

Cass interview series

Interviews with national bodies concerned with Quality Management Enhancement (QME): CIPD, BQF, AMBA, ABS and CMI

Full transcripts of interviews carried out by **Dr Nigel Courtney**, Cass Business School

CIPD

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (<http://www.cipd.co.uk>)

Paul Browning; Manager, Education Quality Management; Wimbledon HO, 10 August 2005

The aim of the interview

- To ascertain the current viewpoint of national bodies (including ABS, AMB, BQF, CMI, CIPD) concerned with
 - a quality management enhancement and
 - b the quality of management education.
- To elicit the intended future direction of policy for influencing central government
- To review the potential impact of supra-national initiatives such as the Bologna Accord.

Questions

The 45-minute interview will focus around the following questions:

1 Where are we going?

In 2002 the last (and final) QAA subject review of management courses criticised, in terms, supplier institutions for teaching quality management but not embracing it in their own businesses.

1a To what extent has the situation improved or deteriorated since 2002?

On balance the situation is better today. QM is being taken more seriously in business schools. When visiting business schools and speaking to Deans and heads of department I usually see a person with specific responsibility for QM – eg: a Director of Quality – who is an assistant dean.

1b What evidence do you have for this view?

I'm not aware of any metrics [since the last QAA subject review]. We don't measure at present; we do use a Risk Assessment approach, taking a more subjective view. We look for 'recommendations for achieving good practice' – which we now call Action Points – and specify a timescale for these to be met.

We have two streams or kinds of educational centres to run courses and CIPD exams. Centres are either approved or not approved, there is no in between state. Every institution is reviewed every 5 years. The FE colleges and private providers tend to run CIPD national exams – and could ask questions across the whole syllabus. The HE institutions deliver HR

courses that are accredited through internal assessment. Exams at these centres will examine on what has been taught in the module and we can see which institutions need to be pushed more.

Currently there are 11 'Centres of Excellence': LSE, Westminster, Kingston, Cranfield, Portsmouth, West of England, Nottingham Trent, De Montford, Manchester Metropolitan, Strathclyde, Limerick. The differentiating factor is that they do more HR research work that is disseminated into courses and the practitioner community.

2 Is this satisfactory?

Increasingly fierce competition for talented students has been accompanied by a drive towards student-centred engagement (Barr & Tagg 1995).

2a Is student-centred engagement leading to better or worse academic results?

The main difference is the person teaching. If the tutor is focused on the students, then 'Yes', results are better. Most complaints concern tutors who are not engaged. Good tutors expect a lot of their students ... and students will respond well to this demand. Complaints from students are not about volume of work but stem from clashes – for example when three courseworks are due in the same week.

To put this in context, we are phasing out the CIPD programme at undergraduate level; it is almost all at Masters level – students are there because they want to be there.

2b Do you find that leading institutions have shifted towards the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning?

CIPD Programme leaders must be CIPD members – so they are or have been practitioners or involved in non-academic work and are not over-focused on academic research. Centres that do research need balancing so their outputs feed into the teaching.

I see tensions because of a divergence between academics who want to encourage learning and 'quality people' who want the boxes ticked. Quality can become an end in itself. 'Excellence' should be an extension of Quality Management Enhancement (QME). Progress is not coming from the quality people but from the very committed tutors whose main focus is to see the students learn.

3 What should be done about it?

Some hold that in the 80s and 90s the quest for quality was chiefly concerned with achieving minimum levels or standards.

3a If so, what has been the effect on management education?

Chasing quality has certainly helped. CIPD has very few Centres it has significant concerns about. A lot are very good – they have combined good teaching and development of the quality side.

3b What should UK institutions do to achieve higher quality standards?

They must develop the people who are actually delivering the teaching. This is the biggest issue – especially in FE where the pressures are horrendous. Tutors in the business studies departments of some FE colleges have to teach 900 hours. They don't have time or resources. Students need access to electronic journals and tutors need time to stay ahead of the students. No allowance is made for the relative difficulty of a qualification.

Why are there not more linkages between Colleges and universities – as there is for Foundation degrees? For example, Harrogate College is a full faculty of Leeds Met. There are some very good FE Colleges, it always comes down to resources.

In terms of meeting employers' expectations, CIPD exams have both knowledge parts and skills parts – enabling candidates to show they are able to know and able to do. Skills are a significant part even at post-grad level. Graduates should be competent to conduct an interview or run a training session. We get very clear feedback from employers if this doesn't happen.

4 Who wins and who loses, by which mechanisms of power?

40 European states have now agreed to implement the Bologna Accord by 2008. Although GMAC estimates that this will lead to 12,000 new management courses in Europe at Masters level, UK institutions appear to be complacent.

Regarding the Bologna Accord, I see a lack of concern in UK institutions about – I'm afraid it's the result of limited understanding. CIPD is moving to post-grad only programmes largely because the area is closely defined by the Bologna Accord. A lot of UK universities have been slow off the mark – it's not the thing people want to talk about.

There is complacency. Existing programmes are getting filled with overseas students and there are new courses specifically designed for overseas students. China has just 'discovered' HR and there is ferocious demand. But in most of Europe, especially Eastern Europe, English is taught in schools from age 5. The 12,000 extra courses in Europe will lead to a crowded market.

4a Do you anticipate that implementation will commoditise management education?

I'm not sure ... it may. The particular experience required for HR means that programmes have to have a balance of academic and practitioner components. We are looking worldwide – much wider than Europe. I know of two UK universities that now run courses in Continental locations. The competition today is from the US and Australia.

4b Should UK institutions be taking a more proactive stance?

They are already fairly proactive in winning business but I'm not sure the Bologna Accord is seen as a competitive issue. There has been little response to date. An international conference here – say at Cass – could be useful. Recently CIPD called a conference on delivering our programmes in the Middle and Far East rather than in Europe and the Accession countries. Representatives from 20 Centres turned up.

Regarding the suggested shift towards excellence in teaching and learning, I think there is still some way to go. Some institutions are farther than others. There is a lot of good practice and much better facilities in terms of learning resources, libraries and IT.

We have a team of 15 monitors who conduct approval visits. They record Action Points and – on the basis of their experience in other Centres – often record up to ten items of good practice. Their feedback is very positive – especially from talking to students.

CIPD approval, or accreditation, by our monitors is based on a set of criteria to do with achieving expectations. Although we don't benchmark against good or best practice our review reports do record plenty of examples. This autumn I intend to go through past reports and pull out examples of good practice for the benefit of our members. CIPD will be happy to arrange with you for these to be more widely disseminated via your project website so that other institutions can learn from them.

BQF

The British Quality Foundation (<http://www.quality-foundation.co.uk>)

Jan Szymankiewicz, Director of Member Services; London H0, 17 August 2005

The aim of the interview

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 - a quality management enhancement and
 - b the quality of management education.
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Questions

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1 Where are we going?

In 2002 the last (and final) QAA subject review of management courses criticised, in terms, supplier institutions for teaching quality management but not embracing it in their own businesses.

Jan responded to the underlying question: “If there was excellence in business education, what would it look like?” by offering a brief description of the nature and purpose of BQF and the Business Excellence Model (BEM).

The BQF was founded in 1993 following the successful introduction of the Excellence model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) as the framework for assessing applications for the UK Business Excellence Award.

In essence, the BEM is a generic framework comprising of nine elements in the form of a system for measuring and assessing excellent performance and for moving forward.



[source: http://www.quality-foundation.co.uk/ex_description.htm]

The concept is concerned with ‘being an excellent organisation’ and about ‘the way you run your business’. The BEM enables an organisation to gauge performance and set goals for improvement, via self-assessment every one or two years, at three levels:

- a Committed to Excellence (certificate)
- b Investors in Excellence (certificate) [similar to IiP]
- c Annual Awards

Measurement of performance in each element can lead to a total maximum score of 1,000 points. Typically, adopters initially score about 250. Candidates for an Award need at least 650 points to have a chance of winning.

A study in 2000 by Kevin B Hendricks of the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario and Vinod R Singhal of the DuPree College of Management at the Georgia Institute of Technology investigated organisations that won awards for implementation of the Business Excellence Model and found, first, that they outperformed a benchmark peer-group by 34% over the following five years and second, that the margin widened steadily with time. Similarly positive findings, to be published in September, flow from Leicester University research into the impact on the 'bottom line' resulting from a focus on excellence.

The BEM is a form of accreditation that would enable a business school, for example, to assess itself in a rigorous way. The BQF website lists several thousands of members, currently including some 24 FE Colleges, 16 universities and 4 university business schools. Use of BEM could potentially lead to benchmarking or even a league table – although Jan is not aware of any such initiatives at present.

EFQM (<http://www.efqm.org>), at its Brussels HQ, issues tailored versions of the model, including one for the Public and Voluntary sector. BQF also offers to SMEs an introductory version of the BEM called "BQF Snapshot" (see http://www.bqf.org.uk/pi_bqfsnapshot.htm).

1a To what extent has the situation improved or deteriorated since 2002?

I'm not aware of any direct evidence either way. However, an organisation that has been severely criticised will usually address the issues to stop further criticism ... so I would expect that there has been some improvement.

1b What evidence do you have for this view?

I would expect feedback from business school graduates to be a reliable measure. I've heard CBI members express disappointment at standards of outputs from business schools. You also hear business schools complain of 'dumbed-down' A-levels leading to 96.2% pass rates.

2 Is this satisfactory?

Increasingly fierce competition for talented students has been accompanied by a drive towards student-centred engagement (Barr & Tagg 1995).

2a Is student-centred engagement leading to better or worse academic results?

The logical consequence of student-centricity is that the customers get power – just as we have seen with shoppers. What attracts a student to a particular school? Enjoyment and the pass rate may count as much as reputation. The pressure on business schools to get 'bums on seats' might lead to actions to get results that are attractive to students rather than academically rigorous.

2b Do you find that leading institutions have shifted towards the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning?

I simply don't know if this is so.

3 What should be done about it?

Some hold that in the 80s and 90s the quest for quality was chiefly concerned with achieving minimum levels or standards.

3a If so, what has been the effect on management education?

In the 80s and 90s the quest for quality was a rather isolated activity ... it was about getting ticks in boxes. But now the business case for being excellent is coming to the fore.

Each of the nine boxes in the high-level BEM is supported by a manual detailing the relevant factors. For example, take 'process' – it is an enabler that leads to people, customer and Corporate Social Responsibility results. The situation has progressed from 'Did we do that process well? Yes or No?' to 'Did we do that process well and did it lead to a more business-focused output?' An organisation that doesn't deal with all nine boxes will have deficiencies in their organisation.

But the BEM is not the only approach; some of our members use other models. For example, some will focus on people and the impact of their people on results. But in time this is bound to affect processes and so the organisation gradually finds itself looking at more of the nine boxes.

BQF is not saying that business schools must adopt the EFQM framework – they already have to go through a number of accreditation procedures [including the government's RAE and standards set by various national and international bodies such as AMBA, CMI, CIPD, Equis, AACSB etc]. It could be useful to construct a map that positions and associates these initiatives and the various quality management models. If so, my colleague John Smith, a BQF director, might be able to assist the QuBE project with this.

3b What should UK institutions do to achieve higher quality standards?

The bottom line is that an academic organisation is little different from any other organisation. The principles are the same – they all have customers, products, processes, outcomes and a need to be commercial. The only difference is that in a commercial organisation the employees and the management are there because they can run businesses – whereas, in a business school, people are there because they can teach and, typically, are not experienced in running businesses. That's where the challenge lies – just as it has for medical doctors running the National Health Service.

The answer lies in the way targets are set. This will impact on behaviour and could drive an organisation in the wrong direction. For example, GPs today are obliged to see a patient within 48 hours of contact ... therefore it is impossible book an appointment in three days time. So, if the RAE rewards academic research highly, then business school faculties might tend to seek good researchers rather than good practitioners. Lowering standards does no student a favour.

4 Who wins and who loses, by which mechanisms of power?

40 European states have now agreed to implement the Bologna Accord by 2008. Although GMAC estimates that this will lead to 12,000 new management courses in Europe at Masters level, UK institutions appear to be complacent.

4a Do you anticipate that implementation will commoditise management education?

If you are a student with a degree of choice, what will influence your choice? The perceived value of the certificate; its future value in your career; the reputation of the business school;

location – fun and things like that; the ease of getting the certificate – depending on one’s ability. For potential employers the issue is: ‘are the standards of a particular school comparable with others nationally and internationally’.

I see a parallel with the European Logistics Association which embraces logistics associations in 31 countries. The standard of qualification gained in each country has to be comparable and transferable so that a trained person can seek and gain employment in another European country. To ensure this, the European Certification Board for Logistics evaluates courses and training offered in all 31 countries and accredits these if they meet the required standard, at up to four comparable levels of qualification.

We have found that training providers and universities do want accreditation so that their graduates can work abroad if they choose. So, for the Bologna Accord to work it will be crucial that there is a related body to ensure that all educational courses meet some agreed minimum standards.

4b Should UK institutions be taking a more proactive stance?

Complacency is dangerous when there is a threat of increased competition. In logistics, countries such as Poland have benefited hugely because Poles want to come to the UK to work in many aspects of logistics such as supply chain management or vehicle fleet management. The qualification offered in Poland equips them to do this because the courses are taught in English and take account of UK Health and Safety regulations and so on.

For education in general, the Bologna Accord will benefit those countries where a high preponderance of citizens want to work elsewhere. This means states in Eastern Europe and the Accession countries in particular. In time, it will become easier for employers to select these employees with confidence.

Regarding the future direction of policy for influencing central government, BQF does not lobby. It has to be for the universities and business schools to lobby government to stop linking funding to the wrong measures because this will create the wrong behaviours and seriously constrain excellence. Because many MBAs go into industry and commerce it could be fruitful to link with the CBI whose leader, Digby Jones, has already been lobbying in this area.

Initial results from the BQF/EFQM/Leicester University research into improved performance through a focus on excellence will be presented at a Sponsor Members’ meeting in Hatfield on 9th September. If Cass’ Director of Quality, Dr Carol Vielba, would like to attend I will be happy to arrange an invitation.

In addition BQF will be pleased to provide an electronic copy of the report for dissemination via the QuBE project website, when it is released.

AMBA

Association of MBAs (<http://www.mbaworld.com>)

Jeanette Purcell, Chief Executive; London HQ, 23 August 2005

The aim of the interview

- To ascertain the current viewpoint of national bodies (including ABS, AMB, BQF, CMI, CIPD) concerned with

- a quality management enhancement and
- b the quality of management education.
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Questions

Ms Purcell advised at the outset that in addressing the following questions she would focus on the post-experience MBA degree and the better schools offering the MBA and accredited by AMBA.

1 Where are we going?

In 2002 the last (and final) QAA subject review of management courses criticised, in terms, supplier institutions for teaching quality management but not embracing it in their own businesses.

1a To what extent has the situation improved or deteriorated since 2002?

The current trend is towards greatly increased competition. This is affecting the approach and strategies of business schools but it won't necessarily produce better Quality Management.

Many UK schools have not woken up to that fact that the Bologna Accord will intensify this competition by flooding the market with new Masters programmes. Some of these courses will be very attractive – they will be taught in English and, in Denmark for example, will be free. I'm concerned primarily with the MBA degree and how it is distinguished from the growing number of pre-experience Masters. What's important about the MBA degree? Two key features are the multi-cultural mix and the fact that it is a post-experience qualification.

1b What evidence do you have for this view?

Although I believe there has been some improvement in quality management, there is very little evidence to support that view – it's gut feel. I think the situation has improved in AMBA-accredited schools because we have been able to raise the bar a bit. I suspect it hasn't changed much in some non-accredited schools.

The increasing pressure in the market will mean that only the best will survive. All those schools that jumped on the bandwagon during the MBA boom – and are now trying to flood their courses with candidates from India and China – will either close or the quality they offer will be impaired. There is currently a lot of enthusiasm for franchising courses and overseas partnership – but these arrangements make quality much more difficult to manage. However there are some excellent examples of successful, well-managed franchises. The better schools are setting up franchises and partnerships outside the UK – for example, Strathclude in Switzerland, Dubai and Shanghai.

2 Is this satisfactory?

Increasingly fierce competition for talented students has been accompanied by a drive towards student-centred engagement (Barr & Tagg 1995).

2a Do you find that leading institutions have shifted towards the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning?

This is really an extension of the differences and tensions between the old universities and the new universities and the private business schools. The RAE scores are so vital that the

old universities are being forced to focus on research at the expense of student-centred learning and teaching.

The RAE works against quality in a business school context. If they want to recruit good researchers they risk having fewer academics who are good teachers with relevant and recent business experience. The good private business schools tend to be better at the student support, careers advice and so on that underpins student-centred learning. In the MBA world, rankings are so important. And these are influenced by feedback from students and alumni. So business schools try to ensure that students have had a nice time and lots of attention but does this really build quality?

The MBA environment is probably the most heavily policed – in terms of external evaluation and the pursuit of excellence. This is not so much the case with pre-experience Masters and BScs – which are more vulnerable to quality impairment.

2b Is student-centred engagement leading to better or worse academic results?

I don't think it's possible to say. Student engagement should be just part of a strategy to build quality which includes excellence in teaching and rigorous assessment.

Where business schools are able to focus on student-centred engagement and where they are doing it for the right reasons – i.e. not just to improve their position in the rankings – I suspect that academic results are better. But many business schools are having to concentrate on research and this is distracting them from student-centred engagement.

What affects student results? There has been no noticeable change in pass rates over the last ten years ... but then the rigorous selection process and calibre of MBA students means that the pass rate for MBAs is always very high.

3 What should be done about it?

Some hold that in the 80s and 90s the quest for quality was chiefly concerned with achieving minimum levels or standards.

3a If so, what has been the effect on management education?

Yes, this is a fair representation; quality management enhancement is equated with getting ticks in boxes. And this does tend to lead to commoditisation.

At AMBA we are concerned with setting the agenda and promoting responsiveness, flexibility and innovation. But we are also a standards-setting agency because this is helpful to employers ... so they know what they are getting. We set about 70 criteria that have to be rated. Accreditation criteria must accommodate innovation or you just get lowest common denominator improvement.

3b What should UK institutions do to achieve higher quality standards?

They can improve quality by hiring better faculty, teaching smaller classes, giving better student support, by more rigorous assessment – both before, during and after the programme – and, especially, by better engagement with the business community.

To push back the tide of commoditisation business schools are now looking at what differentiates them in a crowded and competitive market. The best schools will identify their particular strengths and market these well and develop them. For example, London Business School is renowned for its global MBA and this is borne out by the faculty mix, the quality of its students and the jobs gained by its graduates. Other schools will choose to differentiate by

their promoting their national or regional profile, targeting a different market. And there are other examples such as Cass Business School which sets out to be ‘the intellectual hub of the City’.

4 Who wins and who loses, by which mechanisms of power?

40 European states have now agreed to implement the Bologna Accord by 2008. Although GMAC estimates that this will lead to 12,000 new management courses in Europe at Masters level, UK institutions appear to be complacent.

4a Do you anticipate that implementation will commoditise management education?

I touched on this earlier. Fundamentally, Bologna means a shift from 5-year degree courses culminating in a Masters-level qualification to a three or four year Bachelors degree followed straight away or later by a two or one year Masters course. In effect, most of continental Europe will move towards the 3 plus 2 or 4 plus 1 approach established in the UK. So people here think they don’t need to do anything.

Most UK business schools are treating Bologna as a wait-and-see situation. Their response will depend on what happens when Europe has produced the first batch or two of students with a 3-year degree. Will employers employ them? Will people value the degree? If not, what will these graduates do?

The outcome will determine what happens at Masters level. I think the number of students in continental Europe taking a separate Master degree will increase strongly for the next five to ten years ... and then decline steadily. Another factor is that in Europe the standard is likely to be a 2-year Masters whereas it is 1-year in the UK. I wonder if the UK model is sustainable.

4b Should UK institutions be taking a more proactive stance?

Yes. It is the role of business schools to lobby government on policy direction. For example, the continuing obsession with funding tied to research – is it sustainable? Will business schools need some support to cope with the competition from Europe, post-Bologna? But this lobbying should be through representative bodies because politicians don’t have enough time to talk to everyone.

I think it would be highly appropriate for the issues raised by Bologna to be addressed by an international conference hosted here in London – especially as Britain currently holds the presidency of the EU. GMAC is the only agency taking initiatives at the moment. EFMD has not been particularly involved and I’m not sure how the AACSB is reacting.

Regarding the collation and dissemination of good practice, our accreditation inspectors’ reports identify lots of good practices but it tends to sit in filing cabinets. We’ve just recently begun to extract examples of best practice so we can use our online journal to put a spotlight on quality and innovation. We will look into whether these examples could be publicised via the QuBE project website. Robert Owen, our director of accreditation can identify what’s good at, say, 10 accredited business schools. Then maybe we can collaborate to arrange these in clusters for further promulgation.

Regarding a possible map linking the types of quality management models used and the nature of accreditation bodies – such as AMBA, EQUIS and AACSB – the issue is ‘would it be useful?’. There was talk of harmonising the standards of these three agencies and creating an international standard of accreditation under the auspices of the British Standards Institute. Whilst we are interested in establishing areas of commonality we have some difficulties with

harmonisation. Unlike the other accreditation agencies we only accredit the MBA and other specified masters programmes. The others accredit the institution and therefore look at its entire range of management courses from BSc to DBA.

The MCI has been part of a team putting together national occupational standards for management and leadership. This relates to NVQs from level 3 to 5. It's a standard of competence and it supports the transition from management to leadership.

ABS

Association of Business Schools (<http://www.the-abs.org.uk/index.php>)

Jonathan Slack, Chief Executive; London, 5 September 2005

The aim of the interview

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1 Where are we going?

In 2002 the last (and final) QAA subject review of management courses criticised, in terms, supplier institutions for teaching quality management but not embracing it in their own businesses.

1a To what extent has the situation improved or deteriorated since 2002?

I remember saying at the first meeting that it seemed the project was trying to fight an old fight ... the quality agenda had moved on. There isn't a mechanism to measure if QME [quality management enhancement] has improved or not and it's not very clear where QME is on the political agenda. As I see it, the accent today has moved from QME towards developmental improvement – and so the issue now is 'what does good practice look like?'

In the absence of a requirement –the QAA Subject review – that was placed on institutions, there has been even more interest in voluntarily seeking accreditation. In the UK this means AMBA, EQUIS and AACSB – and most of the leading business schools have all three. In addition, schools are seeking accreditation from professional bodies – accountancy, marketing, personnel development and so on. Currently these bodies decline to collaborate, cooperate or merge. Typically, business schools will have gained six to ten such accreditations and I know of one school that has 16. Schools take these things very, very seriously and voluntarily put themselves through these inspections in order to gain the kite-marks.

All these accreditation bodies' processes are demanding and robust. But they don't publish anything about good practice – just a list of Centres of Excellence. ABS works closely with EFMD, owners of the EQUIS approach. This is a standards-based form of peer review that measures against published criteria. However, the reviewers' reports are kept private. The

Bologna Accord will lead to a European Register of accreditation bodies. It won't be confined to the European marketplace – the US could come in. A key requirement is full disclosure of all inspection reports. Bearing in mind the Freedom of Information Acts, things could become difficult.

1b What evidence do you have for your view?

What is clear is that more and more schools are looking for staff development programmes. There is a drive to 'professionalise' admin and teaching staff at all levels. At ABS we see it in the increasing demand for our programmes for Deans, senior academic administrators, heads of department and directors of research.

The HE Academy has just issued a consultation paper on a framework for professional standards in HE teaching. It's called "A standards framework for teaching and supporting student learning in higher education"

[see 'news' at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/news/20_3370.htm. The consultation document itself is at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/documents/Standards_Framework.pdf]

Another sign is the establishment of the National Forum for Employers and Business School Deans – which was one of the recommendations of the report by the Council for Excellence in Management and Learning. Much more is going on than there used to be and it should find its way back into business school's processes.

2 Is this satisfactory?

Increasingly fierce competition for talented students has been accompanied by a drive towards student-centred engagement (Barr & Tagg 1995).

2a Is student-centred engagement leading to better or worse academic results?

I see a slight shift in the balance. Good tutors do get fairly assessed in the feedback from their students – but at the poor end of the spectrum, tutors could be got at.

The expectations of post-grad students have changed. They can't accept the possibility of failure but many have to have part-time jobs and don't want to have to study too hard. Escalating fees have heightened the problem ... and it's filtering down to undergrad level.

It's also leading to fragmentation of programmes. The Master of Public Administration degree is taking off. It's a sensible idea – but MPA cohorts are being taught separately from the MBA. I know of some MBA programmes where 80 to 90% of the cohort is Chinese – so they are being separated into a Chinese-only stream. This sort of thing defeats a key benefit of the MBA – the mix of cultures and experiences to learn from.

There are other contra-indications ... the grade inflation at A-Level and the league tables in higher education. The Norrington tables now show that at some Oxbridge colleges nearly half of students get a First. All in all I see no evidence of better education.

2b Do you find that leading institutions have shifted towards the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning?

ABS has done the research. It shows that those business schools who did well in assessment exercises also did well in QAA reviews and similar audits. On the other hand, some schools getting 24 out of 24 in the Subject Review didn't do well in research.

Yes, I'm sure many schools have shifted to the pursuit of excellence in teaching and research and in the management of their programmes. They are now on that path. This is particularly

evident from the EQUIS results. Both ABS and UK schools have been very influential regarding EQUIS. Both project directors to date have been British and all the good QAA processes have been incorporated into EQUIS. One result is that in the UK more schools are accredited than in any other European country.

3 What should be done about it?

Some hold that in the 80s and 90s the quest for quality was chiefly concerned with achieving minimum levels or standards.

3a If so, what has been the effect on management education?

Until 1992 we definitely had two different sectors – universities on the one hand and the polytechnics and FE Colleges on the other. The auditing then was by the CNAA. I saw that the polys and colleges were incredibly developmental; they were not ‘tick boxy’ at all. It wasn’t about minimum standards. The procedure for setting up a new course meant an external panel – a few people from commerce and the professions but mainly people from the ‘old universities’ who were very demanding – far more so than at their own institutions! I feel this is why the polys were eventually deemed to be of university status.

And then we saw Higher Education Quality Council surveillance rejected by the ‘old universities’. But gradually QAA caused change to be absorbed (except at Cambridge). Eventually there were no unsatisfactory results at HE level. I think that’s why Subject Review has come to an end – QAA had fulfilled its purpose.

Another review system – the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) – will continue until 2008. This makes the quality of research a key factor in higher education funding and it rewards schools for hiring researchers rather than business practitioners, particularly at the undergrad level. Top professors won’t join quality committees because it won’t help them get papers published. There is a closer match within Executive Development, which attracts many mid-career professionals to come in and co-teach.

3b What should UK institutions do to achieve higher quality standards?

There’s a pecking order for attention. Top grade research comes first, usually followed by the flagship programme – MBA or Executive MBA, international programmes, undergraduate and professional courses and then administration.

But each has some need for quality enhancement – especially administration – and I see a shift. More universities are recruiting high grade administrators – in PR, HR, finance, fund-raising and so on. Academics are no longer trying to do the admin.

4 Who wins and who loses, by which mechanisms of power?

40 European states have now agreed to implement the Bologna Accord by 2008. Although GMAC estimates that this will lead to 12,000 new management courses in Europe at Masters level, UK institutions appear to be complacent.

4a Do you anticipate that implementation will commoditise management education?

Absolutely. Yes. Bologna will harmonise and standardise. Most courses will have the same duration and curriculum and will use similar case studies and text books. Many will be taught in English. There will be more joint programmes.

The unique selling propositions will decrease in number. However, France still appeals strongly to francophone nations, Spain likewise in Spanish-speaking countries. We're still likely to get a more international mix on cohorts in the UK.

We'll see greatly increased competition. Business schools offering a full service – from undergrad to doctorate and executive education – will have to make some very difficult choices. Can they do it all and maintain quality delivery? They'll have to choose between going local – offering a seamless transition to local FE colleges, or going national – how many full national schools can we have? Or going international – and losing impact back home.

I hear lots of conversations about fundamental review of courses, about how to support and ensure quality. Staff cannot sustain the plethora of activities. Niche-ing is market driven. For example, Oxford Said is taking on a film industry focus, with David Puttnam and others.

4b Should UK institutions be taking a more proactive stance? And what should be the future direction of policy for influencing central government?

It comes back to the link between quality management enhancement and the quality of management. We need to continue the light-touch regime. If we are going down the European route we should go for institutional level practices and voluntary accreditation and not invent a supra-European bureaucracy.

I was involved with AMDISA [the Association of Management Development Institutions in South Asia]. Its several hundred members wanted to focus on quality improvement through accreditation as the prerequisite to get into the market. They decided to start with programme accreditation. But there were over 100,000 programmes. It was impracticable; nothing was ever achieved.

Now I see that EFMD has just launched EPAS – the European Programme-based Accreditation System – to complement EQUIS, which is institution-wide. It appeals to institutions in central, eastern and southern parts of Europe whose business schools wouldn't meet EQUIS but who have an MBA that could deserve a kitemark. At D-G level, EFMD is very interested in Bologna and wants to get on the proposed register.

ABS members have asked for discussion of the Bologna Accord to be on the agenda at our annual conference in October. Kai Peters at Ashridge is tracking things. We need to see what happens in 2006/07 when the first batches graduate with a Bachelors. Will they leave or stay on for the Masters? The evidence from Holland is that 70 to 75 percent are staying on. Much of Europe seems to favour a 2-year Masters whereas the UK has settled for a 3 plus 1 format.

Will employers [in continental Europe] employ people with a BSc? A group of 40 of the largest firms in Germany – 'Bachelors Forward' – have announced that they will. I think that's very significant. It could be the pebble that starts ripples right around Europe.

The strategic choices that business schools have to make will be wider than quality and will have to be more proactive regarding Bologna.

I'm glad that the QuBE project seeks to coordinate with the new subject centre for Business Management, Accountancy and Finance, based at Oxford Brookes.

CMI

Chartered Management Institute (CMI) (<http://www.managers.org.uk>)

Mary Chapman, Chief Executive; London HQ, 24 August 2005

Mary Chapman has been Chief Executive of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) for seven years. Last year CMI absorbed the Institute of Management Consultants.

The aim of the interview

- To ascertain the current viewpoint of national bodies (including ABS, AMB, BQF, CMI, CIPD) concerned with
 - a quality management enhancement and
 - b the quality of management education.
- To elicit the intended future direction of policy for influencing central government
- To review the potential impact of supra-national initiatives such as the Bologna Accord.

Questions

The interview addressed the following questions:

1 Where are we going?

In 2002 the last (and final) QAA subject review of management courses criticised, in terms, supplier institutions for teaching quality management but not embracing it in their own businesses.

1a To what extent has the situation improved or deteriorated since 2002?

I'm reminded of the adage 'a cobbler's children are never shod'. And perhaps 'physician heal thyself'. The concept of what we mean by quality management is changing. In my view, if quality management is to have any value at all it has to be more than a compliance approach.

One of the main criticisms of management education has been the lack of stakeholder involvement in developing programmes. It concerned me when I came into my role that the relationship between business schools – both at Further Education and Higher Education level – and CMI was quite low. Even now we could ask why aren't there more faculty as CMI members? What are business school faculty doing about their own development? A number of those who teach management subjects are not actually qualified for Institute membership in that they have insufficient practical experience in management. So what is the basis on which they are appointed to teach?

Despite these concerns I do sense that the situation has improved – although not far enough. And the improvement we see is largely through external pressures and not internal impetus. It comes largely from the employer voice concerning graduates in business studies, namely: "the skills that we want are not evident". It's not the same as a degree in English or history. Business education should lead to a more vocational degree with relevant knowledge and skillsets.

In 2000, former CMI President Sir Anthony Cleaver led a government initiative – the Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership, funded jointly by the DTI and DfES. This set out to tackle issues related to the UK's management performance reflected in our low productivity compared with the US, France and Germany. Amongst many issues, it addressed questions such as: how can business and management education reflect more appropriately the needs of people going through the programme and the organisations that will employ them? And how can the relationship between business schools and employers be improved?

There were many outcomes – one is the new National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership. Another is a National Forum for business school Deans and employers. This is looking at improving understanding between employers and business schools and the sharing of learning. A third outcome is the ESRC-funded Advanced Institute of Management Research (AIM), now based at London Business School, to sponsor management research and dissemination and to promote improvement in faculty research competence.

However, making funding dependent on published research by business schools is rewarding the wrong stuff. Your study raises a fundamental question: what does excellence look like in management education? There is a paradox – should management education be an academic subject or should it teach relevant skills that will be valuable in practice?

1b What evidence do you have for your view?

Where I see improvement is among those schools that are asking themselves these questions and thinking about their strategy. Do they want to become known for good research or for feeding it through into good teaching? Some of the newer universities – such as Salford and Hull – are claiming a role which is more in tune with local business and more in partnership. But there are over 100 business schools; is what Salford and Hull are doing typical? To what extent can there be different models of excellence for institutions in different contexts?

There are real issues about funding. Universities used to see their business schools as cash cows – but some are now under pressure to recruit enough post-grad students. For example, China is declining as a customer.

This is an enormously challenging time for Higher Education and for business schools in particular. I am a member of the Council of the Foundation for Management Education – a small grant-giving charity supporting teaching fellowships. There is a problem currently in the dearth of faculty – and most are over 50. Funding, related to the RAE, tends to focus Business Schools on their research capability rather than their teaching capability.

2 Is this satisfactory?

Increasingly fierce competition for talented students has been accompanied by a drive towards student-centred engagement (Barr & Tagg 1995).

2a Is student-centred engagement leading to better or worse academic results?

How does one judge success? CMI has plenty of evidence from our survey on management development in the workplace that the ‘chalk and talk’ method is not the most productive if you want to develop enquiring minds and help people learn how to learn – in their future – and if you want achieve the best possible outcomes for a diverse group of learners.

Learning theory tells us that people absorb knowledge in different ways and many want to be engaged more actively. Through our training interventions we know that projects based in the place of work are wanted and valued by the organisation and the individual. This is real time learning; it’s entirely personalised.

We see very positive feedback on reflection of the value of workplace projects. People are conscious of the value their project has brought to their organisation and, therefore, their career.

The appropriate pedagogy depends on the stage of the learner – for example, people in work versus people on a pre-experience BSc. Learning basic business and economic models is fine

for undergraduates; post-grads will learn more from case studies or practical application of this knowledge. Learning outcomes can't be all things to all men. Schools must focus on their strategy and ensure it characterises the pursuit of excellence as defined by their market.

2b Do you find that leading institutions have shifted towards the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning?

[see response to Q2a]

3 What should be done about it?

Some hold that in the 80s and 90s the quest for quality was chiefly concerned with achieving minimum levels or standards.

3a If so, what has been the effect on management education?

Yes, the 80s and 90s were a lot about achieving minimum standards. The quality movement came out of the engineering world – tolerances, reliability, fit for purpose – and provoked a slavish following in other environments. But it's harder to make ISO 9000 work in a services context rather than in manufacturing. The BSI has led the move towards continuous improvement and the pursuit of excellence. Excellence is a moving target that is driven by innovation and changing customer requirements.

It's important to have standards of competence because these can raise the mass to a minimum level. It's the role of standards and quality assurance work to check: 'Are we matching the standards we set ourselves?' We need to go beyond that, beyond even benchmarking and continuous improvement, to achieve excellence through innovation of processes and products.

CMI has responsibility for the national standards for Management and Leadership. These offer a resource that describes the knowledge and skills people need to function as managers. We've had thousands of contributors but it has been hard to persuade universities to get involved. There is a great divide between QAA – concerned with benchmark standards – and QCA – who commission the national occupational standards. The materials are all free on our Management Standards Centre website [<http://www.management-standards.org>]. It's a resource that can be used by individuals, companies and business schools. These standards provide the core content for management education and development. The innovation comes in the design and delivery of the programmes.

3b What should UK institutions do to achieve higher quality standards?

Business schools must shape their strategic and operational development plans in terms of the quality of outcomes they seek to achieve. They could pick up on CMI's work which reflects the needs of the practising manager and pick the tools to drive standards in each particular context.

4 Who wins and who loses, by which mechanisms of power?

40 European states have now agreed to implement the Bologna Accord by 2008. Although GMAC estimates that this will lead to 12,000 new management courses in Europe at Masters level, UK institutions appear to be complacent.

4a Do you anticipate that implementation will commoditise management education?

I think it will drive slightly different behaviour and programme design but I wonder if it will make significant difference. The UK view is that others will have to come in line with us.

Shorter programmes will be offered across Europe. If business education is a marketplace then Bologna will make it more competitive – especially for foreign students who will be able to get a degree in a shorter time.

UK business schools are waking up to the fact that they are competing. Bologna means standardisation and any standardisation brings with it the risk of commoditisation. So how can we differentiate ourselves and compete?

The MBA has peaked in its product life cycle and this also implies increased competition. You can see indications of a mature market in the fragmentation into specialist MBAs and the increasing number of doctorates. Where is the growth going to come from? In what direction should a school go in order to differentiate itself? Many of the best schools are already accredited by the three bodies pushing for quality and standardisation – AMBA, which is programme orientated, and EQUIS and AACSB which accredit the institution. Perhaps the three accrediting bodies should come together.

The imperative behind the Bologna Accord is flexibility of labour markets; portability and transferability of skills across borders. Logically, this greater harmonisation must be based on giving employers across Europe comparability of qualifications. Differentiation may have to come from the quality of the delivery rather than the content of the programmes.

4b Should UK institutions be taking a more proactive stance? And what should be the future direction of policy for influencing central government?

Yes, but what do they want to lobby about? What is important enough to lobby on? If it is against the RAE in its current form then CMI would be supportive. CMI lobbies ESRC and AIM to press for management research that will be of relevance to the practitioner.

Regarding your suggestion of some sort of ‘map’ of the quality management arena for educators I wonder how many people would use it and for what. I was once involved in a project to map the various bodies doing SME support and development. It had virtually no uptake.

Regarding examples of good practice, I know our people note this during inspections at CMI-approved educational Centres. I will ask CMI’s Head of Qualifications whether it is possible to extract examples of good practice from the inspector’s reports and would be happy for these to be disseminated via the QuBE project website (<http://www.qube.ac.uk>).