of subjectivity in this qualitative research.

Another determining factor for the choice of qualitative design for this research is the audience. A choice of paradigm should be sensitive to the audience, whether this audience consists of journal editors, journal readers, graduate committees, or colleagues in the field. More immediately, this researcher's audience are the management educators, employers and students/graduates who are stakeholders in her field of profession and the institution within which she works, and on whom the implications of this study have the greatest impact. Additionally, the paradigm of choice should be one that the audience understands or at least supports as a viable, legitimate methodology. In this regard, this researcher's colleagues in the field of management educational research are also her audience as the qualitative design is commonly used in this field of research. Earlier illustrations of this Chapter (pages 71 to 73) have explained the support and endorsement of social and educational researchers towards the qualitative paradigm.

THE ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

What principles underlie ethical concerns in research? There are three underlying principles (House, 1990:185):

- **Beneficence:** avoiding unnecessary harm and maximizing good outcomes
- **Respect:** respecting the autonomy of others by reducing the power differential between the (researcher) and (respondents), having (respondents) volunteer informing (respondents), and giving
Justice: equitable treatment and representation of subgroups within society. Justice is operationally defined by equitable design and measurement, and equitable access to data for analysis.

House also stressed that codes of ethics in research are methodological and behavioural directives.

Most authors who discuss qualitative research design address the importance of ethical considerations (Locke et al., 1987; Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Merriam, 1988; Spradley, 1980). First and foremost, the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the respondents. In certain extent, qualitative research is always intrusive as participant interview or observation invades the life of the respondent and sensitive information is frequently revealed (Spradley, 1980). Merriam (1988) pointed to the sensitive ethical issues of research, such as maintaining confidentiality of data, preserving the anonymity of respondents and using research for intended purposes. Dockrell (1990:181) also pointed out that it is sometimes difficult for a researcher to appreciate the stress that may be induced on a respondent.

This was of particular concern in this research where many of the respondents’ positions and institutions were highly visible. They were professionals, busy people with little free time but expressed a wish or willingness to positively support this research. If respondents are told precisely what it is that the researchers are looking for, they are more likely to contribute to the research than if they were simply given general information (Dockrell, 1990:182). Furthermore, researchers should also consider cost effectiveness – that is, the value which is to be gained from the research is commensurate with what is being asked of the respondents. However, Dockrell cautioned that researchers must not mislead respondents about the benefits of the investigation to be gained.

This researcher was aware that she was fully accountable to the respondents for methods and behaviour in the conduct of the research. Guided by the principles described, the following safeguards were employed in this research so as to protect the respondents’ rights, and secure mutual respect:

- research objectives, together with a description of how data would be used, were articulated verbally and in writing so that respondents clearly understood their role in this research;
- written, or at least recorded verbal, permissions to proceed with the research articulated were received from the respondents;
- respondents were informed of all data collection devices and activities, such as interviews would be tape-recorded, transcripts would be verified by them, and follow-up interviews might be necessary;
- true records of the interview were forwarded to the respondents for verification;
- respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of their identity, in the case of individual persons or organisations, data were coded, numbers were used instead of names;
- various validating procedures were used to ensure accurate data collection and analysis; and
- respondents' rights, interests and wishes were considered first when choices were made regarding reporting of data.

Usually, at the end of the interviews, the researcher made special efforts to expand respondents' awareness of her research activities. As 'knowledge is power', the more the respondents understood their part they played in this research, the clearer they would be about the process and context of the research and the responsibilities of this researcher in protecting their rights and contributions. The potential value of the research and its implications to the respondents as educators, employers and students/graduates were further clarified. These steps were in line with many qualitative researchers' emphasis on democratic research and ensured ethical standards which illustrated to the respondents the collaborative context of this research (Kemmis, 1990; Altrichter, 1993)

The researcher was also conscious of cultivating a climate of mutual trust and respect, friendly and open interaction with all her respondents, with the hope that respondents would feel worthwhile in their participation in this study. Furthermore, she was fully aware of the pressures and stress imposed on the respondents in terms of time constraint in preparing for interview, being interviewed at length, verifications of transcripts and, where necessary, follow-up interviews. She made every effort to adjust her schedule to suit the convenience of the respondents. One must anticipate that interview timetables or venues might have to be rearranged, interviews might take place at very short notice or be interrupted and continued another day, that transcript verification might have to be discussed on the phone, or to be followed by a second transcript prepared by the researcher for
the respondents' approval. This researcher, being the sole controller and collector of data, fully expected to co-operate with her respondents over such variables.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the conceptual framework and focus of the research. It has also attempted to defend the research design decisions made by the researcher. In doing so, the researcher's stance on the qualitative paradigm, with particular reference to the approaches of Phenomenology, Hermeneutics and Symbolic interactionism, has been explained. In addition, the major strengths, weaknesses and potential dangers of these approaches have been examined.

In conducting this qualitative research on management education, the researcher has used none of these approaches specifically or exclusively, but has combined appropriate elements of these approaches. In doing so, the research is holistic, from the inception of an idea for a study at the initial stage, to the narrative reporting of outcomes at the final stage. The selected qualitative design has served as a framework of guiding principles for conducting this research.

In particular, this chapter has explained how various elements of the qualitative paradigm have been implemented in the research. It has identified the research procedures of data collection, information recording, categories forming, data presentation, data interpretation, and others with the various qualitative methods. Attention to the concepts of validity and reliability has also been demonstrated within the procedures of the research. While recognising the possible limitations of verifying a qualitative study such as this, the 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' (Erlandson, et al, 1993) of the research has been declared and substantiated.

The researcher's background in facilitating a qualitative study, together with the specific ethical considerations relating to this type of study, have also been considered.
Chapter 4

Respondent Understanding of Management

INTRODUCTION

As already explained, the main research question of this study is a complex one. It is about how well the MBA programmes offered by Australian universities satisfy the needs and expectations of three groups of stakeholders - MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates. It hinges on the perceptions of each group as they regard current management practices, how organisations and managers improve these practices, what is on offer by the MBA programmes in terms of the syllabuses, structures and teaching approaches, to what extent these provisions are suitable to the participants, and above all how successful are the programmes in meeting the needs of each group. Underlying these perceptions is a series of assumptions which determine their beliefs and values about the preparation of managers. This Chapter, together with Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, will analyse these assumptions, examine each group's needs and expectations and 'identify differences and similarities among the resultant perceptions.

For clarity of exploring what appears to be many interconnected issues, the analysis of data is divided into five parts, namely, Chapter 4 on Respondent Understanding of Management; Chapter 5 on Management Improvement; Chapter 6 on The Current MBA Programmes; Chapter 7 on The Usefulness Of MBA Programmes, and Chapter 8 on The Future Of MBA Programmes. Within each part of these analyses, data from MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates across the three business schools are organised according to key variables. For example, variables such as 'management skills', 'management tasks' and 'management knowledge' are focal points of analysis of this Chapter. These variables, together with those in Chapters 5 to 8 are significant to the future development of MBA education in Australian universities.

In reporting and analysing the data in each of these chapters, linkages are built to the literature, making comparisons, particularly
where results of data are different, or somewhat surprising, from what previous studies have reported.

As this chapter is the first of the five parts of data analysis of the research, the following main sections form the framework of presentation:

1. Profile of the Respondents,
2. Understanding the Nature of Management;
3. The Managerial Tasks,
4. The Managerial Skills, and
5. The Managerial Knowledge.

PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Altogether 75 (from 104 approached) respondents consented to participate in the research and were interviewed in depth. Of these, 25 (33.3%) were MBA educators, 26 (34.6%) were MBA employers, and 24 (32%) were MBA students or graduates. The demographic details of the three groups of respondents have been presented in Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

The MBA Educators

As shown in Figure 4.1, there were 25 respondents in this group, 10 (40%) were from the Graduate School of Management of the Macquarie University, 8 (32%) were from the Australian Graduate School of Management of the University of New South Wales, and 7 (28%) were from the Graduate School of Management and Public Policy of the University of Sydney. The respondents were predominantly male (88%). The low percentage of female educators who participated in the research was a reflection of the considerably lower number of female compared with male educators (ratio of 1:4) in the three business schools.

Among the respondents, there was a high percentage (80%) of doctorally qualified educators, and more than half (56%) of the respondents were senior academics, holding professorial status. The teaching responsibilities of these MBA educators ranged from General Management, to Organisational Behaviour, Public Sector Management, Industrial Relations, Economics, Operations Management, Marketing, Management Decisions, Management Accounting, Operations and
### Figure 4.1 Demographic Details of MBA Educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>ACADEMIC STATUS</th>
<th>AREA OF SPECIALISATION IN M.B.A.</th>
<th>RESEARCH/CONSULTANCY INTERESTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>General Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>International Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Organisational Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Industrial Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Public Sector Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Politics &amp; Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Industrial Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Industrial Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Organisational Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Corporate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Operations Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Quality Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Marketing Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Operations Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Production Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Economic Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Accounting &amp; Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Financial Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Management Decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Operations Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Management Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Activity Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Organisational Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Organisational Conflicts &amp; Stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Operations &amp; Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Linear Estimation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Public Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Public Sector Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Public Sector Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>General Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Operations Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Linear Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Law/Policy Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Law &amp; Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Management Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Accounting History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Financial Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Banking Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Organisational Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>General Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Comparative Organisations &amp; Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Breakdown of the 25 MBA Educators:
10 from GSM of Macquarie University
8 from AGSM of University of N.S.W.
7 from G.S.M.P.P. of University of Sydney
Statistics, Public Policy, Strategic Planning, Law and Financial Management. There was also a very strong research and consultancy orientation (100%) on the part of the MBA educators.

Very little data was collected regarding respondents' managerial experience prior to their academic careers, as respondents tended to emphasise the importance of their consultancy experience which provided them interaction with top management of business, public or military communities. These factors of qualifications, academic status and strong emphasis on research and consultancies were related to each other, and together did not appear to support a widely shared belief among management commentators that business school educators are often out of touch with respect to the latest developments in their fields (Ashton, 1988; Linder & Smith, 1992; Chief Executive, 1993).

Judging from the research and consultancy interests indicated by this sample of business school educators, there is a considerable commitment to maintaining an understanding of real-world business problems. Interests were as comprehensive and diverse as international management, industrial analysis, politics and ethics, industrial democracy, corporate change, quality management, marketing strategies, production management, economic psychology, financial analysis, operations management, organisational conflicts and stress, public sector strategies and management, law and policy or law and economic relationships, banking management, human resource management and comparative organisations and management. Such research and consultancy interests appeared to be cross-disciplinary - not narrowly restricted to highly specific functional areas of business - and demonstrated an awareness that research and consultancies of this nature demand appreciation of the complexities and subtleties of business. These facts constituted more than 80% of the research and consultancy interests of the respondents, suggesting that they should be well aware of the importance of providing an integrated managerial approach in their classroom teaching - that is, an approach consisting of insights and perspectives necessary for the practice of management.

The MBA Employers

As shown in Figure 4.2, there were 26 respondents in this group. Each of the respondents was associated with at least one of the three business schools of the research, as sponsor of MBA students or employer of MBA graduates. The researcher
## Figure 4.2 Demographic Details of MBA Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>MID/SENIOR MANAGERIAL CAPACITY</th>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
<th>ORGANISATION SERVICE AREA/ AFFILIATION</th>
<th>M.B.A. RECRUITER</th>
<th>M.B.A. SPONSOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>C.E.O Administration</td>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>Regional ✱</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>C.E.O</td>
<td>Research Centre</td>
<td>Regional ✱</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>C.E.O</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Regional ✱</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>C.E.O</td>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>Regional ✱</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>C.E.O</td>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>Regional ✱</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>C.E.O</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>Regional ✱</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Retailing</td>
<td>Regional ✱</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>Asst. C.E.O</td>
<td>Retailing</td>
<td>Regional ✱</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>State HRM</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>National ☐</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>State ✱</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>National ☐</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>International *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>State HRM</td>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>State ✱</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>State HRM</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>International *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>State ✱</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>C.E.O</td>
<td>Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>International *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>Product Development</td>
<td>Food &amp; manufacturing</td>
<td>International *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>Food &amp; manufacturing</td>
<td>International *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>C.E.O</td>
<td>Consultancy</td>
<td>International *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>State HRM</td>
<td>Retailing</td>
<td>National ☐</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>State C.E.O</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>International *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>International *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>State C.E.O.</td>
<td>Technologies</td>
<td>International *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>Consultancy</td>
<td>National ☐</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>National ☐</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>International *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Breakdown of the 26 MBA Employers:

(An effort was made by the researcher to identify the employers with specific business schools. However, interview data indicated that these employers recruited MBA graduates from any or all of the three business schools.)

✱ Employee size: 26 - 100  ☐ Employee size: 101-300  * Employee size: 300+
anticipated that this association was based on a preference for a particular business school. However, interview data revealed that the MBA recruits of these employer respondents were graduates of various business schools.

A significantly large number (77%) of the organisations represented by these employers were privately owned. More than 42% were regional or state organisations employing 26-100 staff, another 19% were national organisations employing 101-300 staff and the remaining 38% were international organisations employing over 300 staff. They were representative of both the public and private sectors, their 'products' or operations varying from banking, telecommunications, research and consultancy, technology, food and pharmaceutical manufacturing, retailing, oil, insurance, hospitals and a range of federal government services. The respondents were predominantly male (82%). More than half of the respondents (54%) were between the ages of 41-50, 27% between 31-40, 15% between 51-60, and 4% between 61-70. The respondents were of middle to senior managerial levels. More than 48% of them were chief executive officers, 4% were partners of firms, 15% were state managers and 38% were departmental heads responsible for human resource management, quality assurance or technical and product development.

More than 80% of the respondents were, or had previously been, recruiters of MBA graduates. Nearly all (95%) of the respondents indicated that they sponsored, or had previously sponsored, their employees for full-time or part-time study in MBA programmes. Taken at face value, these figures indicated that this group of employers regarded fairly highly the MBA education and the quality of the graduates it produced. However, at interviews, the researcher was reminded repeatedly that, while most organisations seemed generally satisfied with MBA recruits, they did have specific criticisms and frequently admitted that their organisations 'happened' to choose MBA graduates with particular backgrounds primarily because of perceived management expertise, technical track record or personal characteristics of leadership. Other reasons given occasionally for choosing MBA graduates were credibility with employees, MBA background, or seniority.

**The MBA Students And Graduates**

Of this group of 24 respondents as shown in Figure 4.3, 10 (42%) were from the G.S.M. of Macquarie University, 7 (29%) were from the A.G.S.M. of the University of New South Wales, and 7 (29%) were from the G.S.M.P.P. of the
### Figure 4.3 Demographic Details of MBA Students/Graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
<td>1st Engineering</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>Public Service Scholarship</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>1st Economics</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
<td>1st Commerce</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>Mid-Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>Public Service Scholarship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>2nd Science</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Public Service mid-manager</td>
<td>Public Service Sen.-Mgr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>2nd Education</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Retrenched</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>1st Engineering</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Junior-Mgr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
<td>2nd Engineering</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Public Service Mid-Mgr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>1st Psychology</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Junior-Mgr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>1st Economics</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Junior-Mgr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
<td>1st Arts</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Occasional Mgmt. Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>1st Commerce</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Junior-Mgr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>Company Scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>2nd Economics</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>1st Commerce</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Mid-Mgr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
<td>1st Incomplete</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Mid-Mgr. Sen-Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
<td>1st Arts</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Nil Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
<td>1st Engineering</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Junior-Mgr. Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>1st Engineering</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Breakdown of the 24 MBA Students/Graduates:
10 from G.S.M. of Macquarie University
7 from A.G.S.M. of University of N.S.W
7 from G.S.M.P.P. of University of Sydney

* MBA to be completed
University of Sydney. The larger number of respondents were students (58%) currently pursuing an MBA programme and the remaining 42% were employed graduates. More than half of the graduates (60%) had completed the MBA during the past three years, while 40% had completed the degree five to ten years ago or longer. Among both students and graduates, the choice of full-time or part-time MBA study was even. 75% of all the respondents in this group were male and 25% were female.

The vast majority of respondents fell into two modal age groups, the 31-40 years (46%) and the 41-50 years (46%), while the remaining 8% were between 21 and 30. The youngest respondent was 27 years of age and the oldest was 49 years. The longest period of work experience before participating in an MBA programme was 23 years, and the shortest was 3 years. Almost 11.5% of the respondents had had 1 to 5 years of work experience before embarking on an MBA programme, 33.3% had 6 to 10 years, 21% 11 to 15 years, 17% 16 to 20 years and 17% more than 20 years. This information was in contrast to the current common entry requirement of MBA programmes of three to four years work experience.

Most respondents held a bachelor's degree (71%), while 17% held master's degrees. A small 21% had attended some post-secondary courses but did not have an undergraduate degree. It was not unexpected, given the high profile of the MBA education, that a very small number - less than 8% - had only a Higher School Certificate. Of the respondents, 62.5% had Arts degrees, while 37.5% had Science degrees. The most popular major unit sequence was Economics, while Humanities was the second-most popular.

Only half (50%) of the respondents were in employment at the time of studying for the MBA, 4% were occasional workers, and 46% were unemployed, having been retrenched or having resigned because of the need to pursue a full-time MBA. Of the employed, about 54% had been at middle to senior managerial levels and 46% had been in junior managerial positions. The factors of age range, academic achievements and number of years worked before an MBA programme also indicated that more than 64% of students unemployed during the time of studying towards the MBA had previously occupied middle to senior positions in an organisation.

Of the graduates, everyone appeared to be in employment after completion of the MBA and at the time of the interview, ranging from 40% engaged in consultancy work, 30% had clearly advanced in their careers after successfully completing an
MBA programme, and 20% remained in the same capacity or nature of work that they had before commencing the MBA programme.

Only one in three (33%) respondents was fully or partly sponsored by an employing organisation and a very large number (77%) self-funded their MBA programmes. This information contrasts with the indications of the MBA employers of this research. As illustrated earlier in this Chapter (page 120), 96% of MBA employers claimed that they were sponsoring, or had previously sponsored, MBA programmes. It was likely that the MBA programmes sponsored by the employers of this research were operated by business schools other than the three which participated in this research, or that the people sponsored by these employers were not within the group of students and graduates who participated in this research.

Respondents, when asked about their motives for self-funding an MBA education, frequently indicated both intrinsic and extrinsic motives, such as 'the field of business/management is interesting', or 'there is high probability of challenging career opportunities'. These motives appeared to have out-weighted the expensiveness of an MBA education, on a year or two's foregone earnings. Being sponsored was not an issue in deciding to obtain an MBA degree. Furthermore, as the predominant age group of the respondents was between 31-50 (92%), the average lengthy period (13.4 years) of work experience of these respondents before an MBA programme appeared to have been influential in obtaining an MBA education. That is, work experience of certain types or duration might have been a contributing factor.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF MANAGEMENT

Any analysis of management education should begin with an understanding of the nature of management. From this it can be argued as to what qualities are needed by well-functioning managers and, therefore, what the end product of a good management education should be. However, this approach did not appear to have been the logic supporting the first educational endeavours which prepared people for management. When management education started in the United States at the turn of the century, it had not rationalised an understanding of what management was. As recorded by Watson (1993:16), at the time:

Providers of management education taught a body of knowledge which was felt to be of use to the manager; ............. the goal was to teach information about business, rather than to educate - lead out - people into the qualities needed to run business.
The literature reviewed also reveals that in the years following these endeavours, the 'skill' approach to management was constantly debated in the context of the nature of management (Chapter 2, pages 27 to 29). For example, there were variations in the understanding and use of the word 'skill' in the literature. The managerial skills advocated by prominent writers such as Mintzberg (1973), Kotter (1982), Potter, et al (1988) and Watson (1993) had, on occasion, been regarded as not quite the same as, yet on other occasions as having much in common with, the managerial skills and competencies initiated by the British and American industries in the 1970s to improve management. In Australia, Karpin's (1995) large-scale study on Australian managers acknowledged that management is, and should be, a Skill. This acknowledgement was in contrast to decades of management research and development which disciplined management first as a Science and later on as an Art. While these prominent writers have gained widespread support for their theories, the debate over the appropriateness of managerial skills as part of the management education curriculum continues. Furthermore, how managerial skills might be developed is often not emphasised in current management education programmes.

Such divergence in opinions, which are still unresolved today, has prompted this study to, first of all, seek respondents' perceptions on the nature of management and the implications of these perceptions to management education. More specifically, these perceptions should reveal many of the assumptions which underlie the values and convictions relating to the purposes, objectives and outcomes of MBA programmes offered in Australian universities. Relevant interview questions are designed to enquire into what managers do, what qualities they need to carry out their tasks, and as a consequence how to make managers effective. More essentially, the questions are designed to explore managerial tasks, skills and knowledge as perceived by the respondents. For example – How important are certain skills to the performance of managerial tasks? What constitutes managerial tasks and knowledge? And, how can one test acquire these skills and knowledge? Responses to these questions will have significant implications for the provision of management education.

The following sections attempt to explore these perceptions of the respondents.
THE MANAGERIAL TASKS

Tasks Performed By Managers

Respondents were asked about their perceptions of the tasks performed by managers. Table 4.1 shows the categories of tasks identified by the three groups of respondents, and the percentage of mention of the tasks and rank order of the mentions. The data show that while respondents may have varying perceptions of a task, significant differences have not been found in their responses.

However, the percentages and rank orders reflect the respondents' perceptions of the scope and frequency of tasks performed by managers. It appears that nearly all three groups of respondents single out interacting with others as the task performed by most managers, which is followed by the task of supervising performance, then socialising and politicking, decision-making and problem-solving, planning and coordinating resources, managing conflict, monitoring and controlling operations, motivating and reinforcing, gathering and disseminating information, training and development, and staffing.

While the managerial tasks are categorised broadly in order to show the perceptions of the respondents, the researcher is aware that these categories have not revealed the distinctive characteristics of management. For example, these categories appear to treat managerial tasks as separate entities, observing management with a rational approach. In reality, as revealed from the opinions of many of the respondents, the essence of management is far from rational. Views of the respondents reveal the following distinctive characteristics:

- As managerial tasks are primarily concerned with the planning and organising of resources, how to integrate the resources and how this integration is managed is the key element of success. This means that managerial tasks are closely linked to their organisational contexts and cannot be easily separated. To understand what managers must do to achieve results, it is essential to look at the changing picture of how organisations operate.
- There is always uncertainty about the best way to perform managerial tasks. As the nature of managerial tasks changes, so do the managerial 'recipes'.
- Competitive pressures are forcing organisations to adopt new flexible strategies and structures. But so far it appears that little attention has been given to the dramatically changed realities of managerial work in these transformec
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Educators</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Students/Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Gathering &amp; disseminating</td>
<td>80 6</td>
<td>69 7</td>
<td>58 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Planning/co-ordinating</td>
<td>92 3</td>
<td>57 9</td>
<td>75 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Socialising/politicising</td>
<td>88 4</td>
<td>84 3</td>
<td>66 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Monitoring/controlling</td>
<td>84 5</td>
<td>65 8</td>
<td>70 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Staffing</td>
<td>44 10</td>
<td>38 11</td>
<td>87 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Managing conflicts</td>
<td>80 6</td>
<td>80 4</td>
<td>62 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Motivating/reinforcing</td>
<td>68 9</td>
<td>76 5</td>
<td>83 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Training/developing</td>
<td>72 8</td>
<td>50 10</td>
<td>66 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Interacting with others</td>
<td>100 1</td>
<td>92 1</td>
<td>91 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Decision-making/problem</td>
<td>96 2</td>
<td>73 6</td>
<td>62 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Supervising performance</td>
<td>76 7</td>
<td>88 2</td>
<td>100 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = attending meetings, exchanging routine/procedural information, research investigation, information flow management
2 = identifying and achieving short- and long-term goals, scheduling, assigning and coordinating work and finance, personnel, and plant resources; deciding which resources are being combined and transformed and how they are to be coordinated; 'construction, maintenance and improvement of an administrative system which co-ordinate and transform human and material resources into productive services'
3 = network-related informal discussions
4 = review and evaluation, preventive maintenance, product/service development
5 = reviewing and recruiting staff, developing job descriptions
6 = negotiating for cooperation or consensus between conflicting parties
7 = encouraging and reinforcing through delegation, reward, participation, feedback and support, or through disciplining and feedback on negative performance
8 = orienting, coaching, mentoring and training
9 = 'involvement with people', labour and community relations, establishing internal and external contacts
10 = deciding what to do; handling day-to-day operational crises
11 = enforcing rules, policies and standards, feedback on negative performance, disciplining, supervision of work operations
organisations. For example, how do department managers control their people when they are working on cross-departmental teams? What managers need to do about this is largely unclear.

- The new managerial paradigm focuses on the tasks of knowing customer value and managing organisational systems relative to the value. Other key organisational efforts are derived as consequences of these tasks and have meaning only once these tasks are addressed.

These perceptions demand a much more complex understanding of managerial tasks which are interdependent and changeable, and that the tasks have the capacity to establish, maintain and change organisations. The activities of managers appeared to be well appreciated by the respondents as combining not just the generation of outputs but also, importantly, social maintenance and innovation. The focus on managerial tasks seems to have shifted to organisational specifics. There is an assumption among respondents that while management jobs contain a set of generalised functions, variety is the essence of managerial work and there can be significant differences from one managerial situation to another. The data also reflect that current expectations of a manager's job have now deviated significantly from the routines of planning, organising, executing and controlling first introduced by classical management theorists. Regardless of differences in managerial level, the discipline or organisation the manager is in, a managerial process appears to require considerable demonstration of behaviour associated with enterprise - this is particularly clear judging from the type and average high frequency of mentions of the behaviour-related tasks identified by the respondents.

**Defining The Occupation Of Management**

The majority of respondents found defining the occupation of management difficult, declaring it problematic to try to separate management from the other activities of an organisation or to isolate it from the context in which management takes place. They maintain that their primary functions are to create, market and exchange goods and services, which is easily observable, but the way they manage - which gives a broad-base purpose, direction and order to these functions - is often less clearly visible and is closely embedded in the total action.

One of the educators interviewed strongly emphasised that management should not be considered as a 'profession' because the essence of management is an all-purpose integrating function in social systems, which is precisely what professions such as medicine, law, accountancy, pharmacy and social work are not. These views
suggest that the occupation of management involves a number of different occupations with different kinds of responsibilities, skills and attitudes.

Overall, the perceptions of respondents reveal that the nature of managerial tasks is far more complex than is often supposed by management textbooks wherein formal rationality prevails or through empirical studies which reveal the essential character of general managerial work. To the respondents in general, management appears to be a purposive 'generalist' process that uses all means available - a process of putting resources together, achieving results within time, budget, and other constraints. When compared with the nature of work of the professions which have clearly defined roles and clearly specified clients, managers are required to also balance and integrate the changing needs and aspirations of many stakeholders in a number of contexts.

Similar to the literature, the majority of respondents appear to be aware of the varied dynamics of the managerial process but fail to fully grasp the meaning - for example, the purpose, objective and outcome - of the management occupation. In fact, when asked to sum up the nature of managerial work, few respondents attempted to do so, declaring that 'there is no simple answer' and 'the concept of management is uncertain'. This observation precipitates some immediate questions: What then are the implications to management education if educators, employers, students/graduates, being the main stakeholders of the education, are unsure of the scope and boundary of the manager's work? What kind of education will enhance an 'uncertain' occupation such as management? How can future managerial roles be prepared? Can an educational process do this?

THE MANAGERIAL SKILLS

Skills Managers Draw Upon To Perform Their Tasks

Respondents were asked about their perceptions of the skills managers draw on to perform their tasks. Table 4.2 shows the categories of skills identified by MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates and the percentage of mention of skills and rank order of mentions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Educators %</th>
<th>Employers %</th>
<th>Students/Graduates %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Planning</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Problem-solving/decision making</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Organising</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Task and time management</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Social interaction</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Leadership</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Financial, budgeting</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Research</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Technical/professional</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Technology development</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Negotiating</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Performance evaluation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Supervising</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = the ability to: set short- and long-term goals; think strategically; facilitate planning; establish planning systems and reproduce different sorts of administrative structures
2 = the ability to: identify and define problem; weight and analyse situations; generate solution; manage crises; act decisively
3 = the ability to: schedule, coordinate and orchestrate operations and activities; 'bring together people and resources'; 'select, combine and turn resources into productive services in different circumstances by different sorts of managerial process'
4 = the ability to: identify key issues, prioritise; break task down to manageable activities; meet deadlines, review and monitor progress
5 = the ability to: communicate interpersonally, and in writing; 'get on with people'; listen; seek clarification, disagree in a pleasant way
6 = the ability to: delegate, establish and share vision; earn respect through confidence and competence; 'work through other people'; manage change; 'take advice'
7 = the ability to: 'account'; manage finance; analyse statistics
8 = the ability to: investigate, gather and interpret information
9 = the ability to: apply job specific, technical/professional expertise, e.g. in marketing, sales, finance, engineering, or law
10 = the ability to: manage information systems
11 = the ability to: resolve conflicts
12 = the ability to: review and evaluate performance for human resource development purposes
13 = the ability to: enforce standards and regulations; 'orient staff and work'
While the three groups of respondents appear to agree in general about what managers do (this Chapter, page 125), the skills required to perform the tasks are less clear. For the educators, the two skills most frequently mentioned are negotiating and problem-solving/decision-making, followed by planning. Whereas for the employers, the two skills are negotiating and leadership, and for the students/graduates negotiating and task and time management. The conflict resolution nature of negotiation has been singled out as the most frequently used skill of managers. There are, however, several significant differences in responses by the three groups of respondents. Although more often than not respondents mentioned Leadership and social interaction, yet task and time management and Performance evaluation appear to be skills frequently mentioned by the students/graduates alone, who in this research have an average of 13.4 years of work experience before pursuing an MBA programme and are, or have been, managerial employees of junior to senior capacities. Whereas only a small percentage of employers and even smaller percentage of educators perceive the two skills as required by managers. In the case of technology development, the employers appear to be the chief advocates.

The percentages of responses relating to managerial skills are comparatively lower than that relating to managerial tasks in Table 4.1. This may imply that respondents in general are not as clearly aware of the skills required by managers as they are of the tasks performed by managers. This observation can be reinforced by a careful study of the views of the respondents. For example, few respondents were as specific as the following employer who stated that:

In our organisation we emphasise the following skill areas: people management skills, change management skills, business management skills, technology management skills, technical skills and other skills necessary for successful business activity within the international environment, for example foreign language and intercultural skills.

(Em.11)

'People Management Skills'

But when asked to explain 'people management skills', the above respondent while specifying the techniques of delegating, supervising, negotiating, group process, coaching and counselling, staff development and performance evaluation acknowledged difficulty in separating this skill-set from other seemingly relevant classifications such as leadership, communication or interaction skill.
To the majority of respondents, the concept of management skill appears to be vague. While indicating that managers possess certain skills, they maintain that 'there is no consensus on what these skills are'. Most of them have difficulty in defining 'managerial skills' or distinguishing them from 'business practices', 'managerial techniques' or even 'managerial experience' - some of the ill-defined terminologies commonly adopted by popular literature attempting to describe, or encompass, managerial skills.

Respondents also have different ways of classifying managerial skills. In the case of the following educators, these skills are:

Strategising; technological imperative; focusing; diagnosing; reputation building; personal drive; varying behaviour.

(Ed:15)

Analytical; social; emotional

(Ed:07)

One of the graduates regarded managerial skill as 'an art of how to manage', while an employer equated the same skill with managerial competency, explaining it as 'an ability to perform effectively functions associated with management in a work-related situation'. Indeed, similar to the literature, there appears to be many versions of defining managerial skill and the respondents' understanding of it was broad, varied and 'collective' (S/6:04).

Quantitative Vs Qualitative Skills

Furthermore, as suggested in the data, the skill-sets more frequently identified by educator respondents appear to be more quantitative (planning, problem-solving/decision-making) - the 'hard' statistical and analytical skills used in areas such as operations management, marketing or finance, whereas those identified by employer and student/graduate respondents are more qualitative - the 'soft' motivational and interactional skills used in areas such as people management and leadership. When asked to explain this observation of the data, an educator respondent who believed that managers needed to know more about finance than would have been gained purely through experience claimed that:

Australian managers are very conservative. They believe the main problems they have in the workplace are problems of communication. But that is not so.

(Ed:11)
There appears, however, to be a collective view among employer and student/graduate respondents that real-life managerial roles demand qualitative skills in greater depth than the quantitative skills. Qualitative skills include leadership, peer and conflict-resolution, processing information and decision-making under ambiguity, introspection and entrepreneurialship.

This contrast in identified skills leads to the matter of what qualities managers require in order to be successful in the 1990s and beyond. The difference in perception among the three groups of respondents suggests that stakeholders are assessing managerial effectiveness with different criteria and standards, based on their respective assumptions of suitable and relevant skills required by managers. The contrast, coupled with the ill-defined, yet encompassing, nature of management skills, makes ways of acquiring the perceived qualities or providing suitable skills quite difficult and will have a strong influence on the content and curriculum design of management education. How best can a manager’s ability to perform be effectively improved? Unless there is a clear and universal agreement on (and public understanding of) management skills, how can educators and their business schools, employers and their organisations, and graduates and their recruiters perform their role in enhancing the quality of Australian managers?

**What Characterises A Good Manager?**

Data also reveal another aspect relating to management skill. When asked of their perceptions on what characterises a ‘good manager’, respondents, regardless of groupings, repeatedly reaffirmed the importance of ‘a skilled manager’ as the key criterion. Their notion of ‘skilled manager’ suggests that management skill involves much more than the possession and development of operational skills and abilities. It also relies upon the development of attitudes, values and mindsets that allow managers to confront, understand and deal with a wide range of forces inside and outside their organisations. It appears that the characteristics of a good or ‘skilled’ manager include a blend of skills, knowledge, aptitudes, attitudes, temperament and personal qualities and only the combination of these enables a manager to manage effectively. This observation raises a few immediate questions which challenge the current provision of education for managers: What type of education provides for the blend of skills described? Does the current MBA provision produce ‘skilled managers’? Can such a complexity of management skill be taught?
Before addressing these questions it is important to consider another important question, namely, what sort of knowledge base is appropriate for developing managerial skills?

THE MANAGERIAL KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge Base Required By Managers

Respondents were asked about their perceptions of the knowledge base required by managers. Table 4.3 shows the categories of knowledge identified by the three groups of respondents, the percentage of mention of the knowledge and the rank order of the mentions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Educators</th>
<th></th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th></th>
<th>Students/Graduates</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Rank</td>
<td>% Rank</td>
<td>% Rank</td>
<td>% Rank</td>
<td>% Rank</td>
<td>% Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Basic management principles</td>
<td>88 2</td>
<td>73 5</td>
<td>91 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Marketing</td>
<td>96 1</td>
<td>88 2</td>
<td>87 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Ethical issues</td>
<td>76 4</td>
<td>84 3</td>
<td>62 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Organisation and its operations</td>
<td>84 3</td>
<td>92 1</td>
<td>75 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 General</td>
<td>72 5</td>
<td>76 4</td>
<td>79 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = management theories and practices
2 = economics, systems, environments
3 = social responsibility, legal issues, equal opportunity employment requirement
4 = how organisation works, a broad, diffused knowledge base which includes extensive local knowledge, i.e. organisational and technical knowledge, networks, human relations
5 = 'common sense', knowledge base of managerial skills is less standardized and formal but more general than that of medical and engineering skills

Perhaps due to the broad and 'generalist' nature of management identified earlier by the majority of respondents, few respondents were able to describe
succinctly the knowledge base required by managers. Often, respondents needed prodding or the researcher’s guidance in identifying the knowledge base. This explains the generally high percentage of mentions against each category of knowledge, as most of the respondents, once given an example of an item acknowledged it as a knowledge base required by managers. Categorising the knowledge base for reporting also presented some problems as some respondents regarded skill as knowledge. For example, managerial knowledge was described by the following employer as:

People management, business policy, finance, economics, statistics, industrial relations, computer appreciation, marketing, production, system design, accounting, law, technical/professional knowledge, foreign language.

(Em.07)

while an educator respondent described the discipline base of MBA subjects as managerial knowledge:

Psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, politics, law, economics, finance, accounting, statistics, mathematics, computing.

(Ed.13)

and a graduate respondent, also a senior manager, described managerial knowledge in skill-based terms:

Communication [oral and written], critical thinking analysis, group and teamwork, task management, time management, information technology, independent learning and self-assessment, entrepreneurialism, leadership, foreign language, numeracy.

(S/G.16)

Other similar comments also stressed the importance of ‘extensive knowledge base’ required by managers. Interestingly, respondents repeatedly attempted to explain that ‘there isn’t a body of knowledge’ for management. There appears to be an assumption that managerial abilities, which aim at coping with a wide range of changing problems, incorporate a broad knowledge base which includes extensive understanding of general and particular organisational and industrial circumstances. Any restricted cognitive base would render managerial abilities far too narrow and specialised to be useful. Data displayed in Table 4.3 suggest that all three groups of respondents closely identify with this assumption, which is compatible with the groups’ earlier perceptions of the generalist and copious nature of both managerial tasks and managerial skills.
However, the differences in the data, while comparatively low, suggest degrees of priority and importance. Is all this knowledge necessary for all managers, or are there specialist bodies of knowledge that some managers require and others do not? What should be the appropriate depth of knowledge for the needs of managers? Data also suggest that the educator group considers the marketing (economics, systems, environments) type of knowledge as more often required by managers, whereas the employer group takes heed of the knowledge regarding organisation and its operations (how an organisation works, technical knowledge, networks, human relations) and the student/graduate group that of basic management principles (management theories and practices).

Range Of Knowledge And Its Application In The Workplace

A greater percentage of respondents in the student/graduate group expressed their doubts about the range of knowledge required by managers and its application in the workplace. Some of the employer respondents, while questioning the priority and relevance to their specific industry or business or, particularly, the statistically-based areas such as operations management or system design, acknowledged the need for 'all-round' knowledge. They emphasised that as managers ascend the managerial hierarchy, discretion and uncertainty tend to increase and standard procedures become less relevant than detailed understanding of the functioning of the industry and organisation. The majority of educator respondents emphasised that management education, particularly the MBA programmes, catered for the 'generalist' manager, maintaining that the more knowledge managers have of their environments the more likely it is that they will perform their functions satisfactorily. As pointed out by one of the educators:

Not all managers will need to know everything on the syllabus of the business school. But it is no possible to say in advance which pieces any particular student can neglect. At the same time, every manager needs to learn specific knowledge of what he is managing, be it a manufacturing plant, a distribution network, a hospital, a charity or some other body.

(Ec:22)

All three groups of respondents generally considered specialist or technical knowledge - such as, in the case of a manager in the accounting field, detailed knowledge of accounting - essential for managers, mainly for monitoring and supervising purposes.
It appears that there is little consensus among educator, employer and student/graduate respondents regarding the body of knowledge required by managers in order to perform effectively. Furthermore, a small number of educators emphasised the importance, yet absence, of 'qualities such as emotional commitment to ethical values, personal and interpersonal skills, and self-knowledge' in the body of knowledge for managers. Data presented in Table 43 reflect these educators' concerns. The knowledge relating to ethical issues is among the least mentioned by all three groups of respondents. The educators stressed that these qualities are really aspects of a whole person, a 'well-educated' manager. An area of knowledge such as cultural literacy leads, not only to the understanding of cultures impinging on the organisation, but also to the development of a broad set of skills. These skills cultivate an essential part of a manager's characteristics, such as intellectual analysis and social competence - these qualities are over and above those general qualities usually aimed for in a study of business or management.

This observation raises a few immediate questions. Is current management education relevant to a 'well-educated' manager? Does it develop the qualities described by these few concerned educators? Should management education be more liberal, stressing the knowledge base which develops a whole person than what has been identified by the respondents? If so, would this be the route to improving the education?

How Can Managerial Skills And Knowledge Be Best Acquired?

On the question of how managerial skill and knowledge can best be acquired, respondents generally focused on the time and manner of acquisition. Data reflect that the majority of respondents, particularly educators, agree that management education should be a post-graduate activity, ideally following on from some years of experience. Their arguments were that:

- older students with experience of the workplace have a more responsible and motivated view of learning than undergraduates;
- studies of organisations and management are much more meaningful if taught to people who have had experience of being managed; and
- maturity is needed for the development of management skills.

However, conflict among respondents arose over the issue of whether technical knowledge such as accounting, finance, economics, operations management, organisation theory and information systems should be provided at undergraduate
level, freeing post-graduate management education to focus on the 'specific activity of management'. The majority of employer and student/graduate respondents regard the study of this technical knowledge at post-graduate level as 'theoretical', not commensurate with students' maturity and experience and not addressing the 'real-life' management of 'analysing and synthesising messy organisation situations' As recalled by a graduate on his study of the topic of operations management in the MBA programme:

How can we learn how to criticise if we are expected to do no more than memorise one solution to a standard problem? How can we gain that self-knowledge which is fundamental in a liberally educated person, if we do not engage in relating our own values to the values being studied at the MBA?

(S/G 05)

Views of the educators, however, reveal otherwise - a high percentage of them insist that undergraduate courses should not be technical, but provide a general education to young students. Some of them claim that they convey technical knowledge to students very differently at post-graduate level, but it is not clear from the data what the differences are.

These observations reflect that many questions relating to the extent of managerial knowledge remain unanswered. Data suggest, similar to the literature, that respondents of this research are uncertain about issues such as: Who decides what managers should learn? What should effective managers learn? And how?

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In addition to presenting the profile of the respondents, this chapter has attempted to analyse the nature of management as perceived by the the MBA-related educators, employers and students/graduates. In particular, assumptions about tasks, skills and knowledge of managers which underlie their perceptions have been examined. From these assumptions, various questions relating to the implications of management education have arisen.

While the three groups of respondents generally regard management as 'broad', 'flexible', 'adoptable' and 'generic', there appears to be no consensus about what the tasks, skills and knowledge of managers are or how the skills and knowledge might be learned. Data suggest that although there are tasks, skills and knowledge generic to managers, successful management may depend on how these work together.
However, it does not appear that successful management is just a sequential exercise of acquiring knowledge and skills and then performing the tasks. In addition, intellect, social competence, motives, traits and others cultivate an essential part of managerial quality. How the synergy involving and deriving from these various characteristics may develop and be effective within management education is not clear.