Consensus and Conflict in Stakeholder Perceptions of Management Education: Views of Management Educators, Employers and Students/Graduates about MBA Programmes in Three Australian Universities

by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of New England January, 1998
I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

(Anges Y.C. Lau)
Abstract

In recent years, increasing dissatisfaction has developed with regard to management education in general and the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree in particular. This research examines the extent of this dissatisfaction.

The research focuses on the relationship between 75 educators, employers and students/graduates who are associated with the MBA degrees offered by three of the best-known business schools in Australia. The aim is to understand the attitudes and viewpoints and, in turn, the behaviours and practices of these three interacting stakeholder groups. Respondent perceptions regarding the purposes, objectives, practices and outcomes of the MBA degree were obtained through in-depth interviews.

The data collected demonstrated that the dissatisfaction is real, a state which is manifested in the mismatch of assumptions, values, needs and expectations of the three target groups. The evidence indicates that while stakeholders highlight many positive aspects of MBA experiences, there is a strong view that in many respects the degree is an inadequate management education programme for today's business organisations. The gap between what management education promotes and the type of management education needed by industry is significant. There is little evidence that co-operative interaction among the three stakeholder groups, or that managerial and organisational effectiveness have been achieved by this type of education.

These findings have significant implications for the improvement and development of management education. Addressing the dissatisfaction is difficult, as it calls for change in culture which, fundamentally, requires remodelling individual values and practices. Educators will need to bridge the gap in customer understanding, view change as beneficial, shift priorities, work towards achieving cultural change in the business schools and serve the life-long educational needs of managers. Employers will need to take the initiative in addressing the educational problems which they also partly own, clarify the requirements of managers, investigate the broad and specific issues of modern business and better manage the investment in the education of their managers. Students/graduates will need to be increasingly responsible for self-development and be proactive with respect to their own educational experience.

Most important, all three stakeholder groups must begin and maintain rich and meaningful dialogue in order to build mutually beneficial partnerships with one another. In addition, it is apparent that government must, as a matter of urgency, lead, facilitate and regulate this collaboration.
Acknowledgements

As these past few years of PhD experience come to a close, I must acknowledge the many people who provided me with knowledge, information, advice, guidance and support throughout the research and thesis writing processes.

First of all, my gratitude goes to the educators, employers and students/graduates who responded to this research, who allowed me to interview them and shared with me experiences, insights and feelings which made this study possible and brought life to this thesis. My outlook on management education has been changed as a result of these interviews. I also wish to thank the three Business Schools involved in this research for the cooperation, assistance and accessibility given to me, particularly in facilitating the conduct of the interviews.

To my supervisors of this research, Professor Grant Harman and Dr. John Spencer, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude. Their experience, wisdom and work in the field of management, leadership, education and research guided me greatly - in particular, their incisive feedback, ongoing support and assistance in keeping my mind on track with the study, as well as their careful reading and constructive critique of my efforts. I am indebted to them for their patience and insights throughout the process of this research.

During the candidature, I have been the recipient of funded professional development leave from the Northern Territory University. I am deeply grateful for this institutional support, especially for the writing time this gave me. I also wish to thank many other associates, in this University and the University of New England, as well as outside the university environment, whose ideas have expanded my viewpoint or who have piloted and triangulated this study. I am particularly grateful to Reverend Alan and Mrs. Jan Kitchingman whose many hours of careful proof-reading and editing have greatly improved the presentation of this report.

Finally, I extend my thanks to my family. I am grateful for their unwavering belief in, and support of, my wish for betterment and achievement. I am grateful for letters and phone calls of support when needed them.
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Abbreviations

AACSB  American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business
AGSM  Australian Graduate School of Management
AMA  American Management Association
Ed  Educator
Em  Employer
GMAT  Graduate Management Admission Test
GSM  Graduate School of Management
GSMPP  Graduate School of Management and Public Policy
MBA  Master of Business Administration
MCI  Management Charter Initiative
S/G  Student/Graduate
TAFE  Technical and further Education
TQM  Total Quality Management