

**BUSINESS STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
TOWARDS A NEW UNDERSTANDING**

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Abstract

The study of business has been popularly characterised as incompatible with a higher education founded on liberal values. However, this characterisation is based on perceptions which have not previously taken account of the pedagogic belief-systems of lecturers. This thesis sets out to re-examine the relationship between the teaching of business subjects and the goals of higher education by exploring the attitudes of Business Studies lecturers in UK higher education.

An analytical framework is constructed as a basis for researching lecturer attitudes to a Business Studies first degree. Business Studies lecturers are largely committed to the vocational preparation of students but adopt contrasting pedagogic positions in seeking to achieve this goal. '*Pragmatic synthesisers*' looked to the acquisition of knowledge and skills and the ability to solve problems, while '*critical evaluators*' defined their primary pedagogic purpose as encouraging students to reflect on and to evaluate knowledge claims. There is also an epistemological schism among lecturers based on attitudes to business knowledge. Lecturers with a background in social science disciplines had a *context-independent* attitude to knowledge. They are suspicious of knowledge derived from the business context which they regard as transitory and of little long-term value to students. By contrast, lecturers with more business experience, often teaching in areas of the curriculum related to functional specialisms, had a *context-dependent* attitude. They argue in favour of responsiveness to the business context and embrace this 'new' knowledge. An analytical framework is presented based on these pedagogic and epistemological dimensions.

Drawing on these findings, the thesis concludes that the study of business can be compatible with a higher education based on liberal values. Many business lecturers are committed to a pedagogy based on critical evaluation and context-independence. Moreover, the changing nature of both vocational and higher education also strongly suggests that, in practice, the goals of Business Studies are compatible with those of a liberal higher education.

Contents

**SECTION A : BUSINESS STUDIES AND HIGHER EDUCATION :
DISLOCATED IDENTITIES**

Chapter 1	Scope and Aims of the Thesis	12
------------------	-------------------------------------	-----------

Rationale (12)
Changes in higher education (13)
A fractured relationship (14)
A pedagogic framework (16)
Challenging the assumptions (19)
Towards a new relationship (20)
Conclusion (21)

Chapter 2 Business Studies and Higher Education : 23
A Dislocated Relationship

Introduction (23)
The evolution of management education (23)
Business Studies : a Trojan horse ? (26)
Doctrinal identity (28)
Epistemological identity (31)
Institutional identity (34)
Professional identity (36)
In search of an identity (39)
Conclusion (44)

SECTION B : THE BUSINESS STUDIES CURRICULUM : TOWARDS AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 3 The Aims of a Business Studies degree 47

Introduction (4)
What is meant by 'aims' ? (47)
The State (48)
The business community (53)

	The student body (55)	
	The academic community (57)	
	A study <i>for</i> or <i>about</i> business ? (63)	
	Conclusion (65)	
Chapter 4	Knowledge in Business Studies	67
	Introduction (67)	
	The nature of knowledge (68)	
	The production of knowledge (76)	
	The organisation of knowledge (80)	
	Conclusion (82)	
Chapter 5	A Framework for Analysis	85
	Introduction (85)	
	The characterisation of aims and knowledge (85)	
	Hypothesis (89)	
	An analytical framework (89)	
	Movement within the framework (95)	
	Relevance to higher education (99)	
	Conclusion (101)	
SECTION C : THE BUSINESS STUDIES CURRICULUM : PEDAGOGY AND TRIBE		
Chapter 6	Methodology	103
	Introduction (103)	
	Rationale (103)	
	Instruments of investigation (106)	
	Ethical issues (113)	
	Conclusion (115)	
Chapter 7	Lecturer Attitudes : a National Perspective	117
	Introduction (117)	
	Documentary analysis (117)	

Characteristics of lecturers (119)
 Curriculum aims (122)
 Curriculum knowledge (126)
 Analysis by teaching subject (130)
 Professional and academic traditions (131)
 Further issues (132)
 Conclusion (133)

Chapter 8 Lecturer Attitudes : Institutional Perspectives 134

Introduction (134)
 The institutions (135)
 Institutional trends (139)
 Lecturer attitudes (144)
 Conclusion (161)

Chapter 9 Business Studies : Pedagogic Realities 163

Introduction (163)
 A pedagogic framework (163)
 'Critical evaluators' (164)
 'Pragmatic synthesisers' (167)
 Critical thinking (169)
 Post Fordism and pedagogy (171)
 Conclusion (175)

Chapter 10 Business Studies : Tribal Tendencies 176

Introduction (176)
 The academic 'tribes' (176)
 A tribal framework (182)
 Conclusion (186)

**SECTION D : BUSINESS STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION :
TOWARDS A NEW UNDERSTANDING**

Chapter 11 A New Analytical Framework 189

Introduction (189)

	A new analytical framework (189)	
	The dynamics of change (195)	
	Wider professional education (203)	
	Conclusion (208)	
Chapter 12	Business Studies in Higher Education : Towards a New Understanding	210
	Introduction (210)	
	Paradigm and pedagogy (211)	
	Vocational educators and critical pedagogy (213)	
	Academic freedom (214)	
	Liberal education and Business Studies (215)	
	Changing higher education (217)	
	Changing vocational education (219)	
	Business Studies in higher education : towards a new understanding (223)	
	Conclusion (226)	
Chapter 13	The Future of Business Studies	228
	Introduction (228)	
	Student choice (230)	
	Decline of integration (232)	
	The new skills agenda (233)	
	Decline of the work placement (235)	
	Differentiation and diversity (237)	
	Conclusion (240)	
Epilogue		241
References		246
Glossary of Terms		268

Appendices

Appendix 1	Business Studies survey	269
Appendix 2	Institutions surveyed by status and number of respondents	274
Appendix 3	Interview Themes	275
Appendix 4	Interviewees by teaching subject and institution	276
Appendix 5	Tables	277

Figures

Figure 1 :	After Kolb's Domains of Knowledge	32
Figure 2 :	Corder's hard/soft continuum	69
Figure 3 :	Three dimensions of knowledge in Business Studies	72
Figure 4 :	An analytical framework	90
Figure 5 :	Mapping the Business Studies curriculum	91
Figure 6 :	An analytical framework for understanding the Higher Education curriculum	99
Figure 7 :	UK institutions offering a 'Business Studies' first degree	107
Figure 8 :	Population and sample	108
Figure 9 :	Lecturers by age	120
Figure 10 :	Main teaching subject by sex	121
Figure 11 :	Most recent previous employment	121
Figure 12 :	Lecturers teaching their first degree specialism	122
Figure 13 :	Is/should Business Studies be a preparation of students for business careers or a general education about business ?	123
Figure 14 :	Does/should Business Studies develop students with mainly business-related or educational skills ?	123
Figure 15 :	Does/should the Business Studies curriculum reflect the wishes of employers or lecturers ?	124

Figure 16 :	What is/should be the most important element of Business Studies - work experience or university-based learning ?	125
Figure 17 :	Aims of Business Studies by age	126
Figure 18 :	Does/should Business Studies mainly focus on numeracy and quantitative analysis or ideas and issues ?	127
Figure 19 :	Does/should Business Studies mainly encourage students to analyse the operation of the business system or its social consequences ?	128
Figure 20 :	Does/should Business Studies mainly encourage students to examine technical or ethical issues ?	128
Figure 21 :	Does/should Business Studies principally focus on relations within and between businesses or between business and wider society ?	129
Figure 22 :	Lecturer perspectives by main teaching subject	131
Figure 23 :	A pedagogic framework	164
Figure 24 :	A tribal framework	183
Figure 25 :	A new analytical framework	193
Figure 26 :	The pedagogic dimension : dynamic forces	198
Figure 27 :	The tribal dimension : dynamic forces	202

Section A

**BUSINESS STUDIES AND HIGHER EDUCATION :
DISLOCATED IDENTITIES**

CHAPTER 1

Scope and Aims of the Thesis

Rationale

Business and Administrative Studies (BAS) is the fastest growing and most popular area of undergraduate study in UK higher education accounting for 19 per cent of students taking first degrees (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 1995). A significant proportion of students within the BAS category undertake a BA in Business Studies. Yet, despite growing numbers of students there is a continuing neglect of educational issues concerning the undergraduate business curriculum in general and the Business Studies degree in particular. The work of Boys (1988) and Silver and Brennan (1988) are isolated examples of empirical studies focusing, at least in part, on the Business Studies degree. Academic interest has concentrated instead on postgraduate and post-experience management education, most notably the Masters in Business Administration (MBA). Influential national reports during the 1980s (Handy, 1987; Constable and McCormick, 1987) linking United Kingdom economic decline to the neglect of British management education and the growth of university Business Schools mainly interested in developing postgraduate management education has focused the attention of researchers away from undergraduate provision.

This apparent neglect of the Business Studies degree also needs to be placed in the context of wider vocational education. Although vocational education was principally pioneered within further education (Burgess, 1977), government intervention to extend the scope of vocationalism during the 1980s and 1990s has mainly been focused within schools a process, perhaps, originally set in train by James Callaghan's speech at Ruskin College, Oxford, in October 1976. The Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education, the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, Economic Awareness as an educational 'theme' of the national curriculum and General National Vocational Qualifications are among government initiatives which represent this trend. As a result, the attention of researchers has understandably focused on examining the

impact of these largely school-based developments. There are journals, such as the *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, and societies, such as the Economics and Business Education Association, almost exclusively devoted to the pre-university vocational curriculum. Similarly, journals like *Management Learning* and societies such as the British Academy of Management reflect the agenda of those concerned with postgraduate management education. The Business Studies degree is sandwiched between school and college-based vocational education on the one hand and postgraduate or post-experience management education on the other. As a result of the dominance of these other agendas, the first degree in Business Studies remains a comparatively uncharted area of the business curriculum in higher education.

Changes in higher education

Substantial changes across UK higher education have occurred during the 1990s. Possibly the most significant development is the movement from an elite to a mass education system (Scott, 1995). The Government target, to raise the participation rate in higher education from one in five young people (18-19 year olds) to one in three by the year 2000, was achieved by 1993 in two rather than eight years (Opacic, 1994). The average undergraduate is now older and more likely to come from a non-traditional academic background (Murphy, 1994). Significant institutional changes have also occurred during the 1990s. The formal 'binary divide' in UK higher education has been removed with the conversion of the former polytechnics into new universities. The organisation of the higher education curriculum has been subject to modularisation facilitating greater student choice, credit accumulation and easier transfer between institutions. Moreover, a large number of institutions have re-organised their academic year replacing three terms with two semesters. There has also been a sea-change in Government funding of higher education which has instituted a competitive internal market for research income and controlled student recruitment through a system of penalties and rewards. New watchdogs have been established to oversee the quality of teaching and research (Higher Education Funding Council for England) and wider institutional organisation (Higher Education Quality

Council') supplanting the role of the Council for National Academic Awards in the former public sector. It is widely accepted that higher education now has a closer relationship with the state and the perceived economic interests of the economy. State-sponsored schemes such as the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative are evidence of this emerging agenda. Higher education funding for degree programmes taught in further education institutions has blurred the distinction between a 'further' and a 'higher' education. Partnerships and franchise agreements between institutions of further education and higher education point to a longer term re-definition of tertiary education in the UK (Coldstream, 1996). Moreover, the recently published report by the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing, 1997) represents the most far-reaching government-backed review of higher education since the Robbins report was published in 1963. Thus, the Business Studies degree needs to be analysed in the light of this changing higher education environment. The rapidly changing nature of this context during the 1990s means that this investigation and re-evaluation is a timely one.

A fractured relationship

There is an assumption that a mismatch exists between the aims of a Business Studies education and those of higher education. A Business Studies education is often characterised as an intellectually unchallenging, vocational education moulded to the particular needs of business or industry (eg O'Hear, 1988). By contrast, those writing about the essence of a higher education (eg Minogue, 1973, Russell, 1993) argue that higher education should be, among other things, about the search for objective truth which demands independence from the specific vocational demands of society and an approach to knowledge based on intellectual rigour or critical thinking. In short, there is an assumption that Business Studies and other subjects labelled as 'vocational', fail to engage students in the spirit of inquiry unique to a higher education. Indeed, the implicit distinction between "*intellectual as against vocational capabilities*" (Becher, 1995, p 405) is central to much educational discourse. Preconceptions that vocational

¹ Another body, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education was established on 27 March, 1997 and will take over the work of the relevant funding councils' quality assessment divisions and all the functions of the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC).

subjects are narrow while academic ones are intellectual and leisured bedevil higher education (Burgess, 1977). It is assumed that subjects like Business Studies involve the acquisition of knowledge for a functional purpose rather than for intellectual or critical reflection about the nature of knowledge and truth. On this basis, Business Studies is regarded as intellectually short-changing students and posing a threat to liberal-humanist values in higher education.

The relationship between Business and Management education and the goals of a liberal, higher education is often represented as fractured or dislocated (eg O'Hear, 1988, Squires, 1990). This may be explained in relation to the crises of identity which afflict Business and Management education in a higher education environment. Many accounts of epistemology in higher education (eg Kolb, 1981; Biglan, 1973; Becher, 1989) lean heavily on the dual notions of pure and applied, and hard and soft knowledge. Within the context of this epistemological analysis, Business Studies is generally regarded as applied and more 'soft' than 'hard' (Biglan, 1973). Added to this, the divergent nature of Business and Management as a disciplinary community (Becher, 1989) means that Business Studies has a relatively low epistemological status as a first degree subject. Secondly, Business and Management is perceived to be representative of an economic and political philosophy, that of free market capitalism, which, according to a number of critics within the higher education community, is bringing about significant but unwelcome changes in higher education (eg Russell, 1993). Moreover, the values and objectives of free market Conservative politics promoting an 'enterprise culture' are closely associated with the study of Business and Management. Thus, the study of business is perceived to be doctrinally sympathetic to values which are regarded by many within higher education as anathema to the values of higher education. Furthermore, unlike many other applied subjects, Business Studies has no clear professional identity and is not associated with a clear set of professional and ethical values. Chapter 2 of this thesis will explore, in greater detail, the nature of this dislocated relationship. However, it will be argued that many of these perceptions regarding Business and Management education are derived from sweeping, macro-level ideological assumptions regarding epistemology and doctrinal identity.

A pedagogic framework

In order to better understand the relationship between Business Studies and higher education, it is important to re-examine the Business Studies curriculum at the micro or pedagogic level. The aims of the curriculum and the basis for knowledge in Business Studies are central to this goal. Chapter 3 will explore the aim of the curriculum in relation to a distinction widely discussed within published literature. This distinction may be characterised as a choice between a study 'for' business or a study 'about' business (eg Tolley, 1983). If a Business Studies degree is understood as a preparation 'for' business life students will learn only the knowledge and skills they are perceived to need for the workplace. Within an education 'for' business there is a presumption that the student will enter (or re-enter) business life after completion of the programme. Alternatively, a study 'about' business is concerned with treating business as a broad sociological and economic enquiry. This would involve wider questions of how and why business shapes social and cultural life using critical perspectives principally drawn from sociology, political science and philosophy. There is no specific presumption that the object of the programme is to prepare students for business careers in the same way as a degree in political science is rarely a form of training for politicians. The distinction between an education for business and an education about business can be drawn from perspectives specific to the Business Studies degree. Tolley (1983), Brown and Harrison (1980), and Boys (1988) all specifically invoke the distinction.

A parallel debate exists within the broader field of management education which is normally defined as business and management education at the postgraduate or post-experience level. Grey and French (1996) draw a distinction between 'managerialist' and 'critical' conceptions of management education. They describe the 'managerialist' conception as concerned with learning a set of techniques and skills to be applied while a 'critical' approach would necessarily involve an understanding of management as a social, political and moral phenomenon. Roberts (1996), Kallinikos (1996) and Fox (1994a; 1994b) elaborate similar frameworks. They also argue that management education commonly seeks to provide a set of tools and techniques as a preparation for

employment in contemporary working life rather than critically evaluating business activity. The 'managerialist' conception corresponds to a study 'for' business while the critical conception is more closely related to a study 'about' business. Many writers on management education appear to agree that the 'managerialist' (or study 'for' business) conception is the dominant aim of the management curriculum (Grey & French, 1996).

Similarly, most accounts of aims in Business Studies suggest that the main purpose of the curriculum is to prepare students 'for' business (Brown & Harrison, 1980; Silver & Brennan, 1988). However, many of these studies are based on documentary statements at the macro, policy level rather than the pedagogic or micro level. The notion that the aim of Business Studies may be understood as either a study 'for' business or a study 'about' business demonstrates that 'commonsense' conclusions regarding the purpose of such a degree at least need to be re-examined at the pedagogic level. Others have questioned whether the macro-level commitment of degrees in Business Studies is an altogether reliable guide to the pedagogic reality. Tolley (1983) argues that while course philosophies are overwhelmingly indicative of a study for business "*it is not clear whether the underlying concern of staff and students in these courses is a study of business or a study for business*" (p 5). Therefore, the distinction between a study 'for' or 'about' business helps to establish part of an analytical framework which will be further developed in Chapter 3.

The conclusion of most writers on business education, that the aim of Business Studies is a study for business, has important implications for knowledge. It follows that if it is assumed that Business Studies provides a vocational education, the curriculum ought to be determined by the context in which knowledge and skills are applied. In other words, the curriculum will be moulded by the business context or more specifically the requirements of employers. Knowledge in Business Studies, and other subjects labelled as vocational, is assumed to be contextually-determined. Gibbons et al (1994) argue that a new production of knowledge is taking place in relation to a broader, transdisciplinary social and economic context. They draw a distinction between two types of knowledge production labelled mode 1 and mode 2

respectively. Mode 1 knowledge is generated within a *"disciplinary, primarily cognitive context"* (p 1), whereas mode 2 knowledge is created in the *"context of application"* (p 3). In terms of business education, there is a presumption that the business environment is the 'context' in which knowledge is produced. In terms of wider higher education, the 'vocational' subjects, such as Business Studies, represent this new production of knowledge. However, contextually-determined knowledge associated with vocational subjects contrasts with the disciplinary, cognitive framework of 'traditional knowledge' in higher education. Therefore, if Business Studies is an example of mode 2 knowledge production it is as at odds with the traditional disciplinary framework within which knowledge is generated. This potentially represents a further characteristic of 'dislocation' between Business Studies and higher education.

Chapter 4 will also address the nature, production and organisation of knowledge in Business Studies. The distinction between science-based (or 'hard') knowledge and humanities-based (or 'soft') knowledge will form a particular focus in discussing the nature of knowledge. This broad distinction has been invoked by a range of authors concerned with the study of knowledge in higher education including Biglan (1973), Kolb (1981), Becher (1989), Corder (1990) and Squires (1990). The validity and usefulness of this distinction will be discussed, and refined, by reference to the work of Corder (1990). The division between a science-based (or 'hard') and humanities-based (or 'soft') knowledge, has also been applied in relation to business education. Mulligan (1987) characterises business education in these terms and is not alone in discussing the balance between humanities-based and science-based knowledge within business education. Other authors concerning themselves with a higher education in business also highlight the resonance of this distinction. According to Watson (1993), the humanities encourage opportunities for debate, articulate exposition and independence of thought. He argues that the combination of *"technological subjects, married to the educational disciplines of the humanities"* (Watson, 1993, p 25) should be the *"dual goal"* of a business education. Although it may be possible to identify theoretical shortcomings with the distinction between humanities-based and science-based knowledge, this debate is strongly evident from

the reading of literature concerning knowledge and business studies in higher education and is therefore likely to concern lecturers. The distinction between hard (or science-based) and soft (or humanities-based) knowledge will form the second part of an analytical framework to be tested and refined through field research.

Challenging the assumptions

The two key assumptions which have been briefly sketched represent a 'commonsense' understanding of a degree in Business Studies; one which provides a vocational education without critical reflection (because it is 'for' and not 'about' business) and where the basis of knowledge is derived from the context of its application. However, the thesis will argue that this characterisation of Business Studies is both crude and inaccurate. The characterisation is based on a *macro-level* (Becher, 1995) or general/political (Lawton, 1992) analysis of the relationship between Business Studies and higher education. In terms of the broad canvas, educational provision, at all levels, has become more closely tied to wider social outcomes and the economic goal of wealth generation (Lawton, 1992; Salter and Tapper, 1994). But functionalism at the macro level of policy-making does not necessarily translate into a parallel change at the *micro level* where students learn about Business Studies within a higher education institution. In coming to the conclusion that Business Studies must be narrowly vocational and draw the basis of learning from the business context, there has been a tendency to overlook the micro level (Becher, 1995), the pedagogic level (Lawton, 1992) or the "*private world of higher education*" (Trow, 1976). This thesis does not support the commonsense conclusions which have been drawn regarding aims and knowledge in Business Studies.

The perspective of the lecturer is vital to any understanding of this micro-level; of how, in practice, Business Studies is taught within higher education. The thesis will therefore, unashamedly focus on how Business Studies lecturers interpret the curriculum at the micro-level providing a sociological analysis of lecturers charged with responsibility for designing, developing and teaching the curriculum. Therefore, the methodology for this study (developed in Chapter 6) is determined by the thesis

that an investigation into the attitudes and pedagogy of lecturers will provide a better understanding of the relationship between Business Studies and higher education. Previous research (Boys, 1988; Silver & Brennan, 1988) has indicated that there may be dissonance between lecturer attitudes and macro-level perceptions of the role of Business Studies. However, these studies have tended to focus on the perceptions of course leaders rather than the full community of lecturers who contribute to teaching a Business Studies degree. This study will show that lecturers in Business Studies are drawn from a wide selection of disciplinary backgrounds and the majority are career academics rather than former business practitioners. In this respect, the thesis will build on the work of Becher (1989) by examining Business Studies lecturers as members of various academic 'tribes', an identity which, in turn, impacts on their pedagogic philosophy.

Towards a new relationship

The investigation will demonstrate that the micro-level relationship between Business Studies and a higher education does not contain the same level of ambiguity and tension perceived at the macro-level. The analysis of lecturer attitudes will demonstrate that many lecturers in Business Studies are committed to an approach to learning based on the critical evaluation of knowledge (see Chapter 9), a core value of a higher education (Barnett, 1990). Moreover, it will be shown that the assumption that Business Studies undermines the role of disciplinary, cognitive knowledge ignores the commitment of lecturers with academic backgrounds in traditional disciplinary areas.

It will further be argued that changes at the macro-level in terms of both the higher education system and the nature of a vocational education are bringing about some convergence between the values of Business Studies and wider higher education. These changes will be explained in terms of a post-Fordist analysis of higher education and changing business needs. Post-Fordism will be defined as the shift from a system of mass production for a mass consumer market to greater flexibility in industrial production, involving technology and labour processes, to produce highly differentiated products for a more discriminating consumer market. In terms of higher

education there are contradictory tendencies. Scott (1995) identifies a Fordist pattern of mass production of university graduates occurring simultaneously with post-Fordist patterns of consumer-based product differentiation (eg unitisation, electives, more specialised degrees). However, post-Fordist trends in higher education suggest that the system is becoming less producer-led. At the same time, a post-Fordist analysis of the needs of business suggests that the fast moving nature of modern economies and 'knowledge' industries will require people capable of constantly re-adapting in a rapidly changing business environment. In a post-Fordist economy learning a specific set of vocational techniques will have little long term value to either employers or employees. Instead, the ability to think critically, a key characteristic of a higher education based on liberal-humanist values, will more closely match the needs of business and industry. This irony is changing the meaning of a 'vocational' education which will in future need to adopt more of the characteristics of an 'academic' education in order to give better long term value to all stakeholders.

Conclusion

Therefore, the thesis will demonstrate that an analysis of lecturer attitudes provides a clearer understanding of the evolving relationship between Business Studies and higher education. While the values of business and academia may remain profoundly different (Tasker & Packham, 1993), business lecturers are primarily members of academia and share a similar set of values. The macro or policy-level debate concerning business and vocational education has highlighted the notion of separate paradigms of 'vocational' and 'academic' education. There is an attendant assumption that the ideology of vocationalism leads to a pedagogy which will fail to engage students in a critical discourse about knowledge. However, the thesis will demonstrate that this deduction does not take account of the role of academic 'tribes' in Business Studies committed to disciplinary knowledge and a critical pedagogy. Moreover, a post-Fordist analysis of the economy, suggested by many lecturers, indicates that a critical pedagogy may be reconciled with evolving notions of a vocational education. Therefore, the study, in undertaking a micro-level analysis of the perceptions of Business Studies lecturers, will also have wider implications for understanding the

changing relationship between vocational education and wider higher education.

CHAPTER 2

Business Studies and Higher Education : A Dislocated Relationship

Introduction

Business and management studies is a subject area often characterised as a contradiction of the traditional principles of a 'higher education'. Critics argue that the core values of higher education, including academic freedom and intellectual detachment, conflict with the more prosaic aims and ethos of business and management education. The relationship between Business Studies and higher education is characterised as awkward and fractured. The basis for this characterisation can be understood by examining the doctrinal, epistemological, institutional and professional identity of business and management. These 'identities' contribute to a 'commonsense' understanding which forms the basis for critical assumptions regarding the relationship between business and management studies and higher education. This characterisation, though, is largely based on the prejudices of the higher education community and overlooks more complex questions concerning the identity of business and management lecturers who, at the pedagogic level, may be more broadly committed to the values of a traditional, higher education.

The evolution of management education

The introduction of business and management courses in higher education was pioneered in the United States rather than the United Kingdom. The first modern business school was endowed by Joseph Wharton, a Philadelphia financier and manufacturer, in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1881 Joseph Wharton gave \$100,000 to the University of Pennsylvania to establish a department for the education and training young men desiring a management career. The Wharton School, founded in 1898, was followed by the business schools of the University of Chicago and California respectively. By 1911 there were 30 similar business schools in operation in the United States as most prestigious universities began to introduce

business programmes and establish business schools (Barry, 1989)

There is a considerable contrast between the well-established role of business and management studies in American universities since the early part of this century and their development in the UK. Moreover, the UK does not have higher level technical and vocational institutions equivalent in status to the *grandes ecoles* in France and the *Technische Hochschulen* in Germany. Business and management education in the UK has emerged only latterly from the fringes of higher education. Conventional routes into a management career have reinforced an amateur tradition. Historically, promotion from the shopfloor, nepotism, or a training in accountancy have all played a more significant role in management careers in the UK than formal business or management qualifications (Barry, 1989).

Business and management education made little impact on UK higher education before the Second World War. There were a limited number of Bachelor of Commerce degree programmes offered at Birmingham, Liverpool and Edinburgh universities although these were quite general in nature. Two institutions, Manchester College of Science and Technology (now the University of Manchester) and the London School of Economics and Political Science also offered postgraduate management programmes in the 1930s. Following the Second World War the development of business and management education followed a similar, largely *ad hoc* pattern disconnected from the mainstream of UK higher education. The Diploma in Management Studies (DMS), launched in 1949 by the newly formed British Institute of Management, represented probably the most significant post-war development in UK management education. In the 1950s, technical colleges carried out the bulk of management education and training. In 1956, a report listing 188 management courses in the UK showed that two-thirds of these courses were offered by such institutions. By 1960, 60 colleges were offering courses leading to the DMS qualification with over 1000 students enrolled (Barry, 1989). Despite the growth of the DMS, there was only limited interest in postgraduate management education and short courses in UK universities in the 1950s. The slack was, to some extent, taken taken up by large companies who established their own internal management centres while independent management

centres were set up such as the Administrative Staff College (now called Henley) and Ashbridge Management College.

In 1963, the place of business and management education in higher education was re-evaluated by the Robbins Report (Robbins, 1963). Influenced by evidence that business and management education should be "*chiefly at home*" at the postgraduate level, the report recommended the establishment of two major business schools later determined to be based in London and Manchester by the Franks report (Franks, 1963). The undergraduate curriculum was left to the Crick report (Department of Education and Science, 1964) which recommended the need for a new nationally recognised qualification in Business Studies broadly in line with the Diploma in Technology pioneered by Colleges of Advanced Technology and other technical colleges. As a result, Business Studies degrees were developed at a number of polytechnics during the 1960s and 1970s under the supervision of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). In 1973 there were 35 institutions with a total enrolment of 3905 students offering a first degree in Business Studies. The number of Business Studies degrees rose steadily during the 1970s and 1980s to 76 by 1987 (CNAA, 1974; CNAA; 1988). The expansion of higher education in the 1990s meant that by 1995 1 in 5 of all undergraduates were undertaking a programme in the Business and Administrative Studies area of the curriculum (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 1995).

The Crick report also formally recognised that the term 'management studies' should customarily apply only to postgraduate courses, a position reinforced by both the Robbins and Franks reports. This resulted in a 'binary divide' between undergraduate business and postgraduate management studies with most university 'Business Schools' focused on postgraduate education. During the 1980's the growth of the Masters in Business Administration (MBA) sited in prestigious British universities led to a withering in the status of the DMS. The growth of MBA programmes and business schools was prompted by the need for universities, most of whom had previously eschewed management education as academically illegitimate, to actively seek out profit making opportunities. In 1986, 47 business schools produced 2,500

MBA's. By 1992, 92 business schools turned out 5,792 MBA graduates (Beckett, 1992), a staggering increase over such a short period.

Therefore, business and management studies is a comparative newcomer to UK higher education with a largely marginal role until becoming an integral part of polytechnic provision during the 1960s and 1970s. Major expansion of provision occurred during the 1980s and 1990s in response to greater demand for business programmes among students and expectations that business schools would act as income-generators for their respective institutions.

Business Studies : a Trojan horse ?

Such (Business and Management) departments are in fact simply training schools for management, and live off the fruits from other trees of knowledge. While there can be no objection to such schools in their proper place, it is quite unclear why they should exist in universities, or why people working in them should enjoy the specific academic freedom which involves their having tenure. Those who live by the market should, if the occasion arises, be allowed to die by the market. Instead, all too often their very existence in a university means that, in unholy alliance with technology departments, they contrive to produce a market ethos in an institution which should by its nature be resistant to such an ethos.

O'Hear, A. (1988) p.14

Business is educationally suspect because it is not a discipline. It does not have much to do with the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, which I see as the function of a university. The syllabus is an agglomeration of several disciplines, and the student may not get an adequate grounding in any of them. The departments tend to be so large, and so closely linked to industry, that they threaten to be a Trojan horse inside the university.

A Professor of English cited by Bain (1990) p.13

Both of these statements contain an important set of assumptions about the role of business and management studies in higher education. Both argue that business and management departments are concerned with a narrow form of vocationalism. O'Hear contends that business schools are *"training schools for management"* while Bain's Professor of English implies direct conflict between the function of business degrees and that of a university (ie *"the disinterested pursuit of knowledge"*). According to O'Hear business is not a legitimate study because knowledge is derived from other disciplines (*"live off the fruits from other trees of knowledge"*) a sentiment shared by the Professor of English who regards the study of business as *"educationally suspect because it is not a discipline"*. Both statements conclude by expressing concerns that business departments embrace business values which pose a threat to the independent academic tradition of the university. In short, business and management is a *"Trojan horse"* for business values within higher education.

Although these statements are perhaps unusual in condemning the study of business with such vehemence, they do not represent isolated pockets of criticism suggesting that business and management is the antithesis of a higher education. Bain (1990) argues that the place of business and management studies in higher education has often been singled out for attack. A number of academics have expressed fears with regard to business and management education similar in nature to those voiced by O'Hear and Bain's Professor of English. Squires (1990), for example, asserts that there is a mismatch *"between instrumental means (more business studies graduates) and desirable ends (more happiness, justice, freedom)"*. Byrt (1989) contends that many academics have doubted whether the study of management is compatible with the aims of a university level education.

Some universities still doubt whether industrial management provides the scope for students to participate in the advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of truth.

R.W.Revans quoted in Byrt (1989) p.61

Moreover, criticism of the appropriateness of an education for business or industry is

both a contemporary and an historic phenomenon. According to Wiener (1980), denigration of business and industrial life is an endemic aspect of British culture and elite educational institutions since the Victorian era have “*reflected and propagated an anti-industrial bias*” (p 132). There remains, at the very least, considerable scepticism with respect to the growing influence of business and industry links at the ‘grassroots’ lecturer level (Harvey, 1995). Furthermore, critical attitudes with respect to business and management are not confined to lecturers. The current generation of students in higher education also appear to subscribe to anti-business attitudes. Fisher and Murphy (1995) demonstrate that many undergraduates are contemptuous of accountancy which represents the most visible business profession. The remarks of O’Hear, Squires and Revans are representative of a deep-rooted antipathy towards business and management studies from within the wider academic community of higher education. They suggest a fundamental dislocation between the values of a higher education and ~~the~~ those associated with a business and management education. This dislocation may be explained in terms of a series of perceived ‘identities’ which represent the way business and management studies is commonly characterised.

Doctrinal identity

Significant changes in the relationship between the state and higher education have taken place during the 1980s and early 1990s. There is a widespread perception, shared by many who write about this relationship, that the state has sought to undermine the traditional values of university autonomy and academic freedom while, further, subordinating higher education to the needs of the economy (eg Lawton, 1992, Salter and Tapper, 1994, Barnett, 1990, Scott, 1995). There is general agreement that the traditional values of a higher education include the search for objective knowledge and truth and the freedom to debate critical and unpopular ideas without fear of retribution (eg Barnett, 1990; Russell, 1993). Thus, autonomy from state control has long been considered a precondition for universities to maintain academic freedom. The state stands accused of eroding these traditional values of a higher education through requiring universities to compete for increasingly limited state funding. Furthermore, it is argued that the interest of the state in higher education

is based on the desire to use it as a direct agent of economic growth (Salter & Tapper, 1994). The notion that higher education should serve the interests of the economy is a 'functionalist' perspective closely associated with the neo-liberal political philosophy of 'Thatcherism'.

These criticisms of the manner in which the state has sought to 'attack' (eg Lawton, 1992) or 'undermine' (Barnett, 1990) higher education are significant in understanding why the relationship Business Studies and higher education is also viewed as a fractured one. Firstly, the Business Studies degree was introduced into higher education in 1965 on the recommendation of a state-sponsored committee and is representative of 'vocational' subjects which the state has sought to promote initially via the polytechnic sector and more latterly in curriculum-wide projects such as the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative. However, unlike other 'vocational' subjects pioneered in the former polytechnic sector, Business Studies is uniquely identified as the embodiment of free market or neo-liberal values conflicting directly with the values of a higher education.

When O'Hear (1988) charges that the study of business and management produces a market ethos which should be resisted in a higher education institution he is assuming that subjects like Business Studies subscribe to the values and objectives of the free market Conservative government from 1979 to 1996. These values are centred on the efficacy of competition as a central philosophy of business life underscored by a number of interlocking ideas. Free market (or neoclassical) economics emphasises the importance of individualism as the essential motor of wealth creation. Business life, it follows, should be largely free from legal constraints in order to maximise wealth creation (Friedman, 1980; Hayek, 1985). The logic of the free market equates competition with wealth creation. This analysis legitimises competition in business as a morally distinct form of human activity justified on the basis of the end product (ie wealth creation). It follows that individuals involved in business activity enjoy a distinct, market identity (Carr, 1968). The moral autonomy of business activity is underpinned by the legal distinction between the individual and the corporate body. Managers of corporate businesses have a legal, and, according to Friedman (1980), a

moral duty to act solely on behalf of this restricted membership. It is thus concluded that the pursuit of objectives apart from profit is a subversion of the purpose of business activity. The notion of co-operative activity in business life is characterised by proponents of the free market as collusion to fix prices or market share and hence a threat to prosperity (Smith, 1976). O'Hear clearly believes that Business Studies, as a subject in higher education, will purvey this one-dimensional set of values sanctifying the virtue of unbridled competition.

Therefore, in terms of the relationship between the state and higher education, Business Studies represents a state-sponsored initiative and one which appears to be ideologically in tune with the neo-liberal values of Conservative government. Business Studies is perceived as the embodiment of capitalist market values which are widely regarded as a threat to the autonomy of the university and intrinsic aims within higher education.

The creation of managed competition between higher education institutions has brought about irrevocable changes in management styles within higher education. 'New managerialism' is a phrase which has come to represent this radical shift of management styles (Dearlove, 1995). Academic management based on principles of collegiality and consensus has been largely replaced by centralised management teams involved in market-led decision making. According to Winter (1996), the experience of staff in higher education has become one of 'subjection' to "*untrammelled managerial power*" (p 71). He defines 'subjection' in terms of a shift from academic to managerial authority and the encroachment of market relationships into higher education as competition and profit increasingly now determine issues in relation to the curriculum, research and teaching. The language of business and management has entered the vocabulary of higher education - customers, stakeholders, contracts, partnerships, franchises, free markets, mission statements, audits and performance indicators. Increasingly, the work of business and management writers, such as Handy (1981), Peters and Waterman (1982), or Peters (1988), are used as a basis for explaining the new competitive context in which higher education must learn to survive. However, 'new managerialism' and the terminology associated with it has

become a target of invective and ridicule. 'New managerialism' is widely regarded as a threat to the traditional values of a higher education such as academic freedom (eg Russell, 1993) and collegiality (eg Dearlove, 1995). Business and management is seen, by association and by its very nature, to be in the forefront in espousing the values of 'new managerialism' those of free markets, customers and mission statements which critics within higher education regard as endangering key academic values. A recent illustration of this phenomenon is provided by press comments with regard to a proposed £20 million contribution by a wealthy Arab businessman to Oxford University's new business school.

Most of what we have had to recently endure, all of the intense messing about, the endlessly distracting time-and-motion studies, the protracted assessment exercises, the misguided application of production line metaphors, all the desperate institutionalised atmosphere of what Foucault has called the will to survey and punish, and, of course, the roughly applied staff-shedding, has been done in the name of management efficiency, in the voice of management-speak, and in the garb of the business school (my italics).

Cunningham (1997) p.14

This statement makes the clear assumption that values associated with 'new managerialism' will be shared and endorsed by the business school. It excludes the possibility that business school lecturers are academic colleagues who may share similar concerns regarding the impact of 'new managerialism'.

Epistemological identity

The classification of knowledge is more than a politically sensitive issue within an academic culture. It determines the status of a subject or subject grouping within an academic hierarchy of knowledge. A number of attempts have been made to classify knowledge on the basis of 'objective' criteria (eg Hirst, 1974). This has, in turn, been subject to attack by sociologists of knowledge (eg Young, 1971) who have criticised the exercise as a naive form of absolutism ignoring the role of powerful groups with

political influence in determining what counts as 'knowledge'. The legitimacy of the search for an objective classification of knowledge is a debate which will go on. However, within classifications which have been developed it is clear that business and management studies, as an amalgam of disciplines taught within an applied framework, is a subject area of limited epistemological status. Becher (1989) in his study of academic 'tribes' and the territories they occupy relies on the work of Kolb (1981) and Biglan (1973) with respect to the characteristics of the knowledge fields which academics perceive they occupy. Four domains of knowledge are identified by Becher on the basis of Kolb and Biglan's work : hard pure, soft pure, hard applied and soft applied. Examples of subject categories which fit into these domains are given in figure 1.

Figure 1 : After Kolb's Domains of Knowledge

	Pure Knowledge	Applied Knowledge
Hard Knowledge	<p>Hard Pure</p> <p><i>Natural Sciences and Mathematics</i></p>	<p>Hard Applied</p> <p><i>Science-based professions</i></p>
Soft Knowledge	<p>Soft Pure</p> <p><i>Humanities and Social Science</i></p>	<p>Soft Applied</p> <p><i>Social Professions</i></p>

As a study leading to a social profession, business and management can be placed largely in the soft applied domain although many of its constituent elements derive from other domains such as sociology and psychology (soft pure), statistics and accountancy (hard applied) or mathematics (hard pure). Other constituent subjects, such as economics, straddle the divide between hard and soft knowledge. However, subjects which might be classified as soft applied are rooted elsewhere. Marketing, for example, contains an amalgamation of soft pure (psychology, sociology) and hard

applied (statistics) knowledge. When O'Hear (1988) accuses business and management of living off the fruits of other trees of knowledge it is examples such as this that he had in mind. The origins of most constituent subjects can be traced back to other domains although the amorphous nature of business and management studies lies predominantly within the soft applied domain.

There is, thus, a problem of epistemological identity for business and management within an academic culture based on traditional subject divides where inter-disciplinary studies are regarded as "*nebulous*" (Barnett, 1990). Becher (1989) notes that 'convergent' academic disciplines are identified with the academic elite and "*tend to command the respect and envy of divergent disciplinary communities*" (p 37) such as business and management. The consequence, therefore, of a divergent disciplinary tradition within the soft applied domain is a low epistemological status.

Business and management studies has a correspondingly weak intellectual reputation. The paucity of research in business and management education is widely acknowledged. A Commission on Management Research, set up jointly by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the British Academy of Management, reported that research in business and management is poorer than in social science as a whole (ESRC, 1994). Whereas the average social science department consists of approximately 19 academic staff with 37 per cent classified as teaching-only, an average management department numbers 48 academic staff with an estimated 50 per cent teaching-only. The 1992 University Funding Council Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) found that a large proportion of management research takes place in low-rated institutions, graded 1 or 2. Moreover, a similar pattern of comparative underachievement emerged on the basis of the 1996 RAE. In a Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) league table of subjects reflecting on the 1996 RAE, business and management was ranked 56th out of 69 subjects (THES, 1996).

Weir (1993) comments that management researchers tend to trade long term development for the immediacy of a "*sexy headline*". There are few leading British management writers and theorists who have made a significant contribution to the

field. The giants and modern gurus of business and management thought are virtually all Americans; Taylor, MacGregor, Drucker, Deming, Kanter and Peters among others. British management education is constantly playing 'catch-up'. The success of non-academic paperbacks with catchy titles and common sense conclusions does little to enhance the reputation of business and management studies as a serious, *bona fide* academic discipline. The success of enterprising individuals with minimal business (or sometimes general) education and 'I did it my way' books written by entrepreneurial and managerial icons serve to celebrate and reinforce the cult of the amateur while undermining the value of academic study. 'Serious' publications all too often fall into two distinct categories; books written from an academic perspective but with low levels of organisational applicability and anecdotal, often simplistic, 'success' check lists produced by training practitioners with limited critical analysis.

The presence of ideological tension within a discipline with identifiable schools of thought also contributes to a sense of doctrinal freedom of speech. As Becher (1989) points out, debates in some disciplines, such as sociology or economics, can be readily understood in broad political terms. Economists can be characterised, perhaps crudely, as 'left wing' or 'right wing'. The existence of such a debate adds intellectual spice to the study of a discipline. Business and management is not perceived in terms of offering such freedom of debate, representing a one-dimensional and very 'right-wing' competitive ethos. This gives rise to the suspicion that business and management may involve a lack of intellectual challenge which fails to inspire students to become lifelong learners. Business and management graduates are among the least likely students of any subject to acquire further qualifications (Squires, 1990; Coates & Koerner, 1996). Far fewer business and management students re-enter higher education after graduation compared with those graduating from most other applied subjects (Squires, 1990).

Institutional identity

The Business Studies first degree is intimately linked both to the history of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and the polytechnics. During the

1960s and 70s Business Studies was considered a symbol of the distinctive goals of a polytechnic education (McKenna, 1983) representing, according to then Education Minister Tony Crosland, a separate tradition of higher education (Vaughan, 1982). By the early 1980s no polytechnic in the United Kingdom was without a Business Studies degree (Vaughan, 1982). Business and management studies is, therefore, predominantly associated with a polytechnic education and is still largely based in 'new' universities².

However, other degree level subjects, notably engineering, are closely connected to the CNAAs and the old polytechnic sector. Perceptions of low epistemological status and fears with respect to academic freedom are not unique to business and management. Similar charges have been levelled at a range of other applied disciplines. However, business and management, unlike science, "*does not perform any vital contribution to what we know about man and his place in the world*" (O'Hear, 1988). The identification of business and management as a distasteful symbol of free market values has meant that departments must justify their existence within higher education by working as an institution's 'cash cow'. According to Forrester (1986), Cannon (1992) and Weir (1993), parent institutions require business schools to justify a dubious presence in an academic culture through expansion, consultancies and fully funded courses. This theme is underscored by the ESRC Commission on Management Research.

Universities have seen this expansion (of business and management) as a ready source of income and have often not reinvested enough of this income in the development of their business schools.

ESRC (1994) p.15

There has also been a failure to integrate business and management studies into higher education institutions. The establishment of business faculties within British universities set in train the academic isolation which has followed. The Franks Report (1963) recommended the creation of postgraduate business schools in a semi-detached

² Former polytechnics granted university status in 1992.

relationship with parent institutions. This established, through the subsequent growth of business and management in higher education, a tradition of keeping business schools and departments at arms length with a high expectation that they will generate considerable income. On the basis of this perception, it is not wholly surprising that Oxford and Cambridge were slow to embrace business and management education until financial considerations overcame academic misgivings. While most universities have established such programmes over the last 10 or 15 years, Oxford only began to teach a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) programme in October, 1994. Templeman College, the centre for Management Studies at Oxford University, generated 70 per cent of its own £3.7 million income in 1990 (Adonis, 1992a). However, the College is inauspiciously housed three miles from the dreaming spires, on the wrong side of the ring road. According to Adonis (1992b) the cross subsidised beneficiaries of this policy are often struggling, but 'worthy' departments who form part of the accepted academic order.

However, many business faculties have demonstrably failed to deliver the anticipated financial bonanza for cash-strapped institutions (Cannon, 1992). Faced with recessionary pressures many businesses have cut back on education and training while at the same time becoming more discerning customers in the light of burgeoning competition between business and management providers.

Professional Identity

Unlike other applied studies, such as medicine or law, business and management has no clear *professional identity*. The lack of publications analysing the study of business and management from a professional perspective makes this marginalisation immediately apparent. There exists a considerable body of literature concerning 'professional education' but much of this excludes discussion of 'business' or 'management'. One of the keys to understanding this exclusion is that a profession is normally inextricably linked to an ethical rationale. Professions are perceived as serving the interests of society but similar, selfless motives are rarely associated with business practise. Both medicine and law occupy an accepted and respected niche in

society which business and management as a wide-ranging amalgam struggles to attain. Davies (1993) highlights this problem in relation to the need for business and management education to embrace wider social responsibilities.

What is the role of Law.....to enhance Justice;

What is the role of Medicine.....to enhance Health;

What is the role of the Church.....to enhance Spirituality;

BUT.....

What is the role of Business.....to enhance (please fill in !)

Davies (1993) p.10

While the 'minor' professions (Glazer, 1974) may not enjoy the same professional status as medicine and law, nearly all are perceived as making a positive contribution to the betterment of society. Social work, nursing, teaching and town planning are often referred to as the 'helping' professions (Glazer, 1974). By stark contrast, according to Glazer (1974), profit is the unambiguous end of business.

Medical practitioners or lawyers have a direct professional relationship with patients or clients and both medicine and law are controlled by professional bodies steeped in strong and independent ethical traditions. Glazer (1974) identifies medicine and law as the 'major' professions since, in part, their practitioners work independently and not under bureaucratic control as in the other 'minor' professions. Goodlad (1984) also makes a similar argument.

Indeed, the more managers are seen to be owned by organisations whose primary *raison d'être* is profit (rather than disinterested service to the public) the less 'professional' they are perceived to be.

Goodlad (1984) p.5

In seeking to determine whether social work qualifies as a 'profession', Bowie (1990) draws on a number of criteria, originally identified by Flexner (1925), essential to any occupation seeking such a status. Notably this definition includes the condition that a

profession has to *“be imbued with an altruistic spirit.”* (Bowie, 1990). As O’Hear (1988) comments business and management is not closely connected with the improvement of the human condition. Indeed, the professions most closely associated with business and management studies, probably accountancy and banking, have, in recent years, acquired a tarnished public image. Neither of these professions is held in particular affection or respect by the British public or British undergraduates (Fisher & Murphy, 1995). The much publicised failure of the financial self-regulation of the City of London, scandals involving auditors and insurance companies and the reputation of British banking with regard to small businesses and third world loans are examples which dog the public image of these professions. Such scandals have reinforced, rather than dispelled a popular image of ‘business’ and ‘ethics’ as contradictory terms.

Notions of professionalism encompass both mastery of an area of knowledge and skill, and service beneficial to the client (Jarvis, 1983). Within most professions this concept of service results in a continuous debate with respect to relevant ethical issues. In business and management, by contrast, the debate concerns the relevance of ethical issues *per se*. The classical school of economic thought, from Adam Smith to Milton Friedman, argues that the unbridled pursuit of rational self-interest is central to economic prosperity. It follows that ethics in business may hamper the wealth creation process and be counter-productive to the best interests of the ‘client’ (ie society). The argument follows that society is, thus, best served by the absence of restrictive ethical principles in the conduct of business. Business and management education is not strongly associated with a concern for the wider social consequences of economic activity unlike other applied disciplines which have attained professional status. Universities act as gatekeepers with respect to would-be professions. The dominant idea of a liberal education dictates that occupations wishing to attain professional status must tailor their curricula to embrace the importance of humanistic values (Salter & Tapper, 1992). The perception that ethics plays only a limited role in a business and management education is a significant barrier to academic respectability. A serious consideration of ethics is also an essential precondition if the study of business is ever to be considered a fully-fledged profession.

In search of an identity

The series of identities which have been outlined above represent a 'commonsense' understanding of business and management in its relationship with higher education. Business and management studies is uniquely representative of the free market, embracing those values which have driven increasing state intervention in higher education. Business and management has, moreover, evolved as a semi-detached income-generator within many institutions. Its low epistemological status and threadbare intellectual reputation also compound this sense of isolation. Finally, unlike other newly emerging applied areas of the curriculum, business and management is not closely associated with professional values such as a concern for ethics or serving the wider public good.

This analysis would suggest that business and management studies may pose a threat to the core values of a higher education. However, this characterisation is based on a macro-level analysis of the relationship rather than an examination of the micro, pedagogic level. It is an impression based largely on a stereotyped understanding of business and management education. It is essential, therefore, to examine business and management as a teaching community in order to begin assessing whether liberal-humanist values are in any way threatened. Questions need to be posed regarding with respect to where business lecturers come from and what forms the basis for their sense of identity.

The business and management curriculum largely derives from soft pure (eg sociology, psychology) or hard applied (eg accountancy, statistics) subject disciplines. There are very few academics within such departments with a first degree in business or management studies. Most have graduated and, importantly, identify with a discrete subject discipline such as economics. Forrester (1986) identifies two types of current management staff : academics applying specific disciplines to the study of business and management and practitioners who have switched to teaching after management or professional experience. Barry (1989) also comments on these two, quite distinct, points of entry but underlines the predominance of an academic tradition.

Most British management schools in universities and polytechnics are much closer to what may be called an academic model of organisation than they are a professional school. They tend to emphasise the discipline that underlies issues and value publications by staff in academic journals.

Barry (1989) p.76

Traditional academic criteria still dictate the process by which business and management lecturers are selected. Shaw (1991) contends that business lecturers are largely drawn from related disciplines and not from the ranks of the relevant professional body and comments that most accountancy lecturers have an academic background in economics without experience of accounting practice. Murphy (1992) comments that management staff are appointed principally on the basis of research expertise. This process is likely to be compounded by the recent restructuring of funding arrangements in higher education which rewards research, rather than teaching quality (McNay, 1994). However, staff are faced with a broad range of role demands. Enterprising activities, such as consultancy and collaborative research, are roles which many staff from an academic background find difficult to adapt to. Bolton (1993), in discussing claims to 'internationalism' within business schools, comments on this diversity of demands.

The pressures on faculty are already substantial : they are expected to teach diverse audiences including undergraduates, MBA's and businessmen; to improve their institution's research profile through the quality of their publications; to demonstrate the "real world" relevance of the material they teach. These challenges often pull in contradictory directions.

Bolton (1993) p.23

Faced with this dilemma, it is not surprising that many lecturers will seek to establish a research reputation in the familiar territory of first degree specialisms such as economics or psychology. This also means that staff can retain the security of academic identity and contact with colleagues in other departments and associated bodies in traditional disciplines part of a process Becher (1989) labels the

‘intellectualising dynamic’. Brennan and Henkel (1988) note the absence of a strong business studies culture within universities. This is partly derived from the origins of business studies in departments of economics which have subsequently sought to re-establish a separate identity through specialisation, sub-division and the growth of mathematical modelling. According to Brennan and Henkel (1988), economists display a marked identity and loyalty. This appears to have resulted from academic drift towards ‘hard’ and the ‘pure’.

Furthermore, business faculties struggle to deliver the entrepreneurial expectations of parent institutions partly because they are staffed by academics rather than ‘entrepreneurs’ recruited from industry. White & Horton (1991) in their study into the level of corporate support for higher education found that manufacturing companies, keen to support research and development in areas such as engineering and pharmaceuticals, accounted for 82 per cent of total spending. This means that service organisations, with whom business and management departments are more apt to forge significant links, are substantially less likely to provide support for higher education. Consultancy work claims by business academics are often exaggerated (Cannon, 1992) with the bulk of such activities normally consisting of customary academic ‘moonlighting’; working as external examiners or part time teaching for other institutions. The attachment of many business and management staff to their own functional specialism means it can be very difficult in practice for faculties to deliver the real flexibility required by companies wanting a genuinely tailored programme (Warner, 1990). This, in turn, has added implications for the income which business faculties can realistically generate.

Despite the impression that the study of business does not constitute a professional training, links between staff and the ‘real world’ of commerce and industry tend to occur on the basis of professional contacts. Some tutors will be associated with their respective professional body such as the Institute of Management, the Chartered Institute of Marketing or the Chartered Institute of Accountants rather than the broader world of commerce and, particularly, industry. This is reflected by the strength of links forged by industry-specific business and management courses. Particularly

strong ties have been established between emerging 'professions', such as Retail Management, and degree courses tailored to the needs of large employers (Murphy, 1992). Although degree courses in Retail Management, Tourism and other industry-specific studies are growing, general business and management is still a significantly more popular area of study with a curriculum, at undergraduate level at least, which remains substantially controlled by the academic community.

Barnett (1990) argues that the business community helps shape an uncritical agenda in undergraduate business studies. However, most research indicates that employers are relatively uninterested and play a peripheral role in constructing the curriculum.

One of the outstanding features of business degrees was that they were largely internally generated; employers were not lobbying for new courses or course changes.

Boys (1988) p.121

More lip service is paid to the importance of links between the academic programme and employers than may be generally recognised given the background and priorities of staff looking to survive in an academic ethos. This is reflected in a report into business and management provision by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) (Department of Education and Science, 1990) which noted the failure of staff in the former polytechnic and college sector to update their industrial and commercial experience. A more realistic threat to the academic tradition may rest with the mismatch between the quality of business and management programmes and the calibre and experience of available staff which has also drawn HMI criticism.

The future growth of management education could be inhibited by the inability of many institutions to recruit well qualified teaching staff.

Department of Education and Science (1990) p.8

There is also a mismatch between the attitude of the business community and business faculties with respect to research. The business community is sceptical of the value of

academic management research. The preference of managers for prescriptive statements and actionable advice is noted by the ESRC (1994) management research report. Faced with information-overload in their daily lives members of the business community want rapid diagnosis and problem resolution. Research based on theoretical principles is less likely to meet this perceived need. Academic research is under-valued as a result. By contrast, the predominant research model of business and management remains 'scientific' rather than applied (Orpen, 1993). Most management research relies on the same principles of controlled observation and empirical testing as other more traditional academic disciplines.

The secrecy which is valued by many large organisations acts as a significant barrier to applied research models. The practical difficulty in carrying out investigations in business organisations was one of the issues highlighted in Tom Clarke's inaugural lecture as professor of corporate governance at Leeds Metropolitan University. Clarke criticised company boards as unwilling to co-operate with researchers. When the 'discreet' existence of boards made some unwilling to inform shareholders of vital information, the prospect for researchers is bleak (Utley, 1993). Business organisations understand and jealously guard information. This makes gaining access to organisational decision-makers and information extremely difficult (Easterby-Smith, 1991). It also poses a methodological problem for academics seeking to carry out 'real' applied research and has led to maverick strategies where researchers have gone 'undercover' using deception as a conscious tactic (eg Beynon, 1973). Ethical approaches to applied business and management can be stymied by problems of access. Substantial issues of power and politics inhibit management research.

Research into managers and management provides a case where the subjects of research are very likely to be more powerful than the researchers themselves.

Easterby-Smith (1991) p.45

However, the predominance of the scientific model in management research is only partly attributable to the practical obstacles facing researchers. The preference for a positivist paradigm is also closely connected with Becher's 'intellectualising dynamic'.

Most mainstream texts and journals favour publication of 'scientific' research (Orpen, 1993) squeezing out applied work. Journals established with the explicit intention of bridging the divide between the academic and the practitioner tend to rapidly become the preserve of the former community. Even papers in business ethics have recently appeared on the basis of quantitative methods indicative of an academic drift from applied to pure research. The need to bridge the gap between practitioner and academic led the Commission on Management Research (ESRC, 1994) to suggest the need for a new European journal along similar lines to the *Harvard Business Review*.

Conclusion

The history of the ambivalent relationship between business and education is well documented (Wiener, 1980). However, this ambivalence is both historic and contemporary (Cannon, 1992). As a 'practical' study many commentators on higher education regard business and management as unintellectual or, in its wider political context, an anti-intellectual pursuit. Many of the difficulties faced by business and management in gaining acceptance within the 'academy' have been shared by other 'practical' and professional subjects. Indeed, according to Burgess (1977) even pure science was considered "*suspect*" until the 1950s. There is, perhaps, a conservatism which greets the introduction of any new subject in UK higher education.

However, there are aspects to the identity of business and management which pose particular, and perhaps unique problems. The perception that business and management is both an apologist for and a champion of a free market ethos brings it into conflict with concepts of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Furthermore, as a 'minor' profession, devoid of any publicly recognised ethical dimension, business and management does not appear to share the same level of concern expressed by other professions with regard to the human condition. While other minor professions share a low epistemological status (eg social work) they are connected with a set of professional values and a concern for the human condition.

It is far from clear whether this 'macro' view accurately reflects the place of business

and management studies in higher education. It needs to be stressed, though, that much of this imagery concerning business and management is based, almost entirely, on a macro-level of analysis where ideology is examined at the general or political level rather than that of pedagogy. These identities, whether correct or not, inform the debate concerning the relationship between business and management studies and higher education. It does not necessarily follow that the pedagogic reality of a degree in Business Studies matches this macro-level identity. A better understanding is required of business and management at this pedagogic level where it is less likely that such sweeping ideological assumptions can be maintained.

Section B

THE BUSINESS STUDIES CURRICULUM : TOWARDS AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 3

The Aims of a Business Studies degree

Introduction

This chapter will seek to establish a framework for understanding the aims of degrees in Business Studies. This will be achieved by reflecting on the role of the principal architects of the Business Studies degree : the state, business and professional interests, the student body and the academic community. A key distinction will be identified between two contrasting notions of the aim of a Business Studies degree. It will be argued that the aim of a BA in Business Studies can be expressed as either a study in specific preparation for a business career or as a general education about business as an economic and sociological phenomenon. It will be concluded that this distinction raises a central ambiguity concerning the goal of a higher education in Business Studies.

What is meant by 'aims' ?

A considerable literature exists concerning the aims of education (eg Peters, Woods & Dray 1973; White, 1982). Found within this literature are a number of recurring themes. One such important distinction concerns what is meant by 'aims' as opposed to 'objectives'. Aims are more readily associated with general, long-term priorities or statements of intent while objectives are more specific, interim targets. Objectives are the means of achieving an aim. This is more than a semantic point as it indicates that aims tend to be the endpoint of the curriculum rather than the targets along the way.

A second key theme of the literature concerns the very usefulness of approaching the aims of a curriculum entirely in terms of its *stated* aims. Sociologists of knowledge draw a distinction between the overt curriculum, that which is presented in curriculum documentation, and the covert curriculum, that which exists but is not formally documented. Explanations of this covert curriculum might be viewed from a Marxist

perspective, as an exercise in the maintenance of capitalist values (Gramsci, 1971), or more generally as a recognition of the important role of teachers (and lecturers) as cultural agents making decisions as to what experience is desirable or valuable.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the widely disseminated division between extrinsic and intrinsic aims made by Downie, Loudfoot and Telfer (1974). Attitudes to the purpose of knowledge underpin this distinction. White (1982) defines intrinsic aims as those where knowledge is regarded as desirable in itself. Extrinsic aims, by contrast, only regard knowledge as desirable or necessary as a means for achieving further ends. A conflict between educational and economic aims, intrinsic and extrinsic respectively, is given by White (1982, p 63) as an example of this division.

These themes, found in the general literature concerning aims and education, help to inform the debate concerning the aim of Business Studies degrees. In seeking to establish the aims of Business Studies degrees it is important to reflect on the role of the public and private world of higher education (Scott, 1995) in shaping 'aims' both extrinsic and intrinsic. Furthermore, in considering the question of aims it is important to reflect on the role played by the academic community as cultural agents in delivering the curriculum to students rather than relying entirely on written documentation.

The State

The state is the founding sponsor of government-funded reports which have paved the way for the development of the Business Studies degree. The aims of the Business Studies degree are thus closely associated with the evolution of national policy on technological education. Following the Second World War there was a sharpening awareness that Britain's poor industrial performance might be linked to the absence of technological education at degree level. The Percy Report (1945) sought to begin the process of redressing an imbalance which had previously excluded industrial interests from higher education and according to Lane (1975), the report was the origin for higher level technological work. Rogers (1993) comments that the decision to set up the National Council for Technological Awards (NCTA) in 1955 was taken in

response to the perception that employers needed “*educated technologists*” (p 12). The decision to entrust this task to the NCTA was critical in dividing technological education from the university sector. Lane (1975) remarks that the universities were not “*trusted*” with this new form of higher education designed to explicitly meet the economic needs of the nation. Scott (1995) is more specific in claiming that the decision of the 1956 White Paper on technical education to set up colleges of advanced technology, funded directly by the Ministry of Education, demonstrated an unwillingness on the part of Whitehall to entrust the matter to the University Grants Committee.

Business efficiency became a prominent issue during the 1950s and 1960s. The ‘amateur’ tradition, whereby managers were recruited into British industry with no previous commercial experience or qualifications, came under mounting criticism. The war had stimulated interest in both officer training and American production methods (Barry, 1989). The British Institute of Management, formed in 1947, launched the Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) two years later as a first step to professionalising management. However, it was not until some years later that business education began to develop within higher education. The four year Diploma in Technology, with one year spent in industry, became the template for degrees in Business Studies when the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) took over from the NCTA. Hence, Business Studies was fitted into a philosophy already established for CNAA Science and Engineering degrees (Lane, 1975).

Thus, at a national policy level, the evolution of business and management education is closely connected with an instrumental rationale. Business and management education was considered essential to help Britain regain its economic competitiveness a link re-affirmed by more recent reports into the condition of management education in Britain (Handy, 1987; Constable and McCormick, 1987). Hence, business education was conceived as an education designed to meet the perceived interests of business which would, in turn, lead to enhanced economic growth. This matching of Business Studies to a vocational model established originally for degrees in Technology needs to be understood in the context of the industrial society of the 1950s

and 1960s built around mass production of largely undifferentiated products by workers with limited personal autonomy filling highly controlled work stations within large bureaucratic organisations (Scott, 1995).

To establish the original purpose of a Business Studies degree it is necessary to reflect on the recommendations of the Crick report (Department of Education and Science, 1964) a committee which had a significant impact on the early shape of the Business Studies degree (McKenna, 1983). The report defined Business Studies as *“all those branches of study directed towards careers in business..”* (p 2). Taken out of context, as an isolated statement, this phrase appears to offer an unambiguous definition of the aim of a Business Studies degree suggesting a clear vocational purpose. However, taken as a whole the report is less clear cut and strongly suggests the accommodation of more general, academic studies. One indication of this is the inclusion of sociology as one of the three basic disciplines recommended by the report. Although the justification for sociology is couched in terms of relevance to organisational needs, Brown and Harrison (1980) have commented that the rationale for its inclusion soon came to rest on its *“broadening and liberalising”* functions and a detached, sociological perspective on business activity. Furthermore, the report itself stressed the importance of *“a liberal treatment of the whole curriculum”* (Department of Education and Science, 1964, p 12). This phrase was defined in terms of four facets, the second of which makes it clear that Business Studies should also be a general study about business and not *“narrowly vocational”* :

Secondly, it should be possible for the curriculum to include elements which are not narrowly vocational, such as the study of business history in relation to scientific and technological change, or an introduction to the history of philosophical ideas or political theory and institutions.

Department of Education and Science (1964) p.12

The report's recommendation for the academic content in economics also suggests some accommodation of a wider educational perspective. According to Crick, students should be familiar with recent economic history and have an understanding of

Britain's economic and industrial structure. While the report goes on to recommend that the content of economics should further include economic theory applied to business problems it is clear that this subject area was perceived as both a vocational and a broader educational study.

The Crick report appeared to recommend a balance between vocational and educational aims. Its recommendations need to be understood in the context of the Robbins report (1963) which submitted that both vocational and educational objectives were legitimate objective concerns of the higher education system. Crick stressed the importance of academic study in college twinned with practical experience gained on a sandwich placement basis. While it recognised that Business Studies graduates would mostly go on to careers in business it was concerned to retain within such programmes the traditional elements of a liberal education. The Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) played a key role in the development of degrees in Business Studies. However, while noting that degrees had "*separate images*" (Silver, 1990) it did not seek to stipulate that only one of these images was appropriate. Stoddart (1981) argues that rather than trying to stipulate one 'image' for Business Studies, the CNAA adopted a pluralist philosophy allowing staff free to experiment with their own approaches. Gore (1981) also notes that CNAA encouraged diverse academic approaches.

Since the Crick report was published in 1964 Business Studies has had more than thirty years to mature as a degree subject. During this period other state-sponsored aspects of business and vocational education, such as the Business and Technological (formerly Technical) Education Council (BTEC), may have had some indirect impact in shaping the aim of degrees in Business Studies. BTEC is a body which has played a significant role in the evolution of business education, particularly within further education. Degrees in Business Studies were predated by Higher National awards in Business Studies pioneered by BTEC. Indeed, the Crick report notes that the creation of an Higher National Diploma (HND) in Business Studies, established in 1959 (Daniel, 1971), had led the Federation of British Industries to conclude that there was a demand for a more advanced award. It therefore seems likely that curriculum

development at degree level has been influenced by the strong BTEC tradition in Business Studies (Silver and Brennan, 1988). Stoddart (1981) refers to the “*pressure exerted*” by the Business Education Council (BEC)³ in pushing towards a more vocational model of business education. The leading role of BEC, in this respect, was having an indirect impact on new CNAA Business Studies programmes in the early 1980s. The CNAA Committee for Business and Management, set up in 1978, established important links with BEC through a Joint Liaison Group. The influence of BEC philosophy on the Business Studies degree is underlined by Gore (1984) both in terms of increasing use of integrated approaches and the adoption of the BEC blueprint with teaching staff moving between both BEC and degree programmes. Woods (1982) contends that BEC philosophy provided the most successful strategy for linking and integrating course content on Business Studies degrees.

BTEC is explicitly committed to a preparation of students for work (BTEC, 1984), an avowedly vocational philosophy. Indeed the first HND course in Business Studies, launched in 1959, was as a result of an initiative by Pilkingtons Limited, the glass manufacturer, which saw the programme as a more effective medium for the development of its management trainees. However, despite an unambiguously vocational philosophy, early HND programmes in Business Studies closely resembled the Crick model, a collection of distinct academic subjects with little attempt to integrate these components (Daniel, 1971). The overriding influence of the Crick model on early Business Studies degrees is also evident.

Courses vary, but basically they cover economics, sociology and mathematics, and all give an introduction to accounting and law.

Department of Education and Science (1979) p.6

In more recent years, the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative (EHEI) has sought to develop students with “*personal, transferable skills*” (Department of Employment, 1988). Commenting on the impact of the initiative on a business and management

³ BTEC was previously split into two separate bodies, the Business Education Council (BEC) and the Technician Education Council (TEC)

department, Fuller-Love (1995) indicates that this has resulted in the adoption of more student-centred teaching methods and a greater emphasis on skills development. However, the EHEI has a general remit in higher education part of which is to secure curriculum development and change. In Fuller-Love's (1995) case study the initiative had some marginal impact on the business curriculum by facilitating more staff development and greater contact with employers through student projects without disturbing the fundamental shape or philosophy of the degree.

The business community

Despite the eclectic philosophy which emerges from the Crick report and HND programmes, both Boys (1988) and Silver and Brennan (1988) stress that degrees in Business Studies have developed relatively free from the external demands of employers. Unlike business degrees tailored to specific occupational or professional vocations, such as retailing or banking, Business Studies is not restrained by the requirements of employers or lobbying by professional groups. This view contrasts with the history of HND programmes where the needs of local, large employers has played a more substantial role in curriculum development within the 'service' tradition of further education institutions (Burgess, 1977).

Despite the claim that Business Studies is closely related to the needs of employers (eg Harris and Palmer, 1995), such degrees are unrelated to any specific occupational or professional context. Brennan (1985) analyses the "*vocational intent*" of degree programmes in higher education via the use of a sliding scale. He identifies Business Studies as a programme with a "*diffuse*" rather than "*specific*" relationship to employment. According to Brennan (1985), completion of degrees in medicine, education and social work enable the graduate to enter a specific occupation fully qualified to practise whereas a degree in accountancy or law makes the graduate partly qualified to practise. Even a degree in psychology is, on the basis of Brennan's scale, a closer preparation for employment than Business Studies as students graduate with a necessary educational base for training. Business Studies is regarded by Brennan as a degree study offering only an optional educational base for training where

employment relevance is claimed but subsequent training does not presuppose it. This means Business Studies is ranked just above the least vocational category identified, where there is no explicit employment relevance. Brennan's analysis clearly highlights the ambiguous position of Business Studies which, although often associated with the language of vocational education, is clearly far less occupationally specific than much of the existing curriculum in higher education.

Although professional bodies have not played a significant role in the development of the Business Studies degree many programmes have established specialist pathways in marketing, accountancy or personnel management, in order to secure exemptions for students wishing to pursue professional qualifications after graduation. Other specialist degrees in accountancy or marketing, for example, have collaborated more explicitly with their respective professions. Such contact or influence is hardly surprising given the likelihood that lecturers will, in many cases, already belong to the relevant professional body. Other degrees in areas such as retail marketing are, in some cases, tailored to the specific requirements of major UK employers. One such example is the 'Sainsbury degree' at Manchester Metropolitan University. However, even where major employers are closely involved it is argued that academic control still rests with the university (Targett, 1994).

A wider economic context explaining the declining institutional commitment to vocationalism, passed on originally to polytechnics by colleges of technology, is provided by Scott (1995). He argues that the changing occupational and professional labour market has exercised a powerful influence in sweeping away old notions of vocationalism. Traditional industrial occupations, characterised by limited autonomy and clearly defined work roles, have shrunk dramatically since the 1960s. By contrast, a phenomenon often described as post-Fordism or post-industrialism has led to the vertical disintegration of production in the 1990s. Business organisations have developed smaller federal structures, sub-contract to export uncertainty and desire employees with enterprise and initiative to fill ambiguous, demanding and constantly shifting work roles. This phenomenon, according to Scott (1995), means that the vocationalism developed in the 1960s for technical education is no longer considered

appropriate for the occupations of the 1990s. Hence, he argues that a declining commitment to traditional forms of vocationalism, often termed 'academic drift', is really the result of the 'pull' of the economy rather than the 'push' of the academic community. The language of vocationalism was designed for technical and job-specific occupations. By contrast, according to Scott (1995) the post-industrial age demands workers with more generic, broadly-based professional skills, often labelled competences, placing more emphasis on intellectual attributes. Ironically, according to Ainley (1994), this may lead to a definition of competence more in tune with older elite forms of education. In terms of Business Studies, this may mean that a traditional, non-vocational academic education may be regarded as a more appropriate preparation for a career in business.

This analysis appears to fit the job market prospects of graduates in Business Studies. It is often assumed that Business Studies students will enjoy a significant advantage in obtaining employment after graduation. However, Business Studies is not a particularly attractive degree to many employers (Becher, 1994). Indeed, it is claimed that only a minority of employers place a high value on the substantive content of degrees (Roizen & Jepson, 1985). Studies have shown, for example, that accounting firms prefer to recruit graduates from Oxford and Cambridge despite the absence of such vocational courses at prestigious institutions. Fisher and Murphy (1995) report that although most accounting courses were based in the former polytechnics in 1990/91, employers recruited more than five times as many graduates from the old university sector. Roizen and Jepson (1985), in their study of employer expectation of higher education, found that the type of institution attended was the most important single factor in determining the value of a degree in the market place. Thus, the lack of interest among employers in the Business Studies curriculum may, at least, partly be a function of its location principally in the new university sector.

The student body

A further internal dynamic is provided by the student body studying business at undergraduate level. Research into the expectations of Business Studies

undergraduates indicates an essentially pragmatic student body. A desire for a career in commerce or industry is cited by Horner (1983) as the most popular reason why students choose Business Studies. The second most popular response, elicited in the same survey, was ease in obtaining employment generally. Therefore, students tend to regard the aim of a Business Studies degree as instrumental to their career ambitions. Anticipation of future employment makes functionally based applied subjects such as marketing, accountancy or personnel management popular pathways within business degrees. Horner (1983) found that the vast majority of students favoured final year options closely tailored to their chosen future careers. Graves (1983) comment on the pragmatism of Business Studies students is representative of a range of similar opinion :

As the student sees it, Business Studies is there to provide him with access to a job (not a liberal education).

Graves (1983) p.13

Roberts (1996) argues that the instrumental attitude of students creates pressure on lecturers to transmit knowledge as fact in a predigested and immediately usable form. This type of pressure, though, is probably greater within post-experience management education particularly when students are either self or employer funded.

In a study of opinion among BA Business Studies students who had graduated from Newcastle Polytechnic/University of Northumbria at Newcastle between 1980 and 1993, Coates and Koerner (1996) reported that ex-students were critical of subject areas they had studied but had not found to be specifically useful in their subsequent careers. Specifically, the ex-students questioned the value of the behavioural sciences, such as psychology and sociology, which they had studied as part of their Business Studies degree. The graduates saw greater value in studying functional areas of business, such as marketing, which they regarded as more valuable for future employment.

It is possible that this instrumental view of the educational process may lie behind the

rapid expansion of Business Studies degrees in the 1980's. By 1990 over 35,000 students applied for a place on a business and management programme more than for any single science subject or history or economics. Only politics, english and medicine had more applicants. Moreover, Business and Financial studies is the largest subject group in UK higher education and accounts for an increasing proportion of undergraduate provision. In 1991/92, 10.2 per cent of all first degree students in UK higher education were studying Business and Financial Studies (Government Statistical Services, 1994). This figure has since risen to closer to 20 per cent (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 1995). However, it is unlikely that pragmatic concerns about job prospects are confined to students of Business Studies but extend to a whole generation with career aspirations shaped by the economic climate of the 1980's (Sullivan, Sweeney & Trench 1987) and the rapid expansion of higher education during the 1990s.

The academic community

However, external forces, in the shape of national policy initiatives and the business community, do not appear to have played a substantial, direct role in determining the purpose of a Business Studies degree. Rather, it appears that the academic community have been dominant in shaping the emerging aims of Business Studies. This impression stems from empirical research into the Business Studies degree. The substantive work of Silver and Brennan (1988) and Boys (1988) indicates that the Business Studies curriculum is largely devised without the significant involvement of employers. Rather, the principal architects of degrees in Business Studies are academic staff, drawn from divergent disciplinary backgrounds. Therefore, it is important to consider attitudes stemming from the different academic sub-cultures of lecturers contributing to such programmes described by Trow (1976) and Scott (1995) as the 'private' knowledge-based world of higher education.

Becher and Kogan (1992) distinguish between 'normative' and 'operational' modes in higher education, an analysis which is helpful in understanding the potential ambiguity between business and management as an academic community and the purpose of the

Business Studies curriculum. A normative mode refers to the maintenance and monitoring of values, defined as "*what people in the system count as important*" (Becher & Kogan, 1992, p 10). These values derive from the concept of job fulfilment as an 'internal' source for values and a desire to belong to a 'professional reference group' as an 'external' point of reference.

Most individuals derive some sense of support from the main professional reference group to which they belong, and reciprocate by subscribing to the group's norms...In applied fields, it may embrace professional practitioners as well as academics.

Becher & Kogan (1992) p.11

The normative mode incorporates the desire for acceptance and recognition as part of a disciplinary 'tribe' and as a member of the wider academic community within the principal reference group of higher education. The operational mode, by contrast, is concerned with "*practical tasks*" or "*what people actually do*" as opposed to values which lecturers hold. This analysis indicates potential dissonance between normative and operational modes. Hence, lecturers in Business Studies may hold values which are in conflict with their operational mode which ostensibly involves the preparation of students for business careers. The potential for conflict seems greater if a lecturer in a field such as Business Studies does not seek to identify with professional practitioners as a normative reference group. Therefore, lecturers in Business Studies may find themselves on the horns of a dilemma if, for example, a normative value such as an "*altruistic regard for student development*" (Becher & Kogan, 1992, p 11) does not coincide with their perception of their operational role. Reflecting on their values in a normative mode, a lecturer might be drawn to the virtues of providing students with a general academic education but find in their operational capacity they are expected to prepare students more specifically for the demands of a business career. This means there may be a potential conflict between the educational aims embraced by an individual lecturer and those considered appropriate at the course level.

It is, therefore, important to reflect on the factors which determine the values of

Business Studies lecturers which may conflict with their operational role. There are a number of external reference points which may have an impact in determining the normative mode. It has been noted that Business Studies is a divergent rather than convergent academic community consisting of a range of contributing disciplines. Strong academic subject cultures, within economics for example, mean that there is a noted absence of a distinct business studies culture within universities (Brennan & Henkel, 1988). The age profile of lecturers in business and management studies, with a majority in their mid forties to mid fifties (DES, 1990), means that few will have graduated in Business Studies as a first discipline. Business Studies is not a cohesive, intellectual community with tightly defined external boundaries. Staff teaching Business Studies in higher education are drawn from divergent disciplinary backgrounds. Economists, psychologists, sociologists, lawyers, accountants and others are brought together under the umbrella of Business Studies. In many universities, degrees in Business Studies are serviced by a number of separate departments or faculties. Healey (1993), in focusing on the role of economists servicing business degrees, argues that economics is presently taught to business students as a highly academic and abstract study with little relationship to the strategic needs of business. He contrasts the teaching of economics with the more applied approach of accountants who go straight to a set of company accounts rather than teach the minutiae of double-entry book-keeping. Therefore, it seems likely that subject cultures which lecturers may subscribe to within the context of teaching a Business Studies degree will inform different approaches to the purpose of such a programme. Economists, for example, may perceive a Business Studies as having a different purpose than an accountant. Both the economists and the accountants are bringing their normative modes or values into the operational arena. Thus, lecturers in Business Studies are members of a number of disparate, disciplinary 'tribes' which serves as an important reference point for the normative mode and creates a tension with the operational mode.

Conducting research is an important aspect both of 'tribal' identity and job fulfilment. It has been noted that despite the impression that a Business Studies degree is vocationally oriented at the operational or course level, Barry (1989) and Murphy

(1992) underline that teachers of business are still principally drawn from an academic tradition emphasising research and publication as normal entry criteria. A recent insight into the diversity of purpose of degree programmes within departments of business and management is provided by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 1995). This overview report is based on the Council's quality assessments covering business and management as taught in 104 higher education institutions. Although not specific to the Business Studies first degree, the report reveals that there is no clear agreement as to the purpose of business and management studies. While some programmes of study emphasise vocational aims other do not.

There is diversity in the range of educational aims and the emphasis placed on them. Just over half the expressed aims emphasise vocational relevance, the needs of industry, capability and responsiveness to changing needs.

HEFCE (1995) p.4

The report goes on to note differing approaches to the development of business skills. Some departments define business skills in terms of "*practical, interdisciplinary problem-solving*" (HEFCE, 1995, p4) while others emphasise research and analytical skills. Both approaches might be justified as directed toward the needs of business although there is a clear split between a purely vocational and a more 'academic' philosophy within business and management studies. The latter is less likely to favour a business education purely geared towards the perceived or expressed needs of the business community.

Although encouragement of a research ethos was one of the abiding concerns of the CNAA Business and Management committee during the 1980s, it has become an even more pressing concern for higher education institutions in the 1990s. The marginal funding implications of the HEFCE Research Assessment Exercise have increased the pressure on lecturers to retreat into traditional subject cultures by pursuing academic research and publication. Integrated approaches to teaching and research are less likely to be rewarded by an assessment system which pigeon-holes the output of academics in subject categories. Moreover, the re-organisation of teaching on modular lines in

many institutions is likely to deepen this trend as subject specialists are further removed from involvement as lecturers to Business Studies students *per se*. The 'course' has traditionally provided students and lecturers with a basis for self-identification. In the absence of the course experience lecturers (and students) are likely to become more isolated within distinct academic sub-cultures.

The impact of tribal allegiances and the associated demands for research in a recognised disciplinary area suggests that there may be real conflict between the normative mode of individual lecturers and the operational mode of a Business Studies degree. It might be argued, however, that the institutional setting of the Business Studies degree provides a countervailing force. The major part of the development and provision of business and management at first degree level has taken place outside the 'old' university sector within the former polytechnics and colleges of higher education (DES, 1990). The former polytechnic sector was associated with a unique tradition in higher education which emphasised an alternative, vocational purpose.

The assertion of the public ethic, of meeting the needs of society through more economically and socially relevant studies, came to be regarded as a particular function of the polytechnics.

Becher & Kogan (1992) p.32

Despite the growth of undergraduate Business Studies in the old universities, four times as many students were taking first degrees in Business and Financial Studies at polytechnics and colleges in 1991/92 (Department for Education, 1993). This means that Business Studies has evolved out of a polytechnic and college-based institutional setting where many HND programmes in Business and Finance were established well in advance of degrees in Business Studies. Given this key difference, between the old and new universities, it is possible that the clearer vocational business philosophy which predominates within HND programmes may have exercised more influence within degree programmes in the former polytechnics and colleges. If the former polytechnic sector genuinely represents a separate tradition in higher education there may be grounds to argue that the normative values of lecturers will not clash with the

operational mode.

Burgess (1977) suggests that there are two separate traditions in post-school education. The autonomous tradition is "*aloof, exclusive, conservative and academic*" (Burgess, 1977, p 27) while, by contrast, the service tradition is "*responsive, open, innovating and vocational*" (p 27). According to Burgess (1977) the service tradition is principally associated with further education, not higher education, where innovations such as the development of locally relevant courses with national validity and the 'sandwich' degree were originally conceived. The substantial development of business and management in further education and polytechnics concerned with service tradition innovations (eg sandwich degrees) suggests that lecturers teaching at such institutions should be comfortable with vocational aims.

Yet, there are strong arguments to suggest that the service values which were seen as the *raison d'être* of the former polytechnics when they were conceived have subsequently been largely disowned. For more than twenty years it has been argued that polytechnics have steadily moved towards the modes and aspirations of the older universities, a process called 'academic drift' (Pratt & Burgess, 1974). As a result, through the erosion of the service tradition and the pursuit of the autonomous tradition (Burgess, 1977), the differences in 'tradition' between the former polytechnics and the older universities may be more superficial than real. Scott (1995), for example, suggests that the former 'binary' divide in UK higher education was largely administrative rather than ideological. In terms of considering the attitude of the academic community to the aim of a Business Studies degree, this would suggest that the institutional development of Business Studies in the former polytechnics has not prevented the potential discord between lecturer values and programme aims. Despite the original association of service values with the polytechnic sector, there is little evidence to suggest that lecturers in Business Studies, who largely teach in these institutions, share this philosophy of higher education.

A study *for* business or *about* business ?

It is not clear whether the underlying concern of staff and students in these courses (ie Business Studies degrees) is a study of business or a study for business.

Tolley (1983) p.5

The preceding discussion has focused on the role played by a range of factors in shaping the aims of a Business Studies degree. It provides a somewhat confusing picture of a degree designed initially by the public world of higher education for largely extrinsic reasons which may have been subject to re-interpretation by the academic community to embrace intrinsic aims. However, aims in Business Studies appear to have been janus-faced from a very early stage in its development. This is illustrated by the 'objectives' for a Business Studies degree laid down by the CNAABusiness Studies Board in 1970 (Lane, 1975). These state :

1. The provision of a fundamental study of economics, quantitative methods and sociology which ensures a sound academic education at degree level. An introduction to law and accounting is also required;
2. The development of these subjects so as to be understood as individual disciplines and as applied in industry and commerce;
3. The cultivation of critical faculties; seeking opportunities for innovation through the available organisational channels; and
4. The creation of consciousness of the changing and developing industrial scene

Lane (1970) p.59

The overarching aim of a Business Studies degree is by no means clear from this definition. Instead, it highlights both extrinsic (objective 2) and intrinsic (objectives 1 and 3) purposes within Business Studies. The difficulty in establishing a singular aim for Business Studies has led Tolley (1983) and others to question whether Business Studies is a study 'about' (or of) business or a study 'for' business. In other words,

to what extent is the curriculum concerned with reflecting on the nature of business activity or preparing students with the skills and knowledge needed to participate in some form of business activity ? A study 'about' (or of) business centres on business as a sociological phenomenon. The relationship between business organisations and society would be likely to play a significant role in a curriculum designed as a study about business. However, a study 'for' business is a more specific preparation of students for business careers; a clear extrinsic aim. The operation of business and the means of 'doing' business would be central to this curriculum equipping students with the practical skills required. As the original chairman of the CNAA Committee for Business and Management Studies, Tolley was responsible for overseeing the national validation and development of the Business Studies degree. His concern with the ambiguity associated with the aim of a Business Studies degree and the dichotomy he identifies is influential.

Other writers within the business education field including Brown and Harrison (1980), Boys (1988) and Silver and Brennan (1988) have made a similar identification of the distinction remarked upon by Tolley. Boys (1988), in an examination of business degrees at six institutions, concludes that almost all courses shared a vocational rationale. However, Boys notes that this did not exclude more "*liberal*" objectives such as "*developing the mind*" (p 120) finding the strongest opposition to an education 'for' business within the university sector. Silver and Brennan (1988) also comment that course philosophies of Business Studies degrees favour an education 'for' business. However, although Silver and Brennan go on to hint that the educational reality of such courses may be somewhat different they do not expand on the pressures which, in their opinion, determine the real nature of the Business Studies curriculum. According to Brown and Harrison (1980) the dichotomy between programmes 'about' business and programmes 'for' business' represents a central debate regarding 'vocationalism'. They comment that demands for greater accountability to a consumer society has shifted the legitimation of business education towards a 'for' business extreme. Thus, Silver and Brennan, Boys and Brown and Harrison all suggest that an education 'for' business is, at least in theory, the dominant aim of Business Studies.

Writers concerned principally with management education have also addressed this debate. Grey and French (1996) make a distinction concerning the aim of a management education which corresponds to the debate concerning a Business Studies education. They draw a distinction between understanding management as a social, political and moral practice which they label a 'critical' perspective, as opposed to teaching students a set of techniques and skills which will be subsequently applied in the workplace, referred to as a 'managerialist' perspective. Grey and French (1996) argue that this latter, 'managerialist' perspective dominates much of management education in common with Roberts (1996) and Fox (1994). The debate regarding the purpose of a business education may be linked to general perspectives on the aims of education which further highlight this central tension. White (1982) considers that a defining conflict exists between economic (extrinsic) and educational (intrinsic) aims. Business Studies appears to embrace this contradiction by containing strong elements of each tradition. The 1970 statement of the CNAAB Business Studies Board indicates this dual purpose. The distinction between a study 'about' business and a study 'for' business therefore provides a defining framework for researching the aims of Business Studies degrees.

Conclusion

The purpose of the Business Studies curriculum has been influenced by a range of factors. As a result, it cannot be characterised in clear and unambiguous terms. The degree emerged at a time when UK higher education was being re-defined by the Robbins report (1963). The balance of objectives favoured in the Crick Report is a reflection of Robbins vision for higher education. However, the Crick Report is now over thirty years old and cannot be regarded as a reliable, contemporary guide to the aims of Business Studies degrees. The question of aims, though, is far from resolved. The 1994 HEFCE report on business and management makes it plain that departments approach the purpose of the business curriculum from very different perspectives. Some of the external pressures which have hitherto influenced the aim of Business Studies are no longer present. The polytechnics, who pioneered the Business Studies degree, have now converted into new universities with a fresh set of priorities while

the demise of the CNAA has left academic staff with a freer role as curriculum planners. To discover what shapes the purpose of a Business Studies degree a more detailed analysis is required of the priorities of academic staff who have been left to generate such programmes largely without recourse to external restraints.

CHAPTER 4

Knowledge in Business Studies

Introduction

In examining the Business Studies curriculum it is important to consider the nature, production and organisation of its knowledge. The role of so-called 'hard' and 'soft' knowledge will be discussed as a short hand means of labelling knowledge widely understood within the academic community. However, problems with labelling knowledge in Business Studies on the basis of this dichotomy will then be identified. The work of Corder (1990) will be used to provide a more satisfactory means of understanding the *nature of knowledge* in Business Studies. The assumption, outlined in the previous chapter, that Business Studies is aimed at vocational ends also has important implications for the nature of knowledge. If the assumption of vocationalism is correct, it is probable that a hard, technical approach to knowledge predominates in order to legitimise the practice of business and management (Anthony, 1986).

Another key issue concerns the *production of knowledge*. How is knowledge in Business Studies generated ? It is often assumed that this occurs by reference to the context in which such knowledge is applied (ie the business world) rather than being generated on the basis of a disciplinary, cognitive framework. However, it will be argued that the "*context of application*" (Gibbons et al, 1994) has had a limited role to play in the production of knowledge in Business Studies within higher education. Drawing on the work of Becher (1989) it will be argued that economists, acting as a convergent, tightly knit academic community resistant to the "*context of application*" have retained a key role as guardians of the Business Studies curriculum. This means that a disciplinary, cognitive framework has retained in practice a significant role in the production of knowledge in Business Studies.

Finally, this chapter will consider the *organisation of knowledge* in Business Studies.

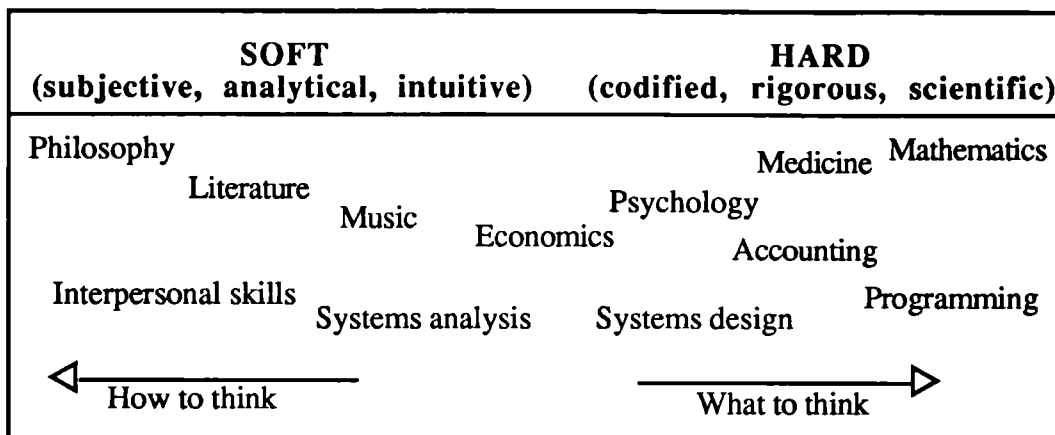
How, in other words, is knowledge presented to students in the form of a curriculum ? The production of knowledge has had important implications for the organisation of knowledge as a curriculum. If knowledge in Business Studies had been primarily generated on the basis of the context of application it would be reasonable to expect a problem-based curriculum which cannot be easily reduced to disciplinary parts. It appears more likely though that Business Studies is largely presented as a multi-disciplinary curriculum because knowledge in Business Studies stems primarily from a disciplinary, cognitive framework.

The nature of knowledge

One of the most widely understood dichotomies concerning knowledge is the broad division between the 'arts' and the 'sciences' (Squires, 1990). This key distinction, between the 'scientific' and the 'artistic', is a commonly accepted division between academic fields of knowledge (Kolb, 1981). However, although this division is frequently cited it is less easy to define the characteristics of 'science' or the 'arts' in precise terms. Kolb, in seeking to map disciplinary differences based his research on the alternative learning styles of students. He clustered the natural sciences and mathematics together as an 'abstract' learning style while referring to the humanities and social sciences as 'concrete'. An 'abstract' learning style is concerned with conceptualisation while a 'concrete' style focuses on immediate experience. A broadly similar division is made by Biglan (1973) but on the basis of disciplinary differences deriving from scholars in different subject areas. Biglan, drawing on the work of Kuhn, distinguishes between paradigmatic and nonparadigmatic fields. He argues that the physical sciences are characterised by a conceptual framework within which scientific theories can be constructed. This is referred to as 'hard' knowledge. By contrast, the social sciences and non-science areas do not have have such clearly identifiable paradigms and content and method in these areas tends to be "*idiosyncratic*" (Biglan, 1973, p 203). This latter area is labelled 'soft' knowledge. Biglan sites the humanities and education at the extreme end of soft knowledge. The social sciences and business are also categorised as soft but in a less extreme position and striving although yet to achieve a paradigm.

Others have taken up Biglan's dichotomy. Becher (1989) adopts the distinction between hard and soft knowledge in his study into the academic 'tribes' who represent subject traditions within higher education. Corder (1990) also employs the hard-soft dichotomy but sets out a continuum within which he sites different subjects (Figure 2).

Figure 2 : Corder's hard/soft continuum



Corder goes on to define the characteristics which underpin this continuum. According to Corder, the hardness or softness of a subject depends on three key factors. Firstly, hard subjects involve in-depth technical knowledge with universal rules of application. In other words, the acid test of hard knowledge is whether a subject can be taught identically the world over. Corder calls this *subject-dependency*. Secondly, if it is necessary to take account of the environment within which knowledge must operate, then rules will not be universal. Corder gives the example of finding the 'right' design for a production control system which must first take account of differences in national cultures, management styles and a range of other factors. This *environment-dependency* makes knowledge softer because rules have to be adjusted to take account of environmental factors. Finally, Corder identifies *person-dependency* where innate ability, such as an ear for music or 'a way with people', plays a significant role in mastering a subject.

There are, though, a number of problems associated with categorising subjects of study as either hard, soft or somewhere in-between the two. Economics, for example, may be approached as a form of applied mathematics or with considerably more emphasis on 'softer', normative policy issues. Similar difficulties are apparent in other subject areas. Corder assumes a medical science approach to medicine by placing it toward the hard end of his continuum. This contrasts with humanist approaches (Seedhouse, 1986) to medicine which place greater emphasis on holistic strategies such as complementary medicine. The medical science approach is also representative of a Western view of Medicine making Corder's analysis clearly culturally bounded.

Despite these problems, the distinction between hard/science-based knowledge and soft/humanities-based knowledge is a well-established one. There are substantial parallels to be drawn between the work of Kolb, Biglan, Becher and Corder all of whom identify similar frameworks for categorising knowledge. The notions of hard and soft knowledge have also provided a means for analysing the Business Studies curriculum. According to Mulligan (1987), the balance between science-based and humanities-based knowledge is a long running debate within Business Studies. Mulligan characterises differences between the scientific and the humanities traditions in terms of alternative approaches to obtaining and validating knowledge. He argues that science uses empirical and mathematical methods for increasing knowledge while the humanities adopt a more sceptical attitude toward the systematic collection of data. In seeking to advance human knowledge the humanities draws on the traditions of literature, art and speculative philosophy. Mulligan is not alone in discussing the balance between the humanities and science within business education. According to Watson (1993), the humanities encourage opportunities for debate, articulate exposition and independence of thought. Watson argues that the combination of *"technological subjects, married to the educational disciplines of the humanities"* (Watson, 1993, p 25) should be the *"dual goal"* of a business education.

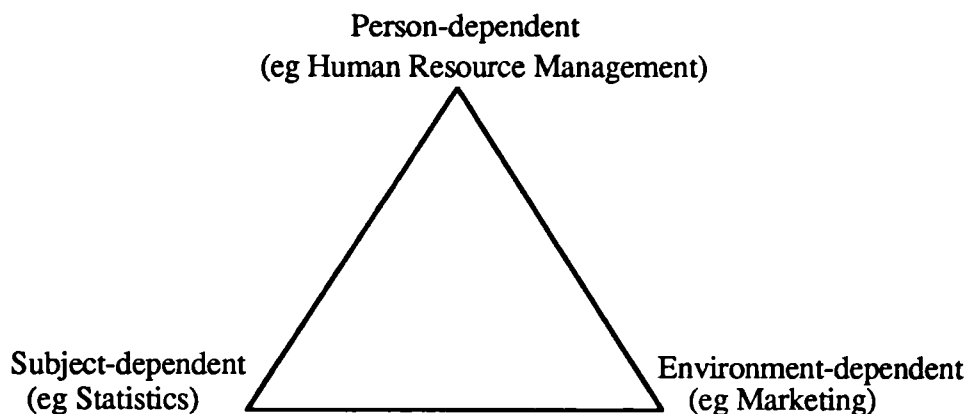
However, characterising the Business Studies curriculum in terms of the nature of its knowledge is a less than clear task. On the strength of Biglan or Corder's work, business education cannot be labelled as either science-based/hard or humanities-

based/soft. Indeed, classifying the curriculum of most professional fields is a difficult task. Stoecker (1993) uses Biglan's conceptual framework in an attempt to map eight previously unclassified 'professional disciplines' including business. Stoecker (1993) is successful in placing just two (nursing and dentistry) of the eight 'professional disciplines' subjected to analysis. Business is classified by Stoecker (1993) in the soft categories with the largest single group appearing in the soft-applied domain. The difficulties encountered by Stoecker (1993) are, perhaps, unsurprising, given that the study of business is not drawn from a singular subject tradition. The eclectic nature of business education embracing subjects as diverse as mathematics and ethics makes pigeon-holing inappropriate. Conceptually, Corder's continuum therefore offers a more appropriate means of considering knowledge in Business Studies than a crude dichotomy based on hard and soft knowledge. Corder places a number of subjects within this continuum including economics and accounting, two disciplines traditionally prominent within the context of a Business Studies degree. He argues that economics should be placed in the middle of the continuum because although the subject is based on 'hard' rules (such as the laws of demand and supply) in other areas there is considerable disagreement between economists on policy issues. In other words, because economics is *environment-dependent* it cannot be considered an entirely hard subject. By contrast, he places accounting toward the hard end of his continuum, a subject, perhaps, with more universal rules although still exposed to environmental factors.

Subjects contributing to the Business Studies curriculum span the hard-soft continuum. Some, such as statistics, are almost entirely subject-dependent while others, such as human resource management, may call for person-dependent skills. Most of Business Studies, however, appears to be environment-dependent to a greater or lesser extent. The theoretical principles of marketing, for example, need to be considered in the context of a range of environmental factors such as national cultures and legal frameworks. Knowledge in law is heavily dependent on its environmental context with systems varying across national boundaries. However, subjects which are more person-dependent, such as human resource management, are also environment and subject-dependent. Similarly, a subject such as accountancy is both

environment and subject-dependent. Only a very few 'hard' subjects, like statistics, are purely subject-dependent with universal rules of application. Thus, rather than a continuum, it may be more helpful to think of knowledge in Business Studies in terms of Corder's three dimensions. This is represented in figure 3.

Figure 3 : Three dimensions of knowledge in Business Studies



The balance between hard and soft knowledge within Business Studies appears to be both a natural tendency and a largely implicit intention of the original curriculum planners at national level. The Crick report, though, contained implicit and explicit reference to the balance between science and the humanities within Business Studies. This original template for the degree identified sociology, economics and mathematics as the essential disciplines for Business Studies. On examination this template appears to offer a balance between the 'two cultures'. As a study which tends to eschew a numeric and rationalist approach to knowledge, sociology may be broadly regarded as a humanities-based discipline in terms of Mulligan's analysis or a soft subject in Corder's terms. Sociology might be alternately defined as a social science but even within Kolb's framework would not be defined as a science-based subject. Mathematics as a numeric study falls squarely within the scientific or hard knowledge tradition able to generate universal laws. However, although the Business Studies degree has been influenced by sociology and mathematics, the modern curriculum

does not contain these disciplines in their 'pure' form. Instead, aspects of sociology and mathematics may also be found within a range of subjects such as marketing, accounting, statistics and human resource management which contribute to the contemporary degree.

Siting economics, the third of Crick's basic disciplines, in terms of the dichotomy between science and the humanities is more problematic. As Corder suggested, economics appears to rest in the middle of the hard-soft continuum although Biglan (1973) places economics on the soft or humanities side in his analysis. Other studies suggest economics is principally a hard or science-based subject. Kolb's (1981) study of learning styles sites economics as an 'abstract' discipline, where mathematics was regarded as very important by graduate students, while sociology was found to be a 'concrete' discipline where the humanities were defined by respondents as very important. An econometrics approach to economics, focusing on the scientific analysis of markets through mathematical models, would produce an economics course with a dominant hard culture. This means, in effect, that many subjects can be either 'hard' or 'soft' depending on the emphasis placed on different elements of knowledge.

The Crick report specified that economics should include economic history and the study of current economic and industrial structures together with the scientific theory of the firm. The report thus contains a coded call for balance between the humanistic and scientific traditions within economics. This indicates that caution is needed in attempting to classify subjects contributing to the Business Studies degree as either hard or soft. Therefore, the Crick report endorsed an accommodation of both cultures within the Business Studies degree. The report specifically addressed the need for balance between the two cultures arguing that the humanities are essential especially for 'higher' levels.

In our present context "business" embraces buying and selling at all stages and the holding, handling and distribution of goods, the service trades and many ancillary activities such as banking, insurance and investment. In modern societies the performance of these functions calls for a complex structure of

interlocking administrative, financial, commercial and advisory services, some of them on a professional basis. The activities involved tend to require a larger element of judgement, “feel” and risk-bearing, and to call for wider practice of the arts of communication, than is necessitated in corresponding ranks of technological employment. Hence, “business studies”, at least at the higher levels, should have proportionately less of a technical content and more of what is drawn ultimately from the humanities.

Department of Education and Science (1964) p.3

It seems probable that Crick was referring to the study of management theory and practice as the principal focus of Business Studies at its ‘higher levels’. Management theory is also illustrative of the debate between hard and soft knowledge in Business Studies. Management thinking can be divided into a number of ‘idea families’ (Huczynski, 1993). One of these is scientific management, which focuses on techniques to maximise productivity and is based largely on laws, rules and principles with claims to universal application. During the 1930s and 1940s, scientific management was applied throughout the world without regard for the environment-dependency or person-dependency of management practice. Hence, scientific management is an example of management as a ‘hard’ subject. However, other ‘idea families’ in management theory such as human relations management are based on a different set of assumptions emphasising the importance of people and motivation rather than mechanics. Human relations theory is more environment and person-dependent and, thus, approaches management more in terms of ‘soft’ knowledge. Although scientific management has fallen out of fashion in recent years, management as an academic subject continues to contain a range of approaches to knowledge spanning the hard/soft or science/humanities divide.

Therefore, although knowledge is often labelled in terms of ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ it is, in some respects, an unsatisfactory dichotomy and caution needs to be exercised in its use. The hardness or softness of a subject depends on shifting fashions within subject areas (such as economics or management) and the selection from the pool of knowledge which has taken place together, perhaps crucially, via the pedagogy of the

lecturer. Furthermore, the notion of hard or soft knowledge, both as a distinction and a point of discussion, has greater resonance within certain subject areas than in others. It is less straight forward, for example, to apply the distinction to the study of languages or law than to economics or mathematics. It is more instructive to think of law as both subject and environment dependent while languages, given the intricacies of pronunciation, are additionally person dependent. Thus, thinking of knowledge in terms of often overlapping dependencies (after Corder, 1990) provides an alternative, and in many ways, a more satisfactory means of understanding the variety of subjects which fall under the umbrella of Business Studies.

Although an implicit balance between hard and soft knowledge may appear to exist within the Business Studies degree the assumption that the Business Studies curriculum is essentially driven by vocational ends has important implications for this balance. The perception that business and management education is directed specifically at preparing students for the workplace has led both Anthony (1986) and Roberts (1996) to claim that a technical, hard approach to knowledge dominates justified by considerations of application. Technical knowledge is the basis upon which business and management practitioners may legitimise their exercise of power and control. It is argued that debates, tensions, conflicts and uncertainties are glossed over within business education and, instead an emphasis is placed on the objectification of knowledge or teaching knowledge as 'facts' (Roberts, 1996). Roberts (1996) contends that business and management education only tends to draw on the more positivist streams within contributing subjects such as economics, sociology and psychology. A similar critique may also be drawn from the work of McIntyre (1981), Kallinikos (1996) and Gammie (1995). This means that only 'hard' knowledge, which can be codified and tested, is accepted as a legitimate part of a business education. This outlaws a critical attitude towards the epistemological status of business and management knowledge. 'Soft' knowledge, which cannot be reduced to techniques for application, is hence rejected.

The production of knowledge

Gibbons et al (1994) argue that a transformation is taking place in the way knowledge is produced. They distinguish between mode 1 or “*traditional*” knowledge, generated within a disciplinary, cognitive context, and mode 2 knowledge, which is produced within a broader social and economic context. According to the authors, a shift of emphasis from mode 1 to mode 2 knowledge is taking place. This new mode of knowledge production occurs in the “*context of application*” and is characterised by transdisciplinarity, heterogeneity and reflexivity. It cannot be easily reduced to disciplinary parts and it is “*generated and sustained in the context of application and not developed first and then applied to that context later*” (Gibbons et al, 1994, p 5). Mode 2 knowledge is, therefore, difficult to label in terms of mode 1 categories of knowledge.

Business Studies might be identified as a classic example of Mode 2 knowledge production but this assumes its *raison d'être* is to serve the context of application. It is received wisdom among influential commentators on higher education that knowledge in Business Studies, and other ostensibly ‘vocational’ subjects, reflects the concerns of employers and other external interests to a much greater extent than other ‘traditional’ degree subjects. Expressed in the terms used by Gibbons (1994), Business Studies is a reflection of mode 2 knowledge production. Scott (1995), for example, states that in new subjects, such as business, teachers pay more regard to the views of ‘active practitioners’ (ie employers) and students as ‘customers’ in designing an appropriate curriculum. It is assumed that the production of knowledge in Business Studies is determined by its (presumed) context of application (ie the business world). Scott (1995) contends that many new subjects, most notably business, gain their terms of reference from “*vocational relevance rather than academic coherence*” (p 34). Furthermore, new influences on curriculum design throughout higher education are sometimes assumed to have had a greater impact within ‘vocational’ areas. According to Bocock (1994), higher education is experiencing a movement away from subject-based knowledge to competences or learning outcomes championed by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) and the Enterprise in Higher Education

Initiative (EHEI). However, Bocock (1994) goes on to assert that there is an increasing awareness of NVQ's *"particularly for those areas of the university curriculum which are vocationally orientated"* (p 121). Therefore, it is taken for granted that areas of the higher education curriculum such as Business Studies are more responsive to economic and social pressures to make knowledge 'useful'.

However, there is limited evidence to support the assumption that Business Studies, or other ostensibly vocational subjects, are at the 'cutting edge' of the new production knowledge. Even in more ostensibly specific vocational areas the context of application appears to play a secondly role in knowledge production. In tourism education, for example, geographical knowledge remains at the core of the subject. In further and higher education tourism focuses on the 'meaning and nature of tourism' rather than the needs of the tourism industry (Busby, 1994). Lane (1975), in his study of the CNAAs, states that *"vocational courses have been called into being by a professional need, rather than having developed out of the inner structure of a subject"* (p60). Business Studies, though, emerged neither from a specific professional need nor out of the inner structure of a single subject. It has also been noted that Brennan's (1985) typology of *"vocational intent"* indicates that Business Studies only has a *"diffuse"* rather than *"specific"* relationship to employment. Business Studies is not directly relevant to a singular professional context but to a multiplicity of different careers.

Moreover, certain subjects within the Business Studies curriculum are more closely allied to mode 1 knowledge production. Economics and sociological aspects of the curriculum such as organisational behaviour do not match any specific business function and were developed out of a disciplinary, cognitive context rather than in the context of application. Other areas in Business Studies, such as marketing or human resource management, are more closely related to the context of application because these correspond to business functions. Hence, Business Studies cannot be conveniently labelled as mode 2 knowledge given that the context of application has appeared to play only a limited role in determining much of the curriculum.

Many degrees in Business Studies have been developed by university departments of economics committed to traditional, cognitive knowledge. The discipline of economics has played a significant role in the evolution of business and management education and the design and development of Business Studies degrees in particular. Twenty years before the establishment of the Business Studies degree, the McNair Report (1944) had contended that economics should be afforded primacy on business-related courses. Economists, therefore, played a central role in establishing Business Studies degrees during the 1960s and 1970s as the academic department in most institutions which had historically acquired most experience in studying business. Even in the 1990s economics has maintained a mainstream role within the Business Studies degree despite its unpopularity with students and its remoteness from direct business application (Healey, 1993).

The continuing importance of economics within the Business Studies cannot be assigned to responsiveness to the context of application. The main justification for retaining economics within the curriculum is as the senior business discipline which theoretically underpins functional areas such as management accounting or marketing (Healey, 1993). However, this argument might equally be applied to sociology and mathematics, the other founding disciplines selected by Crick. Yet, of the three principal disciplines in the Crick formula only economics has clung on to its place within the modern curriculum. Sociology has been almost wholly replaced within the curriculum by human resource management and organisational behaviour prompted, according to Brown and Harrison (1980), by the "*demand for relevance*" (p 57). These subjects evolved out of sociology and social psychology and are more closely directly related to the context of application. Mathematics has similarly withered to be replaced by an incorporation of statistical methods required for business use. Thus, while sociology and mathematics have given way to more applied re-contextualisations of their knowledge base, economics has retained a position within Business Studies as a distinct discipline.

Therefore, the survival of economics within Business Studies has clearly little relationship with the context of application. Instead, an alternative perspective sheds

light on the continuing influence of economics. Becher (1989) has shown the importance of the relationship between knowledge forms and knowledge communities. Academic 'tribes' guard and perpetuate intellectual 'territories'. Becher identifies economics as a convergent and tightly knit disciplinary community in terms of fundamental ideologies, common values and an awareness of belonging to a unique tradition. The convergent and tightly knit nature of economists as an academic community has helped them to maintain control of their discipline as the Business Studies degree has developed and, to a large extent, re-shaped itself over the last thirty years. Healey argues that economics remains within the business curriculum as a result of 'producer-power' (ie academic interests) rather than consumer need (ie student and employer choice). According to Healey, the rate with which economics is being diluted in the face of unpopularity is being inhibited by "*rent-seeking*" behaviour on the part of economists.

Given the evident unpopularity of economics (with students), it is perhaps surprising that it continues to play any role in mainstream business and management education at all....It is hard to avoid the conclusion that, despite what they teach their students about being flexible and responsive to customer needs, business schools in Britain continue in the traditional 'product-push' mould borne of universities' once unchallenged producer power. 'We know what is good for our students'

Healey (1993) pp.34-35

According to Lee (1981), economics occupies a very different role within the Business Studies degree than that envisaged by Crick which had recommended the inclusion of recent economic history and economic and industrial structures. The exclusion of these elements appears to be closely related to the domination of the 'positive' economics paradigm. This restricts legitimate study within economics to empirical observation (Healey, 1988; Lee, 1975) and, thus, would exclude 'normative' issues such as those relating to economic history. Becher (1989) comments that tightly knit disciplinary communities are intolerant of dissent and "*within economics, those that question the basic axioms of the subject are regarded*

as deranged if not positively dangerous” (p37). While, taken as a whole, Business Studies may be essentially a divergent and loosely knit community, economics remains a tightly knit sub-culture within business studies education which promotes the interests of mode 1 knowledge.

The example of economics serves to illustrate that it is unsafe to assume that the production of knowledge in Business Studies is largely determined by external, market forces. While, as Middlehurst and Barnett (1994) identify, the UK higher education *system* may have shifted from state control to a greater emphasis on market direction, it is less obvious that the Business Studies curriculum is being uniquely shaped or re-shaped by similar market pressures. Business Studies is essentially a re-contextualisation of existing forms of knowledge. Some of this knowledge though, as in the case of economics, has not been re-focused to reflect a context of application. Rather elements of both mode 1 and mode 2 knowledge exist side-by-side within the Business Studies degree.

The organisation of knowledge

It has been stated that Business Studies draws heavily on existing forms of knowledge. A ‘Business Studies’ education, is therefore, a synthesis of mode 1 and mode 2 knowledge. This compromise is evident in the construction of the modern Business Studies degree. The foundation or first year of the Business Studies degree retains an emphasis on business ‘disciplines’ such as law, economics, and accounting. Mode 1 knowledge predominates. The context in which knowledge is applied becomes more significant in the latter years of the Business Studies degree with greater focus on functional areas of business practice such as marketing, human resource management or corporate strategy.

It has been established, by reference to both writers and researchers on epistemology in higher education, that although the hard-soft division is not altogether conceptually satisfactory it is a distinction widely discussed and understood. Furthermore, the Business Studies curriculum is identifiable in terms of hard and soft knowledge.

Moreover, this distinction has important implications for the organisation of knowledge. A preoccupation with maintaining a 'balance' between the humanities and the sciences (Watson, 1993) helps to reinforce a subject-based (or multi-disciplinary) curriculum with clear boundaries maintained between hard and soft knowledge. It has been illustrated that Crick's founding framework draws heavily on this compartmentalisation. The more closely Business Studies is identified with an implicit balance between hard and soft knowledge the more likely it is that a subject-based framework will be preserved; a collection of separate 'subjects' rather than an integrated or problem-based study. In terms of Bernstein's (1971) concept of classification, the Business Studies curriculum is quite highly classified. There is a high degree of boundary maintenance between subjects. The components, such as law and economics, were established by Crick as separate subjects in Business Studies and have remained largely insulated from one another. Business Studies is thus a collection type rather than integrated curriculum the latter of which would demand the subordination of subjects to the relational idea of 'business'. According to Stenhouse (1975), integration may well depend on the capacity of teachers to hold on to an open attitude to knowledge. By contrast a collection code, as in Business Studies, holds the hierarchy in place.

There are many barriers associated with integrating a curriculum as indicated by both Bernstein (1971) and Stenhouse (1975). Oldham (1978) identifies four problems connected with establishing an interdisciplinary (or problem-based) approach to Business Studies. The negative attitude of lecturers strongly committed to their own discipline and suspicious, or threatened by, an interdisciplinary course, a lack of suitable text books, and keeping up-to-date in a broad area are three of the problems noted. The fourth problem is a lack of student knowledge to integrate, especially in the first year of a degree programme. While this final problem might have been an understandable barrier in the 1970s the explosion of business education in schools and colleges of further education since this time means that students entering a Business Studies programme are now far more likely to have a relevant GCSE, A Level or BTEC qualification. By 1991/92 Business Studies had become the dominant form of business education in schools with a 75 per cent increase in national entries to GCSE

Business Studies since 1989 (Williams & Yeomans, 1994). However, despite the growth of Business Studies in schools and colleges the multi-disciplinary first degree framework has remained largely unchanged. Integrative or inter-disciplinary approaches are normally confined to the final year of Business Studies degrees and represented in terms of business policy/corporate strategy courses and work experience. However, the traditional claim that work placements act as an integrating experience has itself been the subject of doubt and debate over the last twenty years (Preece & Flood, 1974; Kitson, 1993). According to Bernstein (1971) revealing "*the ultimate mystery of the subject*" (p 240) at this very late stage is symptomatic of a hierarchical organisation of knowledge preserved by a collection code.

A significant mismatch also appears to exist between school-based business education and Business Studies within higher education. The organisation of Business Studies knowledge in schools and colleges of further education is largely interdisciplinary with programmes also strongly emphasising problem-solving, transferable skills and teamworking (Williams & Yeomans, 1994). According to Williams and Yeoman (1994) the emerging Business Studies curriculum in schools represents "*an unusually coherent operationalisation of the new vocationalism*" (p 230). This mode of organisation of knowledge in schools contrasts with the subject-based organisation of Business Studies in higher education. In Bernstein's (1971) terms school-based Business Studies is probably closer to an integrated type of curricula. This suggests that the organisation of knowledge at degree level may still, to some extent, be determined in the 'secret garden' of the academy. While weak boundaries between knowledge areas make for its efficient use (Middlehurst and Barnett, 1994) strong boundaries help to preserve academic territories which are a key source of power, status and authority in higher education. Hence, the preservation of a largely subject-based first degree Business Studies curriculum may be, to some extent, the product of these 'tribal' tendencies (Becher, 1989).

Conclusion

The use of terms such as hard/soft or science/humanities as a short-hand means of

labelling knowledge has become a dominant mode of thought and expression. The place of a discipline within this framework is also indicative of its status. According to Becher (1989) hard knowledge areas enjoy a higher status both within and outside the academic world. Limited hard knowledge within Business Studies is one factor contributing to a low academic status. The amorphous nature of knowledge in Business Studies makes it difficult to identify in terms of a convergent or closely knit disciplinary tradition. Becher (1989) argues that divergent disciplinary communities are without a key basis for self-identification and frequently fail to gain the intellectual respect of peers. O'Hear has argued that Business and Management is an illegitimate addition to higher education and *"live(s) off the fruits from other trees of knowledge"* (O'Hear, 1988, p. 14). Thus, as a collection of disciplinary traditions spanning the hard/soft continuum, Business Studies lacks both identity and status. As a result, its position as a body of knowledge is uncertain and ambiguous. However, within this divergent community economics acts as an influential and highly convergent 'tribe'.

Applying Corder's (1990) framework, most subjects within the Business Studies curriculum are, at least partly, environment-dependent. This represents a mid-point, or combination, of hard and soft knowledge. Corder's continuum is a useful conceptual tool but the cruder hard-soft dichotomy is more widely understood as a short-hand means of categorising knowledge across higher education. Therefore, it is appropriate to use the science-based/humanities-based (hard-soft) division as a research tool for defining knowledge in Business Studies whilst recognising that the polarisation it implies may not be as conceptually accurate as Corder's continuum. The science-based/humanities-based division is a helpful point of departure which will be examined as a dimension which helps to determine the attitudes of lecturers towards the Business Studies curriculum.

Finally, it is important not to assume that the production of knowledge in Business Studies is primarily the result of the context of application. To assert that knowledge in Business Studies is purely determined by vocational relevance ignores the fact that many lecturers have been trained in a cognitive, mode 1 discipline. While the Business Studies degree contains areas which may be primarily determined by the context of

application others are more clearly linked to mode 1 knowledge. Thus, it will be important to investigate the extent to which the context of application is helping to reshape the Business Studies curriculum or whether assumptions in this respect are exaggerated.

CHAPTER 5

A Framework for Analysis

Introduction

The two preceding chapters of this thesis, 4 and 5 respectively, discussed perceptions of aims and knowledge in Business Studies. This chapter will draw on the conclusions of these chapters in summarising the characterisation of the Business Studies degree with respect to aims and knowledge production. A hypothesis will be presented challenging the characterisation of Business Studies as a specific preparation of students 'for' business careers based on knowledge generated from this context of application. The chapter will also propose an analytical framework which will form a basis for the empirical investigation. This framework stems directly from a reading of the literature concerning aims and knowledge in Business Studies discussed in chapters 4 and 5. The relevance of this framework will be illustrated in relation to Business Studies and the wider curriculum of higher education.

The characterisation of aims and knowledge

There exists a perception that the unambiguous aim of a degree in Business Studies is to prepare students 'for' business careers. Degrees in Business Studies, it is assumed, are 'vocational', committed to meeting to 'needs' of business or industry. The reasons for this perception are easy to identify. Firstly, Business Studies was introduced into higher education via the former public sector. Despite critical reassessments of the goals of such institutions (eg Burgess, 1977), the former polytechnics are still historically linked to the development of 'vocational' higher education. Thus, Business Studies was developed within an institutional context strongly associated with the provision of technological and vocational education (McKenna, 1983).

Secondly, the degree was originally designed as a partnership between industry and

higher education through the inclusion of a compulsory period of work experience using the Diploma in Technology as a template. According to the Crick report, it was through the sandwich concept that the integration of education and training would take place demanding *“full collaboration”* between college and employers. The impression of a clear vocational rationale has been further underlined by many who have subsequently written about Business Studies. Horner (1983), for example, categorically states that the main objective of a Business Studies degree is vocational preparation for commerce or industry, a position also taken by a DES Conference on Business Studies in the 1980s (McKenna, 1983). Course documentation always tends to emphasise a concern to produce a degree *“overwhelmingly on the side of ‘for’ business”* (Silver & Brennan, 1988, p 145). Boys (1988) also found that a major public concern of such courses was to prepare students for careers in management, business or industry. The decline of certain subjects, such as sociology, have also been attributed to a desire to match Business Studies more closely to the vocational needs of business (Brown & Harrison, 1980).

Moreover, there is a general perception of Business Studies within higher education as an uncomplicated vocational training for management (eg Squires, 1990; O’Hear, 1988). Business Studies is symbolic of a closer contemporary relationship between the higher education system and the interests of the national economy. As a result Business Studies is regarded as in the vanguard of the ‘functionalist’ perspective within higher education, concerned with tying educational provision to wider social outcomes and wealth generating potential. Business Studies has been characterised as functional (or technically-oriented) by critics from both within the subject community (Boys, 1988, Brown and Harrison, 1980, Fox, 1994) and within higher education (O’Hear, 1988, Barnett, 1992). The influence of the business community has also been cited as shaping an uncritical agenda for undergraduate business studies (Barnett, 1990). Scott (1995) argues that subjects, most notably business, gain their terms of reference from *“vocational relevance rather than academic coherence”* (p 34). It is taken for granted that Business Studies is an area of the higher education curriculum committed to vocational relevance and as such more responsive to economic and social pressures to make knowledge ‘useful’. The strong association of general business

education with the vocational goals of such bodies as the Business and Technological Education Council and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications means that Business Studies has an established reputation for meeting the perceived needs of business.

However, although Business Studies is widely perceived as providing an education 'for' business this perception may be less than accurate. Firstly, it is not safe to assume that the development of Business Studies in the former polytechnic sector acts as a guarantee of vocational commitment. This has been eroded both by widespread charges of 'academic drift' in such institutions since the 1970s and through the restructuring of UK higher education in the 1990s. Broad typologies of institutions, as 'vocational' or 'academic', are more difficult to sustain in a unified system where institutional mission statements suggest differentiation (Scott, 1995).

Secondly, there is little evidence to support the notion of Business Studies as a partnership between higher education and employers. It has been noted that employers take little interest in such programmes especially as Business Studies is free from the demands of a specific professional or occupational group. Although founded on the basis of a government report, Business Studies has, in fact, developed free from any government intervention to ensure that it meets business needs. Lecturers, rather than employers or the government, have principally controlled the development of the curriculum since its inception in the mid-1960s.

There are further weaknesses in assumptions that Business Studies is vocational. Existing research concerning the aim of a Business Studies degree relies heavily on a reading of documentary statements relating to programme aims and interviews with course leaders (eg Boys, 1988; Silver and Brennan, 1988). This research makes the assumption that the written intention or prescription of the curriculum equates to what happens in reality shaped by the pedagogy of the lecturer. In other words, these studies do not investigate the pedagogic reality of a Business Studies education.

It is clear that the aim of a Business Studies degree cannot be understood in

unambiguous terms. The pedagogic reality of Business Studies is not necessarily a study 'for' business. It may, as suggested by Tolley (1983) and others, be understood as either a study 'for' business or a study 'about' business.

The generation of knowledge in Business Studies is often characterised as taking place in the context in which it is assumed to apply (ie the business world) (eg Scott, 1995) rather than a cognitive, disciplinary context. The assumption that a Business Studies degree is designed for business results in the further assumption that the *raison d'être* of knowledge in Business Studies is to serve the context of application. It has been shown that received wisdom suggests that Business Studies is a 'vocational' subject and, thus, teachers pay more regard to the views of 'active practitioners' (ie employers) and students as 'customers' in designing an appropriate curriculum than lecturers in 'non-vocational' subjects. Anthony (1986) and Roberts (1996) argue that this pressure to make knowledge in business and management education 'useful' and applicable results in the dominance of technical rationality. Knowledge is objectified or, in other words, reduced to a set of 'objective' facts. They, therefore, suggest that only 'hard' knowledge is legitimised within a business education because this version of knowledge offers a justification and legitimisation of the exercise of power in the workplace on the basis of technical expertise.

However, the thesis will challenge the notion that the production of knowledge in Business Studies is largely or solely determined by the context of application. Rather, it will be argued that the context of application plays only a secondly role in knowledge production behind cognitive, disciplinary pressures. The role of Business Studies lecturers as specialists drawn from different disciplinary backgrounds will play an important part in re-assessing the assumption that knowledge is generated in the context of application. Business Studies needs to be examined as a knowledge community of subject specialists. The influence of economists, and the discipline of economics in the evolution of business and management education, is likely to be important in this respect. Hence, the thesis will reflect on the work of Becher (1989) in showing the relationship between knowledge forms and knowledge communities, and academic 'tribes' and the intellectual 'territories' they perpetuate. In this respect,

the thesis may have important implications for other, ostensibly vocational subjects in higher education where cognitive, disciplinary knowledge is purported to play a dominant part in the curriculum (Busby, 1994).

Hypothesis

There are three hypotheses:

- (1) The pedagogic reality of Business Studies is at odds with the characterisation that it constitutes a vocational education ‘for’ business. Lecturers who teach Business Studies may be committed to alternative aims, such as an education ‘about’ business;
- (2) Knowledge in Business Studies is thought to be generated by the business context. The pedagogic reality is that knowledge in Business Studies is generated, to a large extent, by disciplinary, cognitive knowledge favoured by Business Studies lecturers acting as members of a diverse academic community; and
- (3) Many lecturers in Business Studies are committed to a form of higher education which embraces liberal-humanist values.

An analytical framework

An analytical framework can be derived on the basis of key distinctions, concerning aims and knowledge in Business Studies. Chapter 4 established that the aim of a Business Studies degree can be expressed as either a study for business or a study about business. Chapter 4 argued that dichotomous labelling of knowledge as hard/soft or humanities/science in higher education has become a dominant mode of thought and expression despite associated problems. It is, therefore, possible to identify a framework for the analysis of the Business Studies curriculum. One axis is provided by the dichotomy between the aim of Business Studies as a study *for* business or as a study *about* business. The second axis is obtained by analysing Business Studies in terms of humanities-based (soft) or science-based (hard)

knowledge. The framework for the study, therefore, consists of two dimensions : an ‘about-for’ business axis and a ‘science-humanities’ axis. These two dimensions produce four quadrants : a humanities-based study about business, a humanities-based study for business; a science-based study about business, and a science-based study for business (figure 4).

Figure 4 : An analytical framework

		Aims	
		A study for business	A study about business
Knowledge	Science-based (Hard)	a A science-based study for business	b A science-based study about business
	Humanities-based (Soft)	c A humanities-based study for business	d A humanities-based study about business

It is important to stress that a multidisciplinary degree subject, such as Business Studies, is composed of a number of contributing disciplines and subject areas. Thus, to characterise an amorphous degree such as Business Studies as hard or soft or for business or about business cannot meaningfully take place without first reflecting on the nature of contributing subjects. Figure 5 reflects on the possible position of a range of subjects which contribute to the Business Studies degree.

Figure 5 : Mapping the Business Studies curriculum

		Aims	
		A study for business	A study about business
Knowledge	Science-based (Hard)	a Accountancy	b Economics
	Humanities-based (Soft)	c Human Resource Management	d Sociology

The positioning of individual subject areas is a difficult undertaking which requires justification and can only, at best, be a provisional exercise.

Box A : Accountancy

Accountancy, together with law, was included in the Crick template for the Business Studies degree as a “*related subject*” in addition to the basic disciplines of mathematics, economics and sociology. The inclusion of both accountancy and law was justified on the basis that both these subjects were essential to anyone destined for a senior management position. Traditionally, accountancy education has been characterised as concerned with the mechanical application of procedures to stereotypical business situations. Courses are often highly practical and technique-oriented (Solomons and Berridge, 1974). Professional accountancy bodies have taken a close interest in accountancy education and effectively prescribed the content of courses as a precondition for students obtaining exemptions from professional examinations (Srinivasan and McCallum, 1988). The emphasis on techniques and rules of procedure applied in accountancy education has been used as a source of explanation for the “*arrested level of ethical maturity*” among accountants (Fleming, 1995). Knowledge in accountancy is widely interpreted as hard knowledge and the

role of finance as a business function means that accountancy education is invariably regarded as a study for business.

Box B : Economics

Siting economics, the third of Crick's basic disciplines, in terms of the dichotomy between hard and soft knowledge is more problematic. It has been noted that the Crick report specified that economics should include economic history and the study of current economic and industrial structures together with the scientific theory of the firm. The report thus contains a coded call for balance between the humanistic and scientific traditions within economics. Lee (1975) and Healey (1988) argue though that economics education is biased towards positive economics which rejects the study of normative issues and adopts a positivist framework for analysis in an attempt to construct immutable laws universally applicable to all societies. The standard model of competitive equilibrium is taught as the core model of economics all over the world (Ormerod, 1994). In Corder's (1990) terms, positive economics attempts to make economics more hard or subject-dependent (ie with universally applicable laws). Moreover, positive economics is the dominant model of economics education taught in Business Studies and is regarded by students as abstract, excessively theoretical and highly mathematical (Healey, 1993). A recent survey has shown that economics lecturers in higher education strongly defend the strong mathematical content of courses in economics (Dent & North, 1996).

Healey (1993) also contends that business students find economics largely irrelevant to their needs as potential managers but is often defended by economists as providing a foundation for students to understand the context in which business operates. Surveys of economics lecturers (Dropp, 1977) have also indicated that objectives such as the preparation of students for professional careers are considered of little importance. Dawson (1981) considers that the basic objective of economics lecturers is decidedly *not* to help the student get a job, become more proficient as a consumer, or cope with personal economic problems, but, rather, to acquire an "*analytical tool kit*" that will help students understand national and world economic problems. Thus,

economics, as taught to business students, might be provisionally categorised as a hard subject about business.

Box C : Human Resource Management

The Crick report recognised that although there was no reference to management or management studies in the committee's template for the Business Studies degree, *"the business studies courses we propose should equip students, after responsible experience, the better to perform managerial functions"* (Department of Education and Science, 1964, p 3). The reluctance of the committee to specify the study of management as part of a Business Studies degree stemmed, at least in part, from the interpretation of management studies as a postgraduate or post-experience discipline established by the Franks report (1963). However, over the last thirty years the study of management, including human resource management (HRM), has become a standard element of a Business Studies degree.

There has been very little specific attention to the epistemology of HRM although Legge (1995) indicates that *"discipline-based research"* in industrial relations and organisational behaviour forms an important basis. A range of disciplines related to business including sociology, law and psychology have, therefore, contributed to the development of HRM. This disciplinary base means that HRM is commonly associated with soft or humanities-based knowledge. According to Butler (1986), the human relations movement occurred from the American wish to humanise their society without interfering with the operation of a market economy. The human relations movement, is essentially a branch of management, which has drawn heavily on theories in relation to motivation and the organisational environment (Huczynski, 1993). As a clearly identifiable business function, with many large businesses containing a personnel or HRM department, HRM is widely regarded as a study for business.

However, as in many subjects, 'hard' and 'soft' models of HRM exist (Legge, 1995). 'Hard' HRM focuses on the importance of integrating human resource policies,

systems and strategies with business strategy. From this perspective, the human resource is conceived of as a factor of production like land or capital. The hard model emphasises *“the quantitative, calculative and business strategic aspects of managing the headcount resource in as ‘rational’ a way as for any other economic factor”* (Storey, 1987, p 6). By contrast, the soft model stresses *“developmental humanism”* (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1990). Soft HRM seeks to involve employees as valued assets, a source of competitive advantage through their motivation. Commitment is generated via communication, motivation and leadership (Legge, 1995). Truss, Gratton, Hope-Hailey, McGovern and Stiles (1997) also comment on the existence of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ practitioner models of HRM. They draw on the work of McGregor (1960) by defining the hard model as one of *“tight strategic control”* and based on an *“economic model of man according to Theory X”* (p 53) while the soft model is centred on *“control based on commitment and Theory Y”* (p 53).

Box D : Sociology

The original rationale for the inclusion of sociology within the Business Studies degree was based on the argument made to the Crick committee by Tom Lupton (Brown and Harrison, 1980). The Crick committee concluded, on the basis of Lupton’s evidence, that sociology could be relevant ‘for’ business in application to problems such as selection and training, rewards and incentives, communication and organisation-structure. However, Brown and Harrison (1980) argue that the maturing of sociology as a radical discipline since the early 1960s means that contemporary sociology appeals towards the provision of a critical awareness about business rather than an education for business. They contend that the inclusion of sociology rests principally on its *“broadening and liberalising functions”* rather than as a technical, problem-solving discipline for managers.

Linstead (1984) agrees that sociology *“contributes in the areas of understanding commonly labelled ‘about’ business rather than ‘for’ business”* (p 53). However, Linstead (1984) argues that Brown and Harrison typify the traditional defensiveness of sociologists and calls for sociology to be integrated into a curriculum for business.

Brown and Harrison (1980), though, regard the role of sociology as non-negotiable in its role as a critical discipline about business. As a body of knowledge, sociology is normally placed towards the end of the soft spectrum (Biglan, 1973; Becher, 1989). In Corder's terms (1990), sociology is not exclusively subject-dependent with theories closely related to environment-dependency. Therefore, sociology may be sited as a soft study about business.

Movement within the framework

It needs to be stressed that caution needs to be exercised in placing any subject within any one box of the framework given that many subjects are open to contrasting interpretations, especially the extent to which subjects are either 'hard' or 'soft'. Moreover, the analytical framework is not a static conceptual tool as subjects may move around within this framework over time. Mulligan suggests that within the broad area of business studies it is likely that different knowledge traditions will result in fundamental differences based on conflicting philosophical positions. Hirst (1973) argues that new 'fields' of knowledge can be endlessly constructed (of which Business Studies is perhaps one of many). It is also likely that Business Studies, as an existing field, may be endlessly re-constructed (Brown and Harrison, 1980). In these re-constructions the balance between scientific and humanistic knowledge may alter as Business Studies degree programmes are written and re-written. The aim of a Business Studies is subject to similar re-construction. In fact, it is likely that most, if not all, disciplines are in a state of almost constant flux. Few subjects are based purely on either humanities-based or science-based knowledge, rather a combination of the two. It is likely that an on-going tension exists between humanities-based and science-based knowledge and the appropriate aim of a subject.

Economics is an example of a contributing subject to the Business Studies degree where an on-going debate exists regarding the appropriate balance between hard and soft knowledge. It has been noted that a number of economists from within the discipline (Lee, 1975; Healey, 1988; 1993) have argued that a drift toward a science-based knowledge has occurred resulting in an over-emphasis on mathematical

modelling and 'positive' economics at the expense of normative issues. Lawson (1997) and Ormerod (1994) also attack fellow academic economists as overly concerned with theoretical modelling ignoring the complexities of real life. In this respect, economics may have moved from box d of the analytical framework during its growth years as a university discipline in the 1960s to box b with an increasing emphasis on hard knowledge. Whereas in economics a debate exists between academic economists regarding the appropriate balance between hard and soft knowledge, in accountancy pressure for movement stems from professional bodies. Accountancy has been located in box a of the analytical framework as a science-based study with a curriculum designed 'for' business. However, the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants, for example, recently called for accountancy degrees to be more firmly rooted in 'social science' and has criticised first degree programmes as narrow, "*watered down versions of the professional syllabus*" (Times Higher Education Supplement, 1994, p 2). This type of criticism may contribute to the movement of degrees where accountancy plays a significant role, from box a toward box b.

Debates clearly exist with regard to knowledge and aims within many subject areas contributing to the Business Studies degree. A further illustration of this can be drawn from business ethics, a subject which has begun to emerge in recent years within the Business Studies degree and more generally within business and management education. Most commentators justify the inclusion of business ethics within the business curriculum as a tool to improve the decision-making skills of students in preparation for a managerial career (ie a study for business). An alternative justification for including business ethics within the curriculum is to provide an opportunity for students to develop a broader critical perspective with regard to the purposes and effects of the business system (a study about business). This approach to business ethics might focus more on issues which lie outside the practical decision-making control of individual managers. This involves a more fundamental questioning of the business system drawing on a rich array of economic and political theorists, such as Marx, Locke, Galbraith and Schumacher, rather than moral theorists like Bentham, Kant or Rawls.

Therefore, it is possible to approach business ethics as either a study for business or a study about business. In a study for business, advertising ethics might be approached in terms of the long term inadvisability of making false or exaggerated product claims perhaps with reference to the self-regulatory system in the UK. A study about business might approach advertising from the perspective of 'consumerism' and address questions of gender, racial and class-based stereotyping and the relationship between product differentiation and status anxiety. The issue of wages provides another example of these two alternative approaches to business ethics. A study 'for' business might focus practically on a wage negotiation case study while a study 'about' business could look more broadly at the issue of a 'fair' or the notion of a minimum wage.

Leading texts on business ethics reflect this divided approach to the curriculum. Most texts emphasise the application of moral theory as a basis for managerial decision making. Chryssides and Kaler (1993) argue that business ethics is essentially a practical study for business while hinting that moral theory is vital in providing a rationale.

It (ie business ethics) has, then, an essentially practical purpose. We inquire not simply in order to be informed, but to inform our actions; to provide those actions with a better and sounder basis than they might otherwise have.

Chryssides and Kaler (1993) p.12

However, other texts take a more eclectic view of business ethics as, additionally, a general study about business including the study of capitalism as one of the key dimensions. In this respect, Hoffman and Frederick's (1995) anthology includes readings on the concepts of economic justice and meaningful work. They also state that an evaluation of the business system is part of their purpose. One of the four tasks of the anthology is :

An ethical investigation of the context in which American business is conducted
- that is, capitalism or the free market. Does the system truly contribute to a

good society and reflect our most important social values ? In particular, is it a just system, one that reflects our beliefs about the fair distribution of goods and services ?

Hoffman & Frederick (1995) p.12

Similarly, a business ethics course may emphasise principle-based ethical positions such as utilitarianism, Kantianism, or rights. These theories are then applied in relation to business case studies to facilitate 'ethical' decision-making. The emphasis here is on ethical principles for decision-making with universal rules of application regardless of environment-dependency or person-dependency factors (Corder, 1990). Therefore, this is a 'hard' knowledge approach to business ethics.

An alternative approach to knowledge in business ethics is to stress the person-dependency of ethics. Several writers, commenting on the curriculum (DesJardins, 1984; Warren, 1991; 1995) have rejected an overreliance on moral rules and principles in teaching business ethics. Instead, they have argued that ethics should be a journey of self-discovery and recommend more use of virtue theory, which seeks to develop an individuals' moral character, as a more appropriate way of helping students to understand their own personal philosophy. This may be characterised as a 'soft' knowledge approach to business ethics because virtue theory, unlike principle-based approaches, does not prescribe universal rules of application but emphasises the importance of person-dependency.

Thus, business ethics may be interpreted as an education for or about business and, similarly, may be defined as highly soft, person-dependent knowledge, or harder, more subject-dependent knowledge. Clearly locating the Business Studies degree within this framework will be a complex challenge given the range of possible locations of most subject areas contributing to Business Studies.

Relevance to higher education

The usefulness of this framework as an analytical tool can be further demonstrated in relation to the wider curriculum of higher education. The framework developed to analyse Business Studies is based on broadly similar criteria to that outlined by Biglan (1973) who identified both the hard-soft and the pure-applied dimensions. In terms of Business Studies, the pure-applied dimension has been re-classified as a about-for business dichotomy to reflect the language used by business educators. However, by reverting back to Biglan's pure-applied dimension the applicability of the framework for the wider higher education curriculum is immediately apparent (see figure 6).

**Figure 6 : An analytical framework for understanding the
Higher Education curriculum (after Biglan,1973)**

		Aims	
		Applied	Pure
Knowledge	Hard	a Medicine	b Biology
	Soft	c Teacher Education	d Education

Box A - Medicine

Medicine is a degree subject based on scientific knowledge but, unlike biology or a number of other natural science subjects or mathematics, is directed towards specific vocational ends. Other examples in this quadrant might include nursing and engineering. Although these subjects are located within the hard-applied quadrant, developments suggest movement may be taking place towards a 'softer' and more applied curriculum. There is growing emphasis on the importance of medical and

nursing students obtaining interactional skills such as training medical students in HIV/AIDS test counselling (Campbell, Weeks, Walsh & Sanson-Fisher, 1996) and generally confronting students with problems derived from professional practice (Bligh, 1995). A similar process of focusing on practitioner skills is occurring in other hard-applied subjects like engineering (Jennings & Ferguson, 1995).

Box B - Biology

Biology may be given as an example of a degree subject which draws on scientific or hard knowledge (Biglan, 1973). The objects of study are understood as mechanisms with networks of cause and effect relationships. Furthermore, biology is not a subject directed at a specific vocational occupation and may be classified as a hard-pure subject. Biglan (1973) suggests that other degree subjects within this quadrant include mathematics, physics and chemistry.

Box C - Education

Education is a degree subject which draws principally on the humanities including philosophy and the human sciences. Biglan (1973) places education within the soft-pure quadrant. It is a study 'about' society focusing on the relationship between education and society. History, Art and English are further degree disciplines which may be sited in this quadrant.

Box D - Teacher Education

Teacher education is drawn principally from humanities-based knowledge but has a very clear objective - to prepare students for their future professional role as teachers (Reid & Parker, 1995). Other social professions, such as social work, might also be located within this quadrant. Government policy has become increasingly prescriptive regarding the nature of teacher education during the 1980s and 1990s insisting on far greater emphasis on a school-led approach (Galvin, 1996) leading to the establishment of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE). This has shifted

teacher education further towards the applied end of the spectrum. Heightened government involvement in teacher education has led to a decline in the role of sociology of education which has either disappeared or been subsumed into parts of the curriculum with ostensibly greater relevance and utility (Reid & Parker, 1995).

It is important to emphasise that the framework is dynamic, rather than static in nature and allows for subjects to move between quadrants. While within Business Studies, economics may have drifted toward hard or science-based knowledge pressures are growing on medicine and nursing to include a greater emphasis on aspects of a soft or humanities-based education with the developing importance of communication and management skills for both professions. Teacher education may also have shifted its position within the framework due to increasing government pressure to focus on teaching skills rather than educational philosophy.

Conclusion

The amorphous nature of the Business Studies degree means it cannot be understood except by reference to its constituent parts and the disciplinary specialists who contribute to the pedagogic reality. The analytical framework provides a starting point for this investigation by recognising that Business Studies is a constituency of academic interests. To characterise the Business Studies degree as designed for business and drawing its knowledge from the context in which that knowledge is applied overlooks this complex reality. The map of the Business Studies degree is clearly far from static with a wide range of subjects under a variety of pressures with respect to aims and knowledge. However, it provides a basis on which begin the empirical investigation.

Section C

**THE BUSINESS STUDIES CURRICULUM :
PEDAGOGY AND TRIBE**

CHAPTER 6

Methodology

Introduction

The methodology for this study is founded on the thesis that an investigation into the micro-level (Becher, 1995) of lecturer perspectives will provide an alternative understanding to 'commonsense' notions regarding aims and knowledge in Business Studies. The methodology for this study has been highly influenced by the work of Becher (1989) and a range of other researchers (eg Ball, 1987, Biglan, 1973, Kolb, 1981) who have concerned themselves with investigations into teacher or lecturer perspectives. The thesis will, therefore, provide a predominantly sociological account of Business Studies analysing the beliefs and characteristics of lecturers. It will be argued that 'commonsense' understandings of Business Studies derive predominantly from macro-level accounts and that a sociological account of the micro-level is needed to develop a broader understanding of the role of Business Studies in higher education.

Rationale

Becher (1995) defines 'micro-level studies' as typically ethnographic requiring the researcher to exercise insight and empathy. In terms of research instruments, micro-level studies normally imply the use of time-consuming interviews and observations. Layder (1993) also identifies 'micro-analysis'. This approach may be contrasted to macro-level studies where a positivist philosophy prevails and quantitative approaches are more readily applied to research problems. Macro-level studies offer more prospect that results can be expressed as generalisations. Becher's distinction between the micro and the macro refers principally to educational methodology. A stronger link with ideology is made by Lawton (1992) who identifies a set of three overlapping levels which represent the way in which ideology and education is understood. The general or political level (level 1) refers to general ideas and beliefs about human

nature and society giving rise to more specific social and moral views expressed by political parties. For example, the free market, neo-liberalism of Adam Smith combined with strong social control advocated by Thomas Hobbes have come to characterise the 'Thatcherite' philosophy of recent Conservative governments. Lawton's second level, that of Education Interest Groups, refers to ideologies shared by different 'groups' with differences in attitude to the curriculum. Lawton (1989) identified four such groups, the privatisers, the minimalists, the pluralists and the comprehensive planners in relation to the national curriculum. Finally, Lawton examines a third level of ideology, the pedagogical level, where ideology operates in constructing teacher attitudes. In terms of business and management there is an assumption that the values of the new right are embraced at level 1 and that, at level 2, interest groups concerned with a business education would favour a right wing 'privatiser' or 'minimalist' perspective. However, understanding of the ideology of business lecturers at the third level, that of pedagogy, cannot be automatically attributed to the values which are assumed to operate at the first and second level.

Becher's (1989) work on seeking an understanding of 'academic tribes' focuses mainly on lecturers teaching pure, rather than applied, subjects in elite institutions. Accordingly, Becher identifies that further studies in *"such applied fields as medicine, accountancy, management studies, education and social work should yield new insights into a relatively neglected but none the less substantial sector of academic activity"* (p179). The work of Boys (1988) and Silver and Brennan (1988) are isolated examples of empirical studies focusing, at least in part, on the Business Studies degree. These, and other, studies (eg Smith, Hart and McCloskey, 1994) have strongly indicated that lecturers are overwhelmingly more influential in framing and re-framing the curriculum than either students or employers. The exclusion of student or employer perspectives from this study is justified partly on the strength of this previous research indicating that higher education lecturers play the key role in designing and delivering the Business Studies curriculum. Moreover, employer perspectives have already been subject to considerable attention by others researching the business and management curriculum (eg Roizen & Jepson, 1985). Student perspectives are also now beginning to attract more research interest (Coates &

Koerner, 1996). However, employer perspectives, in particular, reside beyond the micro or pedagogic level which remains the core focus of this study.

The principal weakness of previous research into the Business Studies degree has been a tendency to focus almost exclusively on the perspective either of employers or of course or programme leaders in Business Studies. These approaches have excluded a detailed examination of the perspectives of *all* lecturers making a teaching contribution to a Business Studies degree. Only a small number of often more senior lecturers may be involved in designing a Business Studies degree whereas all lecturers are involved in the subsequent interpretation of this curriculum in practice. An understanding of the lecturer perspective can only be achieved by taking an inclusive approach via an analysis of the perspectives of lecturers drawn from a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds. A large proportion of lecturers making a teaching contribution to a Business Studies degree may be drawn from outside a university business faculty. Failure to include these lecturers in any field work will distort understanding of Business Studies lecturers as a collection of academic tribes.

The rationale for this research is also drawn from the tendency of previous studies (Boys, 1988) to equate documentary statements and those of course or programme leaders with the pedagogic reality, or how, in other words, Business Studies is taught in practice. Statements in documentary sources about aims and knowledge do not necessarily match the pedagogic reality as practised by lecturers. This observation was made by Silver and Brennan (1988) and is a challenge taken up by this thesis. This possible incongruence of understanding and interpretation of the curriculum between lecturers and documentary sources can only be explored by examining the perspectives of all lecturers rather than a selective few in positions of authority with respect to the written curriculum.

The focus of previous research on macro-level studies concerning the formal, public, written curriculum of Business Studies provides an important point of departure. Curriculum documents provide formal institutional definitions of the aims and knowledge structures of individual Business Studies degrees. Taken as a collective

body such documents also aid understanding of the *stated* aims and knowledge structures of Business Studies as part of a national picture. They provide a possible point of comparison between institutions. However, clearly course documentation cannot, in isolation, provide any understanding of the pedagogic reality. Validation documents are only written prescriptions of what should happen and are not necessarily accurate representations of what happens in reality (Stenhouse, 1975). In order to gain a fuller insight into Business Studies as an activity affected by the personal dispositions of individuals there needs to be a micro-level investigation into the attitudes of lecturers and how lecturer perspectives are shaped by reference to their sense of identity within an academic culture.

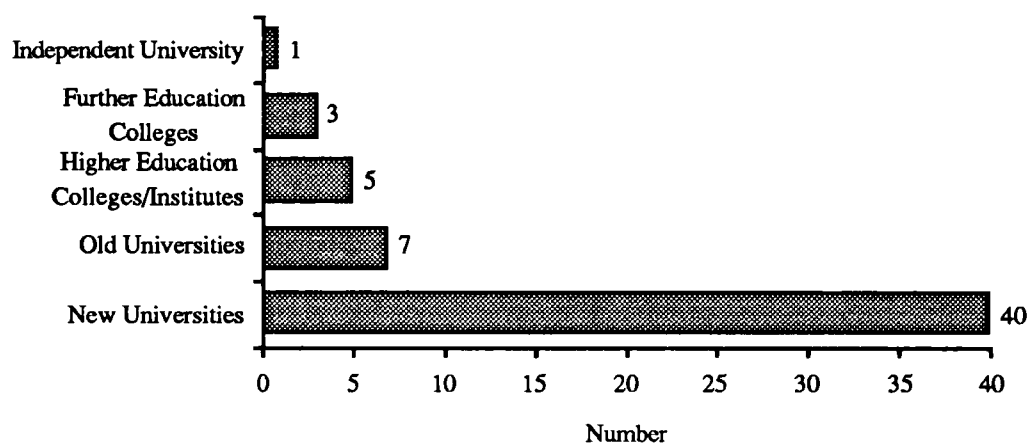
Instruments of investigation

Two instruments of investigation were identified as complementary to the goal of researching the lecturer perspective in Business Studies. Firstly, a questionnaire would help to form a national picture of the attitudes of Business Studies lecturers across institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom. The questionnaire would have two main objectives. Firstly, it would help to establish some primary data regarding Business Studies lecturers gaining an understanding of their background characteristics such as age, experience and qualifications. Secondly, the questionnaire could test out the theoretical framework based on an analysis of previous research regarding aims and knowledge in Business Studies (see Chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively). While the questionnaire would help to establish the usefulness of a theoretical framework based on previous research it will not, as a research instrument, help to illuminate new perspectives or current issues confronting lecturers in a changing higher education environment. This can best be achieved by interviewing Business Studies lecturers in selected institutions.

A postal survey was designed to examine the attitudes of Business Studies lecturers toward aims and knowledge traditions in Business Studies. The population for the study consisted of all full time and part time lecturers who contribute as members of a teaching team on a Business Studies degree programme. A total of 56 institutions

were identified as offering such programmes in the academic year 1995/1996 (UCAS, 1995). The 'new' (post-1992) universities accounted for the vast majority of Business Studies provision with 40 such institutions offering a degree programme. However, degrees in Business Studies are also present in the 'old' university sector, colleges and institutes of higher education, further education colleges with higher education funding and at Buckingham University in the independent sector.

Figure 7 : UK institutions offering a 'Business Studies' first degree



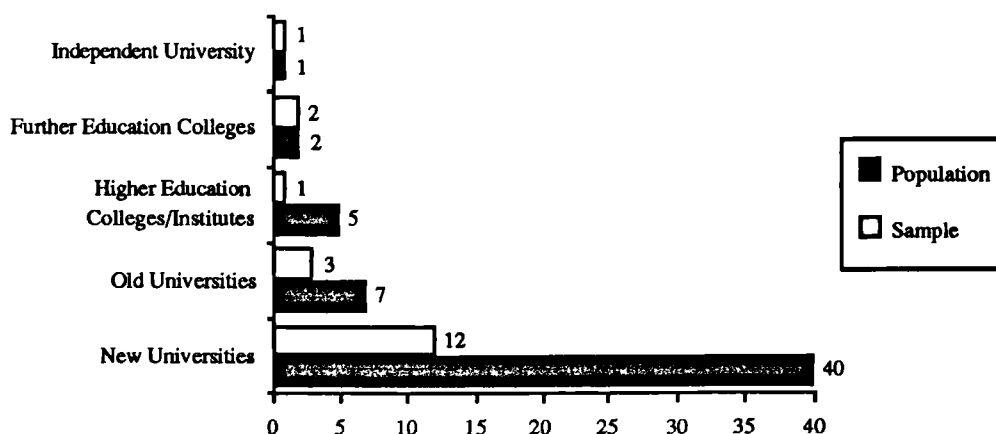
The sampling frame was also provided by the 1995 Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (ACAS) handbook (UCAS, 1995) containing a list of institutions offering a Business Studies degree for entry in 1996. UCAS code N120 was used as the criterion for consistency in order to ensure that only degree programmes entitled 'Business Studies' would be included within the population. Programmes with similar titles such as 'Business Management' or 'Management Studies' were thus excluded on this basis.

Initial contact was made by letter with individual programme directors at all 56 institutions offering a Business Studies degree and lists of all staff members making a teaching contribution to Business Studies degree programmes were requested. Obtaining a list of named individuals from each participating institution was important

to the validity of the research. It helped to ensure that the eventual sample included a representative selection of lecturers. In the absence of such information it is likely that part-time lecturers and lecturers contributing to Business Studies from other academic departments might have been under-represented or even largely excluded from the survey. Lists of individual names meant that any possible distortion of findings through under-representation or over-representation of individuals from one particular institution could be monitored. It also made it possible for the response rate to be accurately measured.

There was a reasonable response to the initial letter seeking the help and co-operation of programme directors. Of the 56 institutions contacted, 19 were able to provide lists of staff members to help form a survey sample. However, fortunately this sample was representative of Business Studies provision by type of institution. Nationally, 71 per cent of institutions teaching Business Studies are 'new' universities compared to 77 per cent of the sample. Other types of institution, 3 'old' universities, 2 further education colleges, 1 institute of higher education and 1 independent university, were also included in the sample. Although this meant a slight over-representation of such institutions, teaching teams tended to be smaller compared with the 'new' universities. The sample also included three Welsh and two Scottish institutions.

Figure 8 : Population and sample



Difficulties were reported by programme directors in co-operating with the request for full staff lists. A number of programme directors were unable to identify all lecturers contributing to the Business Studies degree particularly where the programme was heavily staffed by members of other departments or faculties. However, the re-organisation of teaching through modularisation within institutions was a more serious obstacle in obtaining the names of lecturers teaching on a Business Studies degree *per se*. Lecturers in such institutions teach course components to a student group from a wide variety of degree programmes. Consequently, it is difficult to define such individuals as members of a Business Studies staff group or to expect such lecturers to identify themselves in this manner. The difficulty of defining the 'Business Studies teaching team' probably accounts, at least in part, for the reason why only 19 institutions were able to participate in the survey.

Following a small scale pilot study, which helped to eliminate a number of ambiguities and assumptions, a highly structured survey instrument was produced divided into five sections (see Appendix 1). Section A sought personal information from respondents concerning their sex, age (within an age band), basis of employment (whether full or part-time), subject area of first degree, primary teaching subject, faculty or department, and nature of most recent previous employment. By coding the questionnaires it was also possible to analyse the data across the different types of higher (and further) education institutions in which Business Studies degrees can be found.

In the remaining sections of the questionnaire respondents were asked to respond to a series of statements focusing on aims and knowledge in Business Studies. Sections B and C addressed the aims of a Business Studies degree while sections D and E sought out lecturer perspectives on knowledge in Business Studies. Section B asked lecturers to indicate the prevailing aims of the Business Studies degree at their own institution while section C asked lecturers to indicate their own opinion as to which aims ought to prevail in practice. Similarly, section D asked lecturers where the current balance lay between the traditions of science and the humanities in the teaching of Business Studies at their own institution while section E was designed to establish lecturer

opinion on the balance which should exist. This made it possible to analyse whether there was any substantial difference between the existing construction of the Business Studies curriculum and what lecturers would ideally like to see.

Two dichotomies central to existing literature concerning Business Studies and higher education (see chapters 3, 4 and 5) formed the basis of sections B to E. Questions on the aims of a Business Studies degree tested out the dichotomy which distinguishes between a study 'for' business and a study 'about' business (see Chapter 3). The second dichotomy concerning knowledge differentiated between science-based and humanities-based knowledge (see chapter 4). As a single question or indicator, though, will rarely capture the full meaning of the concept (Singleton et al, 1993) the questionnaire combined several questions (or indicators) to form a composite measure of lecturer attitudes to these key dichotomies. This provided a better overall representation of the concepts being tested and reduced the possibility of ambiguity or misunderstanding.

The separate questions were then combined or aggregated and an average of the scores of the separate items calculated to form an index for both dichotomies. The indexes were each derived from eight pairs of statements. Each pair of statements in sections B and C represented aspects of Business Studies as a study 'for' or 'about' business. Similarly, pairs of statements in sections D and E all related to the science-based/humanities-based dichotomy. Thus average scores may range from 1 (A study 'for' business and science-based knowledge) to 5 (A study 'about' business and humanities-based knowledge).

Questionnaires were sent individually to 605 lecturers contributing to Business Studies programmes at 19 different institutions in November, 1995. Post paid envelopes were provided for the return of questionnaires. 244 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of over 40 per cent. Appendix 2 gives details of institutions surveyed by status and number of respondents.

The reported difficulties of programme directors to identify staff teaching on Business

Studies due to modularisation led to a small number of lecturers returning uncompleted questionnaires. The scale of this difficulty is hard to estimate although the response rate to the questionnaire may provide part of the answer. One non-respondent returned the questionnaire unanswered with the following explanation:

I am afraid I must return your questionnaire unanswered because although I teach on a Business Studies degree I do not have any views about business education or much knowledge about our particular degree. I am a subject specialist brought in on a service basis to teach a combined group that includes business studies students among others. I think you may find that in an age of modularisation a lecturer cannot take account of the specific pathways that students may be following, or be expected to have much knowledge of the philosophy of particular pathways. This is perhaps regrettable and is a feature of a drive for efficiency rather than effectiveness.

As the letter indicates there were particular difficulties attached to isolating 'Business Studies' lecturers within institutions with modular schemes in operation. This mirrors the problem highlighted by programme directors in identifying members of the programme teaching team.

The survey highlighted key differences between lecturers on the basis of disciplinary background and teaching subject which are reported in Chapter 7. This considerably aided the preparation of appropriate interview topics.

Semi or partially structured interviews were used as the second main research instrument. Interviews were conducted with staff contributing to the Business Studies degree at four institutions representative of the full spectrum of provision in UK higher and further education. Two of the four institutions selected were 'new' universities which are representative of the bulk of contemporary Business Studies provision. Funding for business and management is the most significant element of higher education provision in further education and, therefore, it was also considered appropriate to interview staff at a further education college, with higher education

funding for a Business Studies degree. Finally, an 'old' university was included to complete a representative picture of Business Studies provision in UK higher education. In reporting, these institutions will be referred to as New Coastal University, New Urban University, Suburban College and Old Rural University respectively.

The interviews helped to inform an understanding of the pedagogic reality of Business Studies education and concentrated on what Layder describes as 'micro analysis'. They helped to illuminate the impact of the self-identity and the social experience of lecturers in shaping their attitudes to the curriculum. While Layder (1993) stresses the importance of quantitative and qualitative techniques he does highlight the role of interviews (and observations) in the study of 'micro' phenomenon and this was considered the most appropriate means of exploring the lecturer perspective in greater detail.

Investigation of self and situated behaviour is best conducted by the use of classical forms of qualitative research, such as participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews and so on, because these topics demand some ethnographic interpretive account of the meaningful world of the individuals investigated

Layder (1993) pp.114-115

The use of interviews also represents a perceived need to understand the way lecturers understand and interpret the curriculum rather than relying on definitions of curriculum content, aims and values which will be provided through the documentary analysis. Interviewees were representative of a cross-section of lecturers playing both senior and supporting roles in the delivery of Business Studies degrees. In this respect, the means of investigation differed from the studies carried out by Boys (1988) and Silver and Brennan (1988) who focused exclusively on interviewing Heads of business departments and course leaders. Although programme directors were interviewed at each of the four institutions selected, limiting interviews to senior members of staff with a course leadership role was not considered appropriate to the

goal of understanding the attitudes of lecturers in Business Studies.

Programme directors were contacted at the four selected institutions, which had all participated in the earlier survey, for permission to approach staff with a view to interview lecturers and obtain any necessary institutional clearance. However, in order to maintain confidentiality, once permission to approach members of an institution had been secured, all interviewees were then re-contacted directly and arrangements for subsequent interviews were made through individual correspondence. The programme director was thus not involved in making any arrangements for lecturers to be interviewed once his/her permission had been obtained.

The interviews, although semi-structured, retained certain objectives. Sub-topics for discussion and key themes were developed in advance (see Appendix 3) but with flexibility built into the approach. Interviewees were drawn from a range of teaching specialisms within Business Studies (see Appendix 4). Interviewees were provided with a photocopy of their original questionnaire response at the beginning of the interview. This was often used as an initial stimulus for beginning discussion helping to focus on the relevance of the issues raised by the questionnaire. The interviews were planned as the final stage of the research as a deliberate means of evaluating the original framework for analysing aims and knowledge in Business Studies and generating new lecturer-led data for analysis.

Ethical issues

A number of ethical issues arose during the course of the interview phase of the research. Many of these issues were connected with the fact that the interviewees were the peers of the interviewer. The 'insider' nature of the research provided both advantages and problems which are widely recognised by others who have conducted 'inside' research (eg Platt, 1981). The interviewers own employment within Business and Management education enabled initial contact to be made as a colleague, albeit from a different institution. This probably made negotiating access to institutions easier than it might have otherwise been. At the interview itself knowledge of the

vocabularies associated with business and management, and the various disciplines involved, proved an important advantage although care was taken to encourage interviewees to express themselves as fully and clearly as possible. Also, it was possible to encourage interviewees to talk more openly about their experiences because the interviewer could empathise on the basis of a shared institutional experience. Lummis (1987) refers to this process as 'sanctioning' (pp 54-55). A number of interviewees were comfortable to 'air their views' to someone who shared an understanding of the day-to-day realities of their work (Bell, 1987).

However, there were also an equally significant number of problems associated with interviewing one's peers. Unlike more orthodox interview research situations (ie in sociology or psychology) where the interviewee will probably belong to a different social group and have a lower status than the interviewer, the interviewees were all from the same social group (ie business and management lecturers) and had at least equivalent (ie lecturer) or superior (eg Principal Lecturer or Head of Department) status to the interviewer. Platt (1981) comments that "*social equality implies reciprocity*" (p 77) and the fact that those interviewed were peers did have an impact on the way the interviews were conducted. The interviewer felt under some obligation to submit to questioning from interviewees on occasion explaining the state of the research thus far. Wherever possible though the interviewer would try to confine this type of discussion to the end of the interview. In 'sanctioning' or encouraging interviewees to express themselves more fully there was also a degree of exchange of gossip and comment although this was kept at a minimum. The interviewer felt particular responsibilities associated with shared group membership but at the same time was aware of the need to maintain a traditional segregation or distance between the roles of interviewer and interviewee.

The notion of confidentiality was taken very seriously at all stages of the research process. Programme Directors/Heads of Department were contacted for permission to interview staff. However, the names of all members of staff teaching Business Studies had previously been obtained in connection with the earlier survey. Therefore, all interviewees were contacted individually by the interviewer and all arrangements

were made on a one-to-one basis without further involvement of Programme Directors/Heads of Department who were not informed which members of staff had been interviewed. Confidentiality in subsequent reporting was a particularly important issue in the context of the interview phase of the research. All interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of interviewees. However, interviewees were not offered the opportunity of verifying transcripts of their interviews although no interviewee requested this anyway. Where quotations were used, in subsequent reporting, the interviewee was identified by teaching subject and anonymised institutional name. It was considered that this device would be sufficient to protect the identity of the interviewee while, at the same time, providing a reasonable degree of information to the reader.

It was important to convince peers that, in the words of Preedy and Riches (1985), there would be *“some pay-off for them in giving access”* (p 4). The main ‘pay-off’ promised was feed-back at a later date in the form of an abstract for the 244 survey respondents and an abstract or article for the 31 interviewees. This promise meant an added responsibility to publish, to demonstrate the value of the research, and hence the value of peers giving up their time to complete a questionnaire or be interviewed. However, papers were subsequently published in academic journals (Macfarlane, 1997a; Macfarlane, 1997b) and the promise of feedback fulfilled.

Intimate knowledge of the social context of the research was a clear advantage and helped to provide easier access to lecturers. However, a higher degree of responsibility attaches because the respondents/interviewees are colleagues in the world of Business and Management education. There is greater possibility of future personal contact and shared membership of the same ‘group’. Thus, the researcher will have to live with the consequences of any mistakes (Bell, 1987).

Conclusion

The research methodology is intimately linked to the goal of the project; to illuminate the micro or pedagogic perspective of lecturers. This perspective has only been

partially addressed by previous research which has tended to rely too heavily on documentary statements of curriculum aims and the views of programme directors. The survey highlighted a range of issues without providing conclusive evidence of major disagreement concerning aims and knowledge. However, the survey did provide valuable background information concerning Business Studies lecturers and highlighted the importance of disciplinary differences in attitudes to the curriculum. The interviews provided an opportunity for more in-depth analysis of the perspectives of selected respondents to the questionnaire. This, in turn, facilitated the re-evaluation of the original dichotomies concerning aims and knowledge in Business Studies.

CHAPTER 7

Lecturer Attitudes : A National Perspective

Introduction

This chapter will present and reflect on the results of a national survey which has gathered data on the attitudes of lecturers to aims and knowledge in Business Studies. Initially, this chapter will present and reflect on the aims of the Business Studies degree as stated in published programme information. However, it has been determined that this documentation is of limited value in determining the pedagogic reality. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the aims of the Business Studies degree the characteristics of lecturers who contribute to such programmes will be presented. Lecturers hold divergent views concerning the appropriate aim of a Business Studies degree indicating that the widespread perception that such programmes are 'vocational' may be misplaced. There are also differences of perspective concerning the balance between humanities-based and science-based knowledge. A range of teaching subjects within Business Studies provides the basis for distinct academic and professional traditions. Differences in the attitudes of lecturers toward both aims and knowledge appear to be closely linked to these traditions and the institutional setting of such degrees.

Documentary analysis

The Business Studies degree is presently taught by 56 UK institutions of further and higher education (UCAS, 1995). Programme information was obtained from each institution. Statements of aims and objectives contained in prospectus guides and additional programme outlines obtained from programme directors provided an initial, if limited, source of analysis. The overwhelming majority of institutions stated that the aim of their Business Studies programme was to provide an 'academic' education which is 'vocationally' orientated.

The mission of the course is to provide students with an academically sound and vocationally oriented business education to Honours Degree standard which will prepare them for careers in an increasingly internationalised and dynamic business environment.

(University of Derby)

As an integrated sandwich course, this degree combines a sound academic grounding with a practical business training.

(London Guildhall University)

In addition, a large number of programmes made specific reference to the development of business-related skills or specialisation in one area of business at a later stage in the programme attracting exemptions from professional examinations.

This degree provides you with a grounding in general business studies before offering you the chance to specialise in one area.

(University of Northumbria at Newcastle)

The BA in Business Studies is a four year sandwich degree giving a sound grounding across the range of business subjects before encouraging students to pursue those aspects of business that they find most stimulating.

(University of Huddersfield)

Most programmes ostensibly offer a 'neutral' concept of education (Downie, Loudfoot and Telfer, 1974) which combines both intrinsic and extrinsic aims but emphasise that ultimately the aim of their Business Studies degree is a preparation of students for business careers. However, there is some difference of emphasis in how programmes determine to best achieve this aim. The importance of "*skills*" are emphasised by a number of programmes but this term is subject to a variety of interpretations. While some degrees define skills in terms of "*IT, communication and working with people*" (University of Glamorgan) other programmes place this term within the context of "*academic skills*" such as "*creative and analytical thinking*"

(University of Brighton).

The course aims to develop the students' intellectual and imaginative skills and powers through an academically challenging and satisfying programme of business studies.

(University of Ulster)

However, caution needs to be exercised in placing too much importance on these documentary statements of intent. Jackson's (1968) concept of the "*hidden curriculum*" highlights the possibility that official curriculum intentions may contrast with publicly unacknowledged aspects of pedagogy. Hence, the stated emphasis on problem-solving, skills development or intellectual rigour may not match the pedagogic reality of a Business Studies programme. An investigation into the perspectives of lecturers contributing to such programmes helps to provide a clearer understanding of this construction of reality.

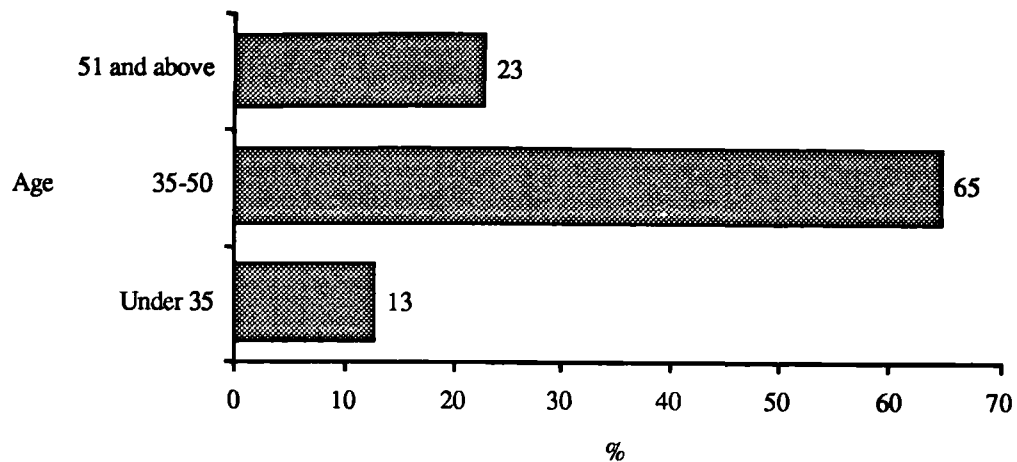
Characteristics of lecturers

The survey helped to identify the background characteristics of respondent lecturers in Business Studies⁴. Two thirds of respondent lecturers were male and aged between 35 and 50. Almost a quarter of lecturers were aged 51 and above. Correspondingly, younger lecturers (aged under 35) accounted for just over one eighth of the sample (see figure 9⁵). Women working in Business Studies are predominantly younger with a quarter aged below 35.

⁴ Appendix 5 displays the full results of the survey in tabular form.

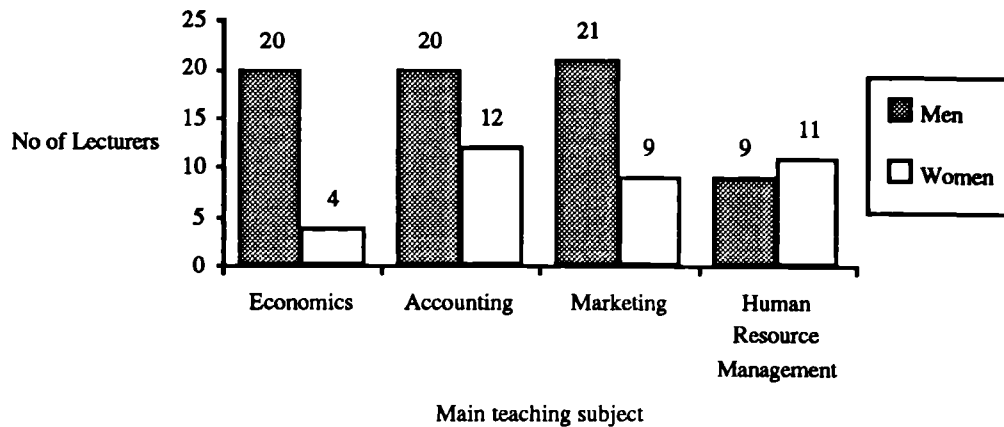
⁵ All figures have been rounded to the nearest decimal point.

Figure 9 : Lecturers by age



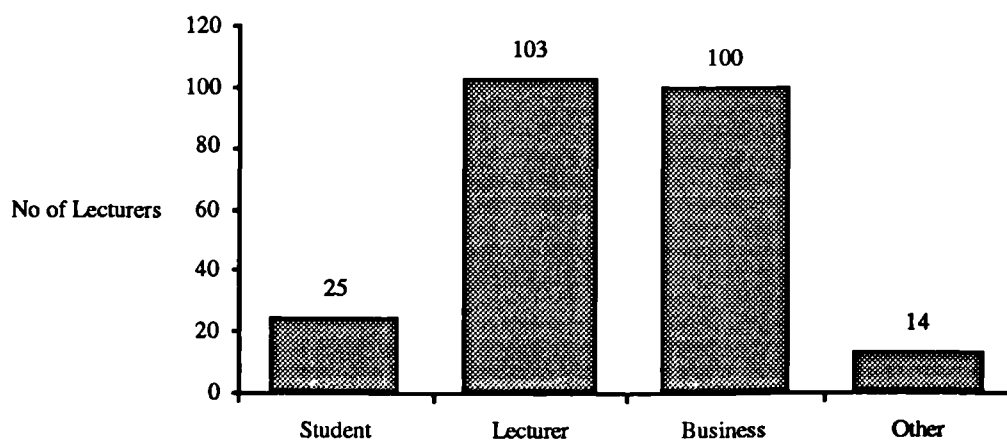
Women are particularly underrepresented in relation to a number of teaching subjects within Business Studies including economics, information technology, management and corporate strategy. Although women are proportionately over-represented in 'soft' subjects such as human resource management and languages they are not proportionately underrepresented in all 'hard' or 'applied' subjects. In accounting, women constitute one third of all lecturers. The age profile of lecturers is older in male dominated teaching subjects. In economics 8 out of 10 lecturers are male with just 4% aged below 35. The overwhelming majority of lecturers are employed on a full-time basis with part-time lecturers, proportionately more of whom are likely to be women, rarely working in other forms of employment. Figure 10 reflects the representation of male and female lecturers in the four most common teaching subjects, which contribute to the Business Studies degree.

Figure 10 : Main teaching subject by sex



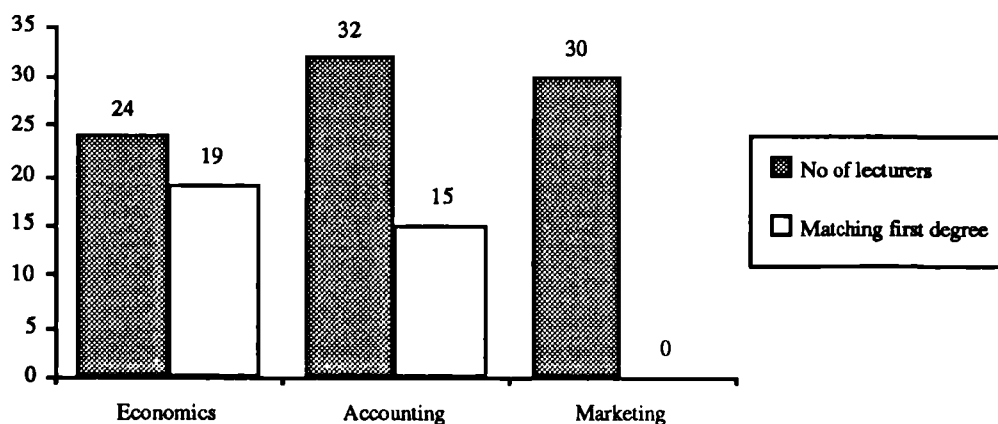
The survey revealed that lecturers are more likely to have recent experience of alternative employment within higher education than in business or industry (see figure 11). Over half of the lecturers in the survey had either worked as lecturers or been students in their most recent previous employment while well under a half had been last employed in business or industry. There appears to be a close relationship between previous employment and the teaching specialism of lecturers. Recent experience in business or industry is less likely among lecturers in economics but considerably more likely among lecturers in accounting and marketing.

Figure 11 : Most recent previous employment



Lecturers are drawn from a wide variety of diverse disciplinary backgrounds with under 17% holding a first degree in business or management. Economics is the single most common disciplinary background although other significant groups are drawn fairly equally from first degree subject areas such as accounting and mathematics, science and engineering and the humanities and social sciences (excluding economics). Lecturers in Business Studies specialise in teaching a wide variety of different subjects. Accounting (13%) and marketing (12%) are the two most common teaching subjects. There is no strong link between the first degree held by lecturers and their main teaching subject. The link is strongest within economics with the vast majority of lecturers holding a similar first degree and also teaching this subject. However, less than half of accounting lecturers hold a similar first degree while not one of 30 lecturers in marketing hold a first degree in this particular subject (see figure 12).

Figure 12 : Lecturers teaching their first degree specialism

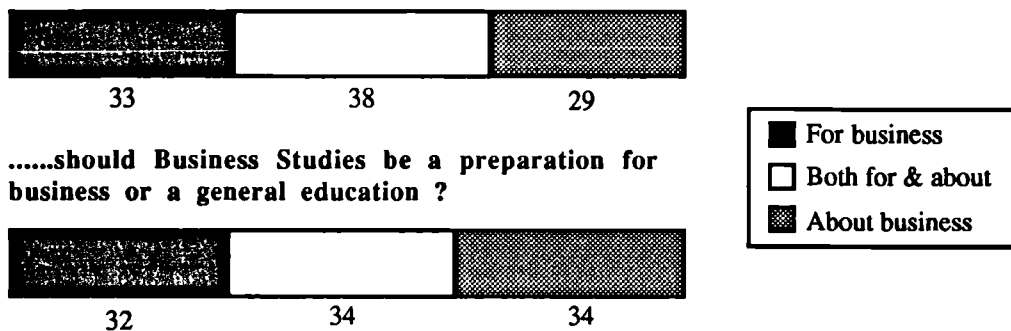


Curriculum aims

Respondents were asked whether the Business Studies degree at their own institution was a specific preparation of students for business careers or a general education about business. Approximately two out of every five respondents indicated that their Business Studies degree equally embraces both of these aims. However, the majority

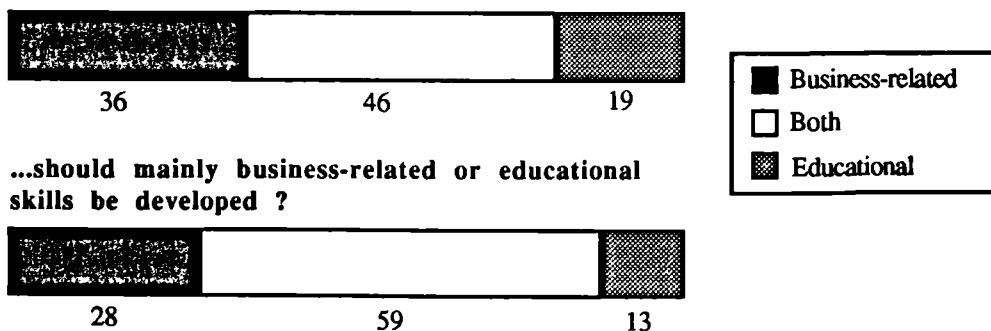
of respondents were more or less equally split between those who believe their Business Studies degree is a preparation for business and those who regard its aim as a general education about business (figure 13). When asked what aim they would prefer Business Studies to embrace, a similar and slightly sharpened difference remained. One third of respondents believed Business Studies should be a specific preparation for business while a further third considered that Business Studies should reflect a more general education about business.

Figure 13 : Is Business Studies a preparation of students for business careers or a general education about business ? (%)



Subsequent questions sought to clarify the perspective of lecturers with regard to this central dichotomy between a study for and a study about business. Lecturers were asked to indicate whether Business Studies develops ‘business-related skills’, such as teamwork and communication, or ‘educational skills’ by reference to analysis and research. The former definition of skills might be consistent with a study for business while the latter are more closely related to a general education about business.

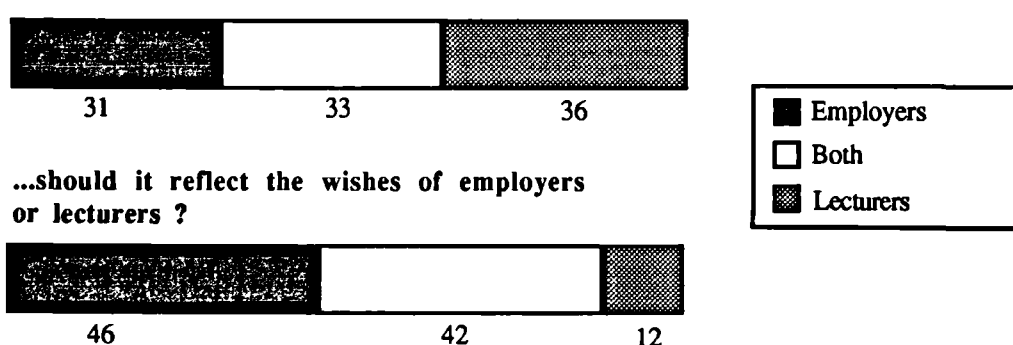
Figure 14 : Does Business Studies develop students with mainly business-related or educational skills ?



The vast majority of lecturers clearly regard the development of business-related skills as an important and legitimate function of a Business Studies degree. However, the majority would ideally like to see more emphasis on the development of skills both for business and educational purposes. Lecturers were also asked why 'academic skills', such as 'research' and 'analysis', are presently developed. A quarter of respondents argued that academic skills are developed because they are valued by employers while a third of respondents considered the reason to be an intrinsic one, as 'part of a university/college education'. Ideally, a majority of lecturers regard the purpose of academic skills as both extrinsic (because they are valued by employers) and intrinsic (because it is an important part of a university/college education).

Respondents were also asked to comment on the role of both lecturers and employers with respect to designing the curriculum. Lecturers responded that the curriculum presently reflects a range of both employer and lecturer interests although the views of the latter group predominate (figure 15). Interestingly though, lecturers expressed the view that employers should be given a greater say in the curriculum. This view would appear to support the notion that Business Studies lecturers regard the appropriate aim of the degree as a study for business.

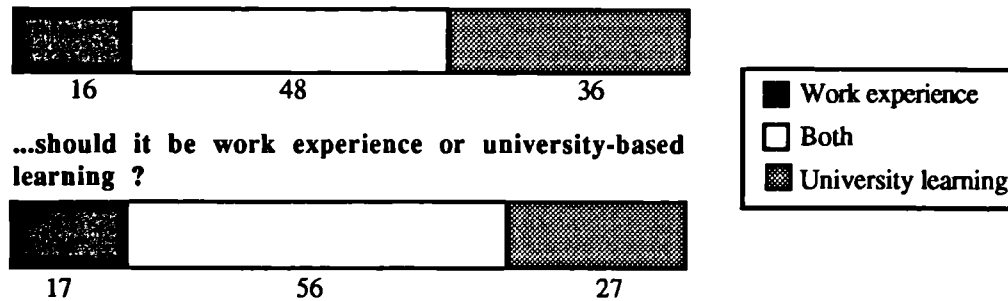
Figure 15 : Does the Business Studies curriculum reflect the wishes of employers or lecturers ? (%)



Finally, lecturers were asked to respond to a question on the relative merits of work experience as opposed to university-based learning. Only a sixth of respondents considered that work experience was or should be the most important element of a

Business Studies degree.

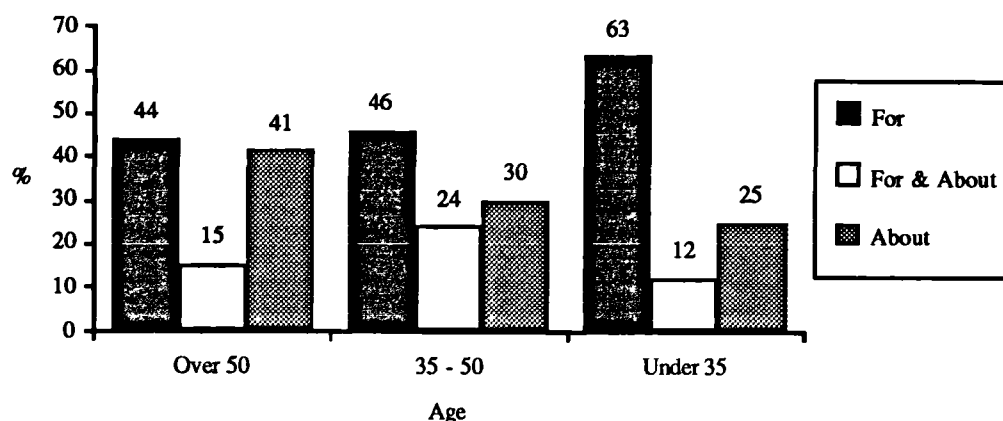
Figure 16 : Which is the most important element of Business Studies - work experience or university-based learning ? (%)



Responses to questions in each section concerning aims in Business Studies were aggregated to form a composite measure of lecturer attitudes. This device was adopted in order to provide a more accurate representation of lecturer understanding of the dichotomy between a study for and a study about business.

Using this composite measure it is interesting to analyse attitudes to the aims of the curriculum on the basis of both age and sex. A higher proportion of female respondents favoured a study for business. Correspondingly, a third of male lecturers favoured a study about business compared to just a quarter of female respondents. This difference, though, between male and female respondents may be due to age. As noted, the average male respondent is older than his female counterpart and there are quite marked differences in attitude on the basis of age.

Figure 17 : Aims of Business Studies by age



Younger lecturers tended to define the aim of Business Studies more in terms of an education for business by comparison with their older colleagues. This might, in turn, be connected with the possibility that younger lecturers have entered higher education more recently from a professional or commercial background.

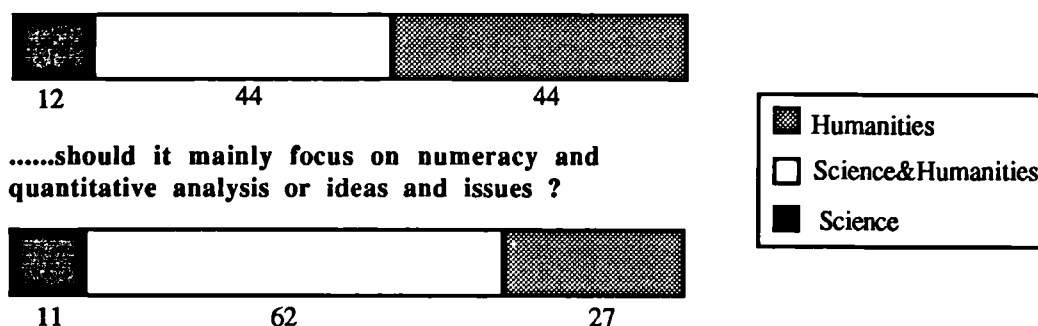
The overwhelming majority of respondents were from the new university sector reflecting the traditional setting for the Business Studies degree. However, the presence of a number of respondents from the old universities made it possible to compare approaches to Business Studies across the former 'binary' divide. There were 22 respondents from 3 old universities. A lecturer at a new university is more likely to believe that Business Studies should be a study for business. Almost a half of all lecturers at new universities regard Business Studies as a study for business. By contrast, less than one third of all lecturers at old universities shared this view. These findings seem to lend support to the research conducted by Boys (1988). He found that the strongest opposition to an education for business lay within the old university sector.

Curriculum knowledge

This section of the questionnaire sought to test out lecturer attitudes towards notions

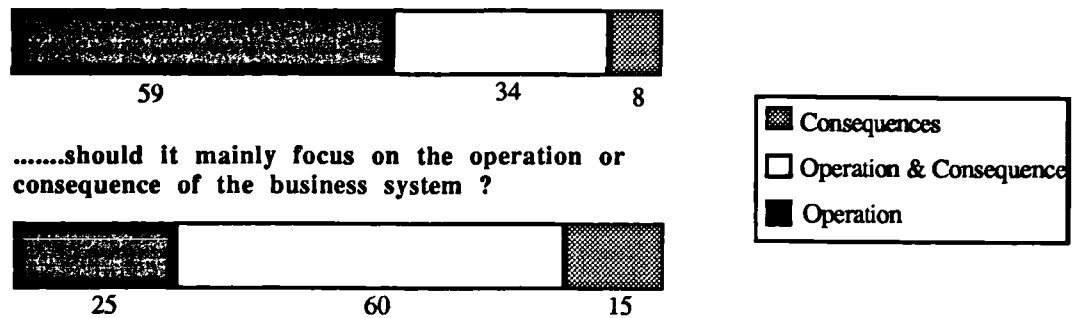
of science-based and humanities-based knowledge in Business Studies. This dichotomy was expressed in terms of numeracy and quantitative analysis to represent science-based knowledge and ideas and issues to represent humanities-based knowledge. The responses to this question indicate that lecturers would generally like to see greater emphasis on science-based knowledge (see figure 18).

Figure 18 : Does Business Studies mainly focus on numeracy and quantitative analysis or ideas and issues ? (%)



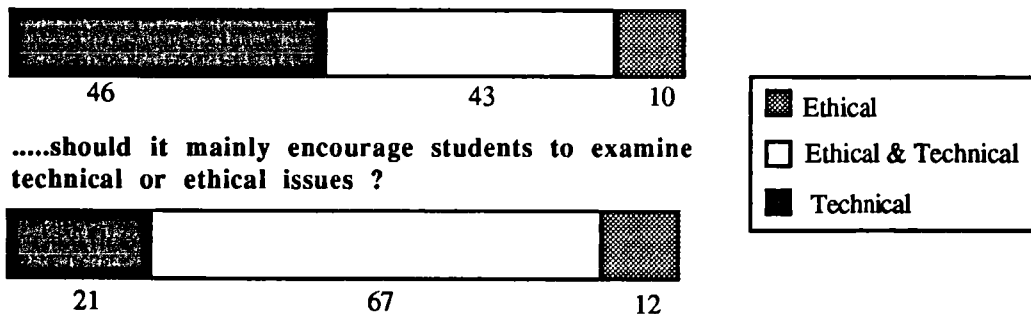
In order to clarify lecturer attitudes concerning this dichotomy a series of further questions reflected further on this concept. Although lecturers expressed a concern that there should be more emphasis on numeracy and quantitative analysis, in other respects they indicated a desire to see more emphasis on humanities-based knowledge. They felt, for example (see figure 19) that there ought to be a greater focus on the social consequences of the business system. While, according to lecturers, the curriculum as currently constructed mainly focuses on how the business system operates only a quarter of respondents support the view that this ought to be the main focus of Business Studies.

Figure 19 : Does Business Studies mainly encourage students to analyse the operation of the business system or its social consequences ? (%)



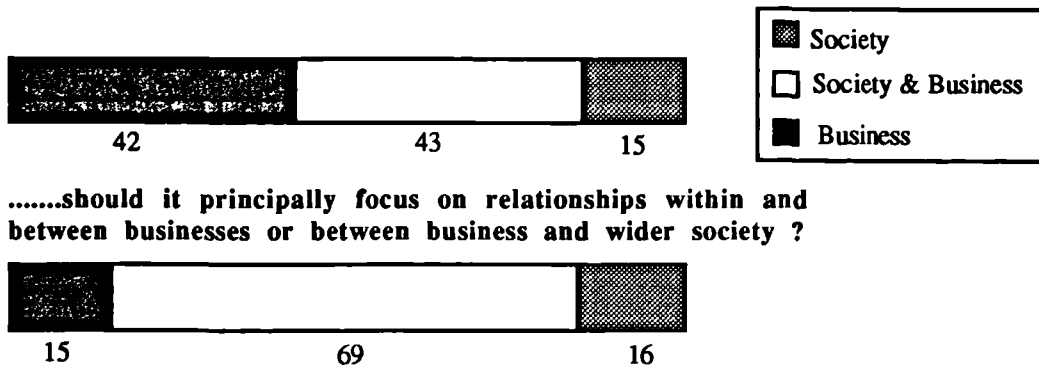
In subsequent questions there were further indications that lecturers want to see more stress on humanities-based knowledge despite their concern regarding the general numeracy of business students. Lecturers believe that the curriculum should place less emphasis on technical issues, where quantitative approaches are normal, and more on ethical issues (figure 20).

Figure 20 : Does Business Studies mainly encourage students to examine technical or ethical issues ? (%)



Similarly, lecturers feel that Business Studies should be less insular and concern itself more with the relationship between business and society (figure 21). Responses to these questions appear to indicate that lecturers might support a stronger representation of non-technical elements such as ethics or sociology.

Figure 21 : Does Business Studies principally focus on relationships within and between businesses or between business and wider society ? (%)



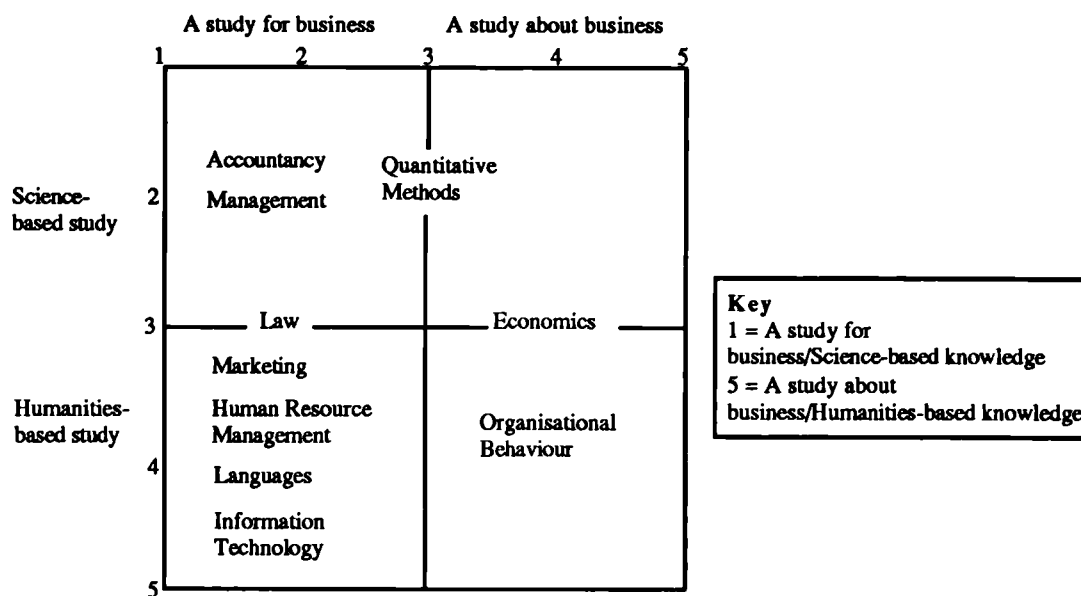
Combining each of the questions concerning knowledge it was possible to produce a composite measure as a more reliable guide to lecturer understanding. As previously noted, proportionately more male lecturers teach science-based subjects than their female counterparts. Perhaps as a result of this proportionately more male lecturers believe that Business Studies should mainly focus on science-based knowledge compared to women on the basis of the composite measure. Furthermore, lecturers teaching science-based subjects tend to be older and, perhaps predictably, support for science-based knowledge rises with age.

Differences in attitude were also apparent between lecturers in old and new universities. There were quite marked differences in the perspectives of lecturers from these two, previously distinct types of institution. A majority of lecturers at old universities (55%) think Business Studies should be a science-based study whereas less than one third of their colleagues at new universities are of the same opinion. Although the old universities represent only a small minority of Business Studies provision, the 22 respondents from 3 such institutions in the survey were uncharacteristic of the sample as a whole. The first degree backgrounds of the 22 were, by in large, in science-based disciplines. Most had a first degree in mathematics, engineering or economics. Hence, attitudes towards knowledge across the former binary divide in UK higher education appears to be closely connected to the first degree background of lecturers.

Analysis by teaching subject

An analysis of attitude on the basis of the main teaching subject of each lecturer indicated important differences in attitudes to both aims and knowledge. Lecturers were asked to indicate their main teaching subject within Business Studies. On this basis 10 principal subjects were identified, the most important of which, in terms of lecturer numbers, were accountancy, marketing, economics and human resource management. Aggregate responses in relation to each of these teaching subjects indicated the existence of quite divergent views. Almost a half of lecturers in both economics and organisational behaviour thought the aim of a Business Studies degree should be a study about business. However, this was not a view shared by lecturers in any of the other subjects. Indeed, a majority of lecturers in HRM, languages, marketing, law and management wanted Business Studies to be a study for business. There were also sharp differences in attitudes to knowledge on the basis of teaching subject. The most common (or modal) response of lecturers in accountancy and management was to favour a science-based curriculum while a majority of respondents who teach quantitative methods also saw Business Studies in these terms. By contrast, a preference for a humanities-based curriculum was the most common response of lecturers in marketing, information technology and languages. Further, a majority of those teaching organisational behaviour and exactly one half of lecturers in HRM wanted Business Studies to be humanities-based. By taking the modal response from each of these teaching subjects, the position of each subject can be plotted on the 'map' (or analytical framework) of the Business Studies curriculum originally identified in chapter 6 (figure 22).

Figure 22 : Lecturer perspectives by main teaching subject (based on mode scores)



Professional and academic traditions

It is clear that lecturers in Business Studies are drawn from a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds. Lecturers in economics are drawn from a significantly different tradition than lecturers in most other business subjects. They also hold quite divergent views from those teaching the majority of other subjects within the curriculum. Economics represents a distinct, academic subject tradition within Business Studies. Lecturers in economics are far more likely to hold a first degree in economics and come from a research or lecturing background rather than out of business or industry. It is, perhaps, for this reason that lecturers in economics see Business Studies as an education about business rather than as a study for business. However, lecturers in organisational behaviour, who also more commonly regard Business Studies as a study about business, are drawn from a wide variety of academic backgrounds ranging from engineering to history. In common with those teaching economics though, lecturers in organisational behaviour are unlikely to have spent their previous employment in business or industry. This characteristic is shared by lecturers in quantitative methods although the overwhelming majority of these lecturers hold a common first degree in mathematics. The *academic tradition* of

lecturers in economics and organisational behaviour contrasted sharply with the more dominant *professional tradition* within Business Studies. Many of the other main teaching subjects parallel the functional aspects of business, such as marketing, accounting and HRM. Lecturers in these specialisms were all drawn from very diverse first degree disciplines and were much more likely to have had recent experience of business or industry. These lecturers represent a professional rather than an academic tradition within Business Studies. Lecturers in economics represent an ageing, and predominantly male tradition within Business Studies. It is therefore likely that there will be a decline in this minority academic tradition in the future given that younger lecturers, who are also more likely to be female, are drawn from the professional tradition.

Further issues

The framework for the research was based on an assumption that a study for business operates as an oppositional aim to a study about business. However, as Silver and Brennan (1988) suggest, in their study of engineering and Business Studies degrees, lecturers may regard the aims of a 'liberal education' and 'vocationalism' as complementary rather than conflicting. Hence, a study about business could act as a suitable study for business.

Thus the liberal goal of the education of the whole person is expressed as part of rather than in opposition to the pursuit of the vocational.

Silver and Brennan (1988) p.240

A third of lecturers expressed a preference for a curriculum which equally addresses aims in terms of both a study for and about business. However, whether this represented a positive preference for a 'neutral' concept of education, embracing both extrinsic and intrinsic aims (Downie, Loudfoot and Telfer, 1974), or simple indifference to the issue needs more thorough investigation. Moreover, Scott (1995) has argued that the post-industrial age demands workers with more generic, broadly-based professional skills placing more emphasis on intellectual attributes. Ironically,

according to Ainley (1994), this may lead to a definition of competence more in tune with older elite forms of education. In terms of Business Studies, this may mean that an education about business may be regarded as a more appropriate means of achieving an education for business. This is illustrated by the view of some lecturers that the development of academic skills on the Business Studies degree should be developed because they are valuable for employment.

Conclusion

The questionnaire highlighted the existence of a wide spectrum of opinion among Business Studies lecturers. However, the analysis undertaken has been mainly exploratory in order to provide a basis for further investigation. Becher (1989) has suggested that academics are strongly influenced by the disciplinary values associated with their first or higher degree. Given that under 17 per cent of the sample held a first degree in Business or Management, it is likely that a complex range of 'tribes' (Becher, 1989) operate within Business Studies each with subtly different sets of priorities and points of self-identification. Interviews with lecturers in Business Studies from four representative institutions will help to illuminate a number of outstanding research issues which have arisen as a result of the survey.

CHAPTER 8

Lecturer Attitudes : Institutional Perspectives

Introduction

As previously noted, there are currently 56 UK institutions teaching a first degree in Business Studies. In the academic year 1995/96 (UCAS, 1995) the vast majority of such degrees remained in new universities with 40 such institutions offering a degree programme. However, Business Studies is also present at 7 old university institutions, 5 colleges and institutes of higher education, 3 further education colleges with higher education funding and at Buckingham University as an independent institution. Four of these institutions were selected in order to carry out interviews with Business Studies lecturers. These institutions were chosen because they are representative of the different types and traditions in which the contemporary Business Studies degree may be found. Two of the institutions selected were new universities as Business Studies degrees were mainly developed and still largely remain within the former polytechnics. Funding for business and management is the most significant element of higher education provision within further education and, therefore, it was appropriate to include a further education college with a Business Studies degree. Finally, to complete a representative range of institutions an old university college was also selected. These institutions will subsequently be referred to as New Coastal University, New Urban University, Old Rural University and Suburban College, respectively.

31 interviews with Business Studies lecturers were completed in May, June and July, 1996. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and interviewees responded to questions in relation to a range of themes including their sense of identity as lecturers contributing to a Business Studies degree programme, the appropriate aim of a Business Studies degree, the nature, organisation and production of knowledge and the development of skills (see Appendix 3). The first part of this chapter will draw on interview data to provide a commentary on different institutional contexts while the

second part of the chapter will examine lecturer attitudes to pedagogic issues.

The institutions

New Coastal University

Business Studies was first introduced at this institution in the 1960s which was one of the original four institutions to establish such a programme in the academic year 1965/66. The institution has recently semesterised and modularised its programmes of study. The Course Director commented that there had been significant diversification of provision over recent years in addition to the generic four year Business Studies degree. A Business Administration (BABA) degree, a three year, non-work placement alternative to Business Studies, had been introduced together with a Business Studies with Languages degree where students spent their third year on work placement in a foreign country.

The degree structure is built on a range of traditional business disciplines in the first year such as accounting, law, quantitative methods and economics. A business skills unit is also included. A range of functional business subjects, such as marketing and operations management, are introduced in the second year. Further units in employment law and organisational behaviour build-on knowledge acquired in the first year. Following a year long work placement students return in their fourth year to complete double semester compulsory units in business strategy and a project. A very broad range of options are also available in specialist areas such as the European business environment and occupational psychology.

New Urban University

The degree is located within the university's Business School and was first established during the 1970s. The institution has also recently semesterised and modularised. The Business Studies degree has developed a series of 5 separate degree routes. In addition to the generic four year sandwich degree, Business Studies is offered by part

time mode via attendance on two evenings per week. Business Studies with Languages is also available as a four year pathway where students take a second language and study and work abroad for a total of 18 months. Two three year alternatives exist for students unwilling or unable to complete a work placement year. These alternatives are a BABA degree or a Business Studies with Languages Pathway. The Business Studies degree is based principally on a range of business disciplines and business functions in the first two years. In the first year students study the business disciplines of economics, accounting, information technology, quantitative literacy, business law and organisational analysis taking a one semester unit in each subject. Students are also required to complete a one semester unit in business skills. Students studying a foreign language drop business law. In the second year a greater element of choice enters the programme. Apart from compulsory semester long units in data analysis and management skills, students may choose from option streams and electives in a range of subjects reflecting more emphasis on business functions such as marketing and human resource management. Students spend the third year on industrial placement and also complete a project in connection with their experiences. In the fourth and final year students are required to take a one semester unit in strategic management and two semester long project units. Option pathways are offered in finance, business information systems, economics of international business, HRM and marketing.

The choice of five separate degree programmes in Business Studies/Administration was strongly linked by lecturers to the cultural diversity and economic circumstances of the student body. The institution has a significant proportion of students from ethnic minority groups and is located in an urban area with high relative levels of unemployment and economic deprivation. A large number of students are drawn from the local population. The importance of the three year BABA degree and the Business Studies with Languages Pathway, were stressed in terms of the needs of mature students and students with financial difficulties wanting to complete their degree in a shorter period.

The Business Studies degree at this institution was founded seven years ago and represents a relatively recent innovation. The institution has traditionally provided a range of degree programmes related to agriculture and the Business Studies degree evolved out of this context. The original degree structure had a strong focus on agriculture. However, the emphasis has shifted in recent years from the production to the consumption of food whilst retaining strong links with the food industry. The course team is small and are drawn principally from academic backgrounds in agricultural science or economics. The expertise of staff within a clearly defined industry means that lecturers are sharply attuned to employer needs. There is a particularly strong and close relationship with employers who play a direct role in helping to shape curriculum change.

In common with other programmes in Business Studies, the first year of the degree focuses on business disciplines such as law, economics and quantitative aspects. There are, though, options running throughout the programme with a particular emphasis on languages and the European food industry. Unlike programmes at most other institutions, management units appear in all three taught years of the degree. Functional disciplines, such as accounting and marketing research, together with a project course are introduced in the second year. Also, unusually for a Business Studies programme, corporate strategy is taught during the second rather than in the fourth year. Following the year long work placement, students return to take a large number of compulsory courses including HRM, international marketing and two other courses with an emphasis on guest speakers from industry and case study work. Assessment is heavily weighted (70 per cent) toward the final year to reflect "*the transformation of students*" during the work placement period.

The re-orientation of the degree away from agriculture and toward a more generic structure is also reflected in the profile of students who undertake the programme. Originally the majority of entrants came from an agricultural background whereas, according to the Course Director, most students are now drawn from outside the

industry. Compared to both New Coastal and New Urban University, this institution has relatively small numbers of students with an annual intake between 30 and 35. There is particular emphasis on group work, case studies, tutorial support and guest speakers from industry described by one interviewee as “*high care, high involvement education*”. Institutional change is not reported to have had any major impact on the degree. Although modularisation has taken place, in the absence of semesterisation, this was not considered to have had any fundamental impact on the provision of Business Studies.

Suburban College

The programme, located within the Business School at a further education college, is offered as either a four year sandwich degree or as a one year full time or two year part time ‘top up’ to students who have completed a ‘good’ Higher National Diploma (HND) or Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Business and Finance or Leisure Management. The degree was validated two years ago by the Open University. The programme is taught on a module and semester basis although the institution is only partly semesterised.

The degree structure differs in certain respects to that at New Coastal and New Urban universities and at Old Rural University. There is more emphasis on interdisciplinary modules from the beginning of the programme although elements of law, accounting, information technology, statistics and economics are included within first year modules. There is, however, less emphasis in particular on economics and organisational behaviour, throughout the degree. In the second year, there is a strong focus on management modules. In the fourth year, following work placement, students are required to take business policy and research methods in the first semester following which a range of ‘specialist vocational pathways’ are offered in the management of IT, business law, finance and accounting, human resources, leisure management, marketing and environmental policy. However, due to student demand, only the marketing pathway has been operational since the validation of the degree.

Institutional trends

The CNAA helped to establish coherence and consistency in the Business Studies degree providing direction from a subject specific point of view. The curriculum is now fragmenting and diversifying in response to system-driven change within higher education. Interviewees highlighted the impact of a number of agendas across higher education which are dictating change in the design and provision of the Business Studies degree. These changes include the composition of the student body, access, modularisation, semesterisation and a greater emphasis on research prompted by the Research Assessment Exercise.

Diversity

The generic four year Business Studies degree is being differentiated as a product to suit the needs of a wider range of student groups. Significantly, there is increasing provision of BABA degrees. This means that work placements are no longer incorporated as a standard component of an undergraduate education in business. The emergence of the BABA degree is perceived as a response to the changing profile of the Business Studies student in the 1990s. A growth in mature students with previous or current work experience, students with financial problems, overseas students wishing to complete their studies within three years, and general difficulties obtaining work placements for larger numbers of students, have increased pressures to relax the traditional year long work placement. Students of Business Studies are also being provided with a range of different routes through their degree often focusing on a professional area (eg accountancy or marketing) or combining with Languages. There is considerable concern among lecturers with regard to these changes and a widespread feeling that the decline of the work placement is having an adverse effect on the quality of Business Studies provision. The BABA degree, the non-placement alternative to Business Studies, was regarded by almost all interviewees as an inferior degree. The commitment of lecturers to the work placement year was based a number of perceived benefits. According to lecturers the year out in industry provides a range of advantages for students including an improved ability to apply theory to practice, a

“foot in the door” with a potential future employer, and vastly improved personal organisation and motivation resulting from exposure to the discipline of professional life.

Access

Student numbers had increased significantly at all institutions with the exception of Old Rural University. Many lecturers commented that, as a result of this expansion, the average student was *“weaker”*. Lecturers were particularly concerned that students were being permitted to *“overspecialise”* at too early a stage within the programme with option choices often available from the first or second year. Several interviewees were worried that the concept of Business Studies as a general foundation was being undermined by this recent trend. In particular, it was felt that the implicit balance within the curriculum between *“hard”* areas such as statistics or mathematics and *“soft”* areas such as HRM was under threat. The opportunity of earlier specialisation means that students are able to avoid hard or soft areas according to their own ability and preferences. A number of lecturers related the limited ability of the student body to cope with hard subjects and the consequent need to stem a high failure rate with the decision to reduce the amount of compulsory quantitative elements. At New Urban University the course director commented that the first year quantitative methods unit had been replaced by a ‘quantitative literacy’ unit for the 1996 academic year to reflect the more limited numerical ability of students. Several lecturers considered that greater access combined with falling standards in the numeracy skills of students entering higher education was leading to a subtle shift toward ‘softer’ degrees in Business Studies with less emphasis on mathematical and statistical aspects.

I think there is a need for hard and soft (ie knowledge). I think the problem becomes though if you want to open access to a greater percentage of the population who might want to go on to do a degree that unfortunately many of them will get stumped by hard elements. I think a lot of Business Studies degrees can focus on a soft core.

(Marketing Lecturer, Suburban College)

Similar problems, concerning the mathematical ability of students, were reported at Old Rural University. However, rather than reduce hard elements, a decision had been made to increase support for students through tutorials with postgraduates acting as additional tutors. It was commented that *“a lot of hand holding”* went on in the first year to help students through the compulsory module in mathematics and statistics. This approach was only possible though because of relatively small student numbers and considerable tutorial contact, a situation not shared by the other three institutions.

There is a particular problem associated with increasing student numbers in further education where students have traditionally experienced more contact with staff at sub-degree level. A lecturer at Suburban College commented that many of their degree students had previously undertaken an HND programme and become accustomed to considerable tutor contact. This had raised expectations among students that they would receive the same high level of guidance and tuition outside allocated teaching time on the degree which they had experienced as HND students.

What we've got is a system where we're trying to recruit larger numbers but teach a degree level programme in the way an HND is run. So, in other words, we're too closely involved with individual students. Students have expectations that they can have access to us whenever they want. Whereas at university, lecturers will post a list of dates and times when they are available they might be teaching a maximum of 14 hours a week. But we can teach up to 23 hours a week yet students expect at the end of a class we should be able to spend 15 minutes helping them.

(Marketing Lecturer, Suburban College)

Semesters and Modules

The curriculum is organised on the basis of modules at all four institutions and a semester system is also in place at each institution except Old Rural University. Lecturers commented that the combined effect of modules and semesters had necessitated a re-organisation of the Business Studies curriculum with one semester

modules of between 12 and 15 weeks replacing longer courses based on the full academic year. According to many interviewees, this change has led to a decline in integrated approaches to Business Studies. While modularisation permits students greater choice in the construction of their own degree many interviewees expressed concern that it was resulting in a fragmented curriculum with students “*dipping in and out*” of Business Studies. It was felt that shorter, semester long modules made it more difficult to provide a coherent, integrated learning experience. Several interviewees commented on this trend:

The curriculum has become much more fragmented. We’re now offering little one semester units whereas before we had three years integrated development.
(Economics Lecturer, New Coastal University)

We are looking more and more at doing modules so we can combine with other degree paths..which then, to some extent, could lead to the compartmentalisation of topics.

(Management Lecturer, Suburban College)

Student choice is also playing an increasingly significant role in the re-shaping of the degree facilitated by modularisation. A conflict is again arising in this context between lecturer perspectives with regard to what students ought to study and student choice. This loss of control over the curriculum is putting pressure on lecturers in less popular subject areas within Business Studies, such as economics and other subjects perceived by students as less interesting or too ‘hard’. Correspondingly, student choice is increasing the study of more popular subjects, especially marketing.

I have to try very hard to sell my subject in the first year to students so that at least a good proportion of them will choose Economics in the second year when it is an option. Many students regard choosing Economics as shooting themselves in the foot because they are actually choosing more difficult options.
(Economics lecturer, New Coastal University)

Student numbers

Both New Coastal and New Urban University have experienced a rapid expansion in the number of students pursuing a Business Studies degree over recent years. This is perceived by lecturers as a threat to the quality of teaching and learning with more limited opportunities for staff-student contact.

We're teaching something like 160 students in the lecture theatre. Its a broadcast. There's no dialogue.

(Corporate Strategy Lecturer, New Coastal University)

The modularisation of the curriculum had led to less contact hours and consequently many lecturers identified an urgent need for students to take greater responsibility for their own learning. According to a lecturer in organisational behaviour at New Coastal University there was a need to make contact time 'count' as a means of stimulating students to "*be more proactive vis a vis their learning*". Most lecturers, though, were pessimistic about the future quality of Business Studies degrees in an age of rapidly expanding student numbers.

We will live in a world with huge (student) numbers, relatively few staff, less staff-student contact and, frankly, less bright students at the margin.

(Economics Lecturer, New Urban University)

Research

Increased competition between institutions on the basis of research was also subject to comment at all institutions, particularly lecturers drawn from one of the three higher education institutions. The course director at New Coastal University contended that priorities to increase the research strength of the institution had changed the basis on which Business Studies lecturers were recruited.

The next generation of lecturers (in Business Studies) are being recruited as

relatively young, ex-graduates with little or no industrial experience who are being recruited for their research potential.

(Corporate Strategy Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Research was not regarded as a practical possibility, however, by members of staff at Suburban College who were more likely to be recruited as erstwhile company trainers or lecturers from other Further Education colleges.

We're not able to go to conferences. The Principal two years ago emphasised the importance of research but we don't have the resources for research. We don't have the time for it first thing, we don't have money or things like leaders or research students. There are cut backs in the library. How are we supposed to do research ?

(Marketing Lecturer, Suburban College)

Lecturer attitudes

Interviewees were drawn from a wide spectrum of teaching specialisms including economics, information systems, employee relations, corporate strategy, management, HRM, marketing, accountancy and languages. The overwhelming majority of interviewees identified themselves as subject specialists contributing to a Business Studies degree rather than lecturers in Business Studies *per se*. Interviewees from Suburban College, though, largely considered themselves Business Studies lecturers as opposed to subject specialists. The interviews raised a wide range of issues relating to the Business Studies curriculum. Interviewees were asked, in particular, to reflect on the aim of a Business Studies degree, their own pedagogy, and how knowledge is generated and organised within Business Studies. On the basis of the interviews a number of defining issues emerged concerning aims, pedagogy and knowledge.

Identity

Interviewees were asked to comment on their sense of identity as lecturers

contributing to a Business Studies degree programme. Two distinct positions emerged from discussion with interviewees in this respect.

The majority of interviewees defined themselves, first and foremost, as subject specialists. Their principal point of self-identification was with a particular academic discipline not with Business Studies *per se*. These lecturers saw their role as “servicing” the needs of the Business Studies degree and/or the business and management department. Interviewees teaching economics or languages had a particularly strong sense of a separate identity. In the case of the economists this sense of identity was related to the fact that most had spent their career teaching economics in higher education. Economists also related their distinct sense of identity to a career-long pattern of research interests in economics. Linguists teaching on a Business Studies degree were normally drawn from outside the business and management school or department. At New Urban University linguists were drawn from within a Business School which had only recently merged with Modern Languages. Hence, many linguists saw themselves in a tangential role as strictly “servicing” the needs of the Business Studies degree. Indeed, most linguists felt excluded from the management and development of the programme.

Lecturers in organisational behaviour, industrial relations and HRM also largely defined their sense of identity in terms of a particular academic specialism rather than as lecturers in Business Studies. Several of these interviewees defined themselves as “academic sociologists”. Many felt that their sense of identity had been diluted by a drift away from the teaching of sociology within Business Studies and a re-casting of sociology as part of HRM and organisational behaviour. One interviewee argued that while economists had retained a separate identity and control over the teaching of economics within Business Studies, sociologists had lost control over the separateness of their discipline.

Economics was taught in the Economics Department and still largely is.

Sociology here is taught by Business and Management staff which wasn't the case years ago. Economists have maintained control over their own discipline.

Economists I would pick out more than anyone else have been most reluctant to become more integrated within a business and management department.
(Organisational Behaviour Lecturer, New Coastal University)

By contrast, a substantial minority of interviewees defined their own principal sense of identity as lecturers in Business Studies. These individuals were mainly drawn from lecturers teaching management, corporate strategy, information technology and marketing. Lecturers identifying closely with the study of business, rather than a separate, contributing academic discipline, tended to have stronger management or business experience and were less research oriented. Two interviewees commented that the teaching of corporate strategy demanded an *"integrative approach"*, an understanding of a wide range of business knowledge and functions which only a non-specialist practitioner could command. Most lecturers interviewed at the Suburban College shared the perspective that they were principally lecturers in Business Studies. This attitude can be attributed, at least in part, to the limited opportunities for lecturers to conduct research and the absence of any practical encouragement for research within their institution. Also, the Suburban College lecturers were required to be more flexible in teaching more hours per week and across a wider range of subject specialisms than their counterparts in higher education institutions.

Aims

Some lecturers see their role as preparing students for work in industry while others see their role as providing an education through a Business Studies degree.

(Industrial Relations Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Interviewees were asked to express an opinion with respect to the appropriate aim of a Business Studies degree. Two distinctive positions emerged. The majority view was that the purpose of a Business Studies degree should be to help students to *"learn how to think"*; to being capable of critically challenging knowledge claims rather than simply absorbing knowledge. The justification given for this position though varied

between respondents. Some respondents justified this position on the basis that a Business Studies education should be inseparable from the purpose of a higher education. This *intrinsic* justification maintained that the essence of a higher education should be about critical thinking and freedom of expression.

Question : 'When you teach on a Business Studies programme what are you trying to achieve with the students ?'

Response : Critical thinking. At the end of the day I believe students are here to think. That is the only opportunity they are going to have in their lives to do some academic work and enjoy freedom of expression without pressures of life as we know it.

(Marketing Lecturer, New Coastal University)

We should keep in mind what a degree is about. Its about people who can think.

(Industrial Relations Lecturer, New Coastal University)

However, other interviewees supported the notion of critical thinking on the basis of an *extrinsic* justification. These lecturers argued that in a post-Fordist business environment the ability to think critically would be crucial to coping effectively with a rapidly changing set of circumstances.

What we have to impart is a way of thinking. We have to train them in how to deal with a constantly changing mountain of facts because we know that tomorrow's mountain of facts is going to be different than today's...So it's training them to think.

(Finance and Economics Lecturer, Old Rural University)

Developing people to think more flexibly is what's going to benefit them in the future as a student going out to work. The only way to be flexible is to get into the habit of asking questions.

(Management Lecturer, Suburban College)

Other interviewees naturally extended the logic of the post-Fordist position, that the needs of a changing economy demanded an intellectual, non-specific education, by arguing that teaching philosophy or the classics might be a better preparation for business than taking a degree in Business Studies.

You cannot reduce it down to teaching them (ie the students) about business because if you're going to be critical, if you are going to be able to think, you have to start off with those things which criticise the way in which you think. You have to start off with philosophy.
(Economics Lecturer, New Urban University)

We want them (ie students) to be able to cope with conflicts, differences of approach, in the way that the literature is put together and want them to use that intellectual ability to analyse. Teaching people classics or philosophy is just as good a way as training for business as anything else.
(Human Resource Management Lecturer, New Urban University)

Lecturers teaching economics, organisational behaviour and industrial relations tended to favour 'learning to think' as their principal pedagogic aim. A more pragmatic view was taken by lecturers in management, accountancy and marketing who defined the aim of a Business Studies degree as a preparation in specific knowledge and skills for a business career or 'learning to do'. Many of these lecturers argued that Business Studies is a vocational rather than academic subject. Students, according to these lecturers, should be capable of entering a business and immediately applying the knowledge and skills which had been acquired on the Business Studies degree.

Business Studies by its very nature is a vocationally oriented subject area.
(Course Director and Business Studies Lecturer, Suburban College)

A subject like Business Studies is very much an applied subject. It's not academic.
(Management Lecturer, Suburban College)

My understanding was and is that if I want to do a Business Studies degree it means that I want to be a business person, running a business. That's the goal. To become a manager.

(Marketing Lecturer, New Urban University)

To me Business Studies is vocational. Its preparing someone to go out into business.

(Information Systems Lecturer, New Coastal University)

A number of language lecturers made a distinction between their pedagogic aim when teaching on a business programme as opposed to teaching their subject on a language degree. When teaching on a Business Studies degree, language lecturers were concerned with the applied use of a language in a business context whereas accuracy, grammar, translation and culture were more important considerations within a languages degree programme. Thus, language lecturers have a different, more limited, set of aims as lecturers when teaching on a Business Studies degree.

The nature of knowledge

There was a widespread perception among lecturers that the study of 'business' involves the re-contextualisation of existing knowledge. Thus, Business Studies is not regarded by lecturers as an academic discipline in its own right but as a compilation of a range of existing academic disciplines such as economics, sociology, psychology and mathematics.

I don't see Business Studies as a subject which has its own integrated, specific methodology and body of knowledge. It is very much a ragbag subject.

(Human Resource Management Lecturer, New Coastal University)

A lot of it is re-contextualising what is out there...BABS degrees are very much a synthesis of knowledge, a re-hashing of existing knowledge.

(Industrial Relations Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Moreover, most lecturers also regard their own teaching subject within Business Studies as a re-contextualisation. Lecturers in HRM and organisational behaviour were particularly prominent in making the argument that their own teaching subjects were re-contextualisations of sociology, psychology and politics.

There is a difficulty in constructing it (ie Human Resource Management) in its own right. I think that's partly because of its basis which is very firmly in sociology and psychology which are disciplines. I don't think HRM is a discipline.

(Human Resource Management Lecturer, New Coastal University)

However, lecturers in economics took the view that their teaching subject, unlike many others within Business Studies, constituted an established and distinct academic discipline. Indeed, many economists expressed the opinion that their discipline formed *the* fundamental theoretical basis for studying business and considered that marketing and corporate strategy were subjects within the Business Studies curriculum which relied heavily on perspectives drawn from economics. These newer subjects, it was argued, re-contextualised knowledge drawn from the study of economics.

The organisation and selection of knowledge

Lecturers were asked to express an opinion regarding the role of science-based (or hard) knowledge and humanities-based (or soft) knowledge within a Business Studies degree, the way this knowledge should be organised and the main influences in shaping and re-shaping knowledge within the Business Studies degree.

An overwhelming majority of lecturers expressed the view that the Business Studies degree should strike a balance between hard and soft knowledge. Interviewees also emphasised that students should learn "*basic disciplines*" such as economics, sociology and mathematics or statistics before this knowledge is re-contextualised at a later stage in the degree programme.

Certainly all BABS students should have exposure to both quantitative and qualitative areas.

(Organisational Behaviour Lecturer, New Coastal University)

I don't believe students can meaningfully engage in that kind of discussion (ie about the business environment) unless they've got some basic principles of understanding in the first place.

(Economics Lecturer, New Coastal University)

I would try to bring it back to the study of disciplines which are useful in business as opposed to a set of spurious disciplines about something which is changing from day to day.

(Economics Lecturer, New Urban University)

However, interviewees expressed the view that student ability and student choice were becoming increasingly powerful factors in re-shaping knowledge within Business Studies. According to lecturers, the limited numerical ability of students was resulting in a reduction in the teaching of mathematics and quantitative methods. At New Urban University the first year 'quantitative methods' unit had been replaced with a 'quantitative literacy' unit for the 1996 academic year. The Course Director commented that the new unit had been written to reflect the more limited numerical ability of students entering the university.

In the past people who designed the course tried to get the balance between what we call quantitative and qualitative. Now, I'm afraid the qualitative side is outstripping the quantitative side because of the type of student we get. We are getting more and more students with very limited knowledge in quantitative methods.

(Course Director and Marketing Lecturer, New Urban University)

Similar comments were also made at Suburban College expressing the preference to retain hard elements but recognising the pragmatic need to re-mould the Business

Studies degree on the basis of student ability especially given the widening of access to higher education.

Student choice is also playing an increasingly significant role in the re-shaping of the Business Studies degree. Greater student choice has been facilitated within most institutions via modularisation. However, the impact of modularisation and semesterisation is overwhelmingly regarded by lecturers as a threat to teaching quality and student learning. Lecturers are concerned that teaching quality will be imperilled by shorter, semester-length modules failing to provide students with an adequate opportunity to understand and reflect on their learning. Examinations at the end of each semester are disliked by lecturers who argued that students are being over-assessed as a result.

Although there's no CNAAB the university regulations are very tight to make unitisation and semesterisation work. On the one side they say there is a clean sheet of paper but then you've got a series of boxes. All you can do is fit into those boxes. Things like assessment and the number of units and the time factor do actually control you.

(Economics Lecturer, New Urban University)

A conflict is also arising in the context of modularisation between lecturer perspectives with regard to what students ought to study and student choice. This loss of control over the curriculum is putting pressure on lecturers in 'unpopular' subject areas within Business Studies, such as economics and other subjects perceived as 'hard'. Correspondingly, student choice is increasing the study of more popular subjects, especially marketing.

Another important factor (in shaping what goes into a Business Studies degree) is student choice. Marketing is widely chosen.

(Information Systems Lecturer, New Coastal University)

The combination of student ability and student choice are acting as a catalyst in

shifting control over the curriculum from the producer (ie the lecturer) to the consumer (ie the student). Whereas the preference of lecturers as 'producers' is to maintain a strong quantitative element within a curriculum balanced between hard and soft knowledge, student ability and, via modularisation, student choice is leading to a shift towards the provision of more soft knowledge within Business Studies.

Lecturers were asked to comment on the relationship between knowledge in Business Studies and the business context. The interview explored with interviewees their views on the influence of the business context in shaping and re-shaping knowledge in Business Studies.

Several interviewees argued that the selection of knowledge to form the basis of a Business Studies degree was largely shaped by the interests of the Course Director and/or established teaching team. Thus, knowledge was seen by these interviewees as producer-led (ie determined by university lecturers). The balance of power between lecturers seeking to represent the interests of their own subject specialism was identified as an important influence.

The direction it (ie the Business Studies curriculum) goes is very much coloured by who the course manager is and the disciplines they come from. Two years ago we had a course manager who was from a psychological background and that flavoured the sort of things which were introduced.

(Organisational Behaviour Lecturer, New Coastal University)

A considerable amount of the direction of the degree relates to the factional interests of the course management team.

(Information Systems Lecturer, New Coastal University)

The history of the departmental context within which Business Studies has evolved appears to also play an important role in determining the representation of knowledge. The study of economics was more strongly represented within the higher education institutions visited as opposed to Suburban College. At all three higher education

institutions visited Business Studies had evolved out of departments of Economics whereas the Business School at Suburban College had been created more recently and without an historical association with the study of economics. Resentment at the continuing influence of economics and economists in shaping the Business Studies degree surfaced in more than one interview. One marketing lecturer commented that economists needed to justify the application of their subject within a Business Studies programme:

The economists should actually explain what exactly it is they are teaching, what exactly they are doing. How can I make sense of this particular theory ? How can I make any sense and apply it ?

(Marketing Lecturer, New Urban University)

Specialist interests among staff also play a key role in curriculum development. The agricultural/food industry background of staff at Old Rural University was clearly highly influential in the framing of their programme. There was an underlying tension, however, between the views expressed by the former (and founding) Course Director and the current postholder. The former Course Director at New Rural University had originally established a curriculum with a very specific focus on agriculture/food production reflecting the traditional, core work of the institution. The current Course Director explained that he had re-directed the programme towards the food retailing sector. There was some evidence that this change of orientation had initially been resisted by several members of the original teaching team. Specialist interests also played a clear role at Suburban College. The existence of specialist options in business forecasting, unusual within the context of a Business Studies degree, is closely connected to the interests and expertise of two staff in this area.

The production of knowledge

Lecturers were asked to comment more specifically about the relationship between the context of application and their own subject specialisms. A distinction emerged between *context-independent* and *context-dependent* subjects within Business Studies.

Context-independent subjects may be defined as those which contain a body of knowledge less responsive to short-term changes in business practice within the context of application. According to lecturers, certain subjects such as economics and sociology may be identified as context-independent because although these subjects inform an understanding of business practice their respective bodies of knowledge are not essentially responsive to short term trends in the way in which business is practised. Context-independence may also be related to the outlook of particular lecturers rather than purely based on the nature of certain subjects.

There are certain individuals (ie lecturers) who like their packaged product regardless of what is going on outside (ie in industry)..possibly those people who teach in the areas that don't change very much. If you look at strategic management and information systems which are very dynamic and continually changing then we could never afford to do that. I think it is driven by what is going on outside.

(Information Systems Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Context-dependent subjects, by contrast, may be defined as those which contain a more limited and contextually-determined body of knowledge. Subjects, such as corporate strategy, HRM and Management, are perceived to be more responsive to short-term changes in business practice in order to maintain legitimacy. However, again, this may also be a function of the attitude of certain lecturers to knowledge particularly where individuals have recently entered higher education from industry.

To a large extent this (ie marketing) reflects the needs of employers. Marketing is an increasingly important discipline particularly as we move more and more towards a service economy focusing on the needs of customers.

(Marketing Lecturer, Suburban College)

These context-dependent subjects were the object of considerable criticism stemming from lecturers in context-independent subjects. The main line of criticism which emerged was the contention that these subjects were based on shifting notions of

business success and that, therefore, knowledge is fundamentally conjunctual to notions of 'success'. In other words, what determines success changes within a rapidly altering business environment and that, therefore attempting to teach 'knowledge' in these subjects is an impossible task as it is determined by this shifting context.

Business Studies which is about how actual businesses operate, as opposed to disciplines which are relevant to business, has started to have a very fly by night character. In other words, they are teaching dogmas and doctrines and approaches which become very quickly outdated.

(Economics Lecturer, New Urban University)

One interviewee identified teaching about the reasons for the success of the Japanese economy as an example of a fad and argued that economic conditions in the 1990s had thrown into question the usefulness and reliability of this 'knowledge'. Several lecturers claimed that Management and HRM in particular were subject to short-term "*fads*" with Total Quality Management quoted as an example. Interviewees also claimed that soft knowledge subjects were more prone to fads than hard knowledge subjects. Marketing was identified as a further example.

Industrial Relations was identified as particularly sensitive to the political context. The decline in the teaching of this subject was strongly linked by subject specialists to the industrial relations policy of the UK government since 1979 and the consequent impact on business practise.

Trade Unions and collective bargaining are no longer as significant as they were 15 to 20 years ago. Therefore, there is a strong justification for reducing the amount of input.

(Industrial Relations Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Since the beginning of the 1980s there has been a fairly deliberate attempt to interfere in the curriculum of higher education. My own subject area (ie

industrial relations) was subject to a lot of external pressures. Departments were closed down. The Warwick Industrial Relations centre was subjected to a high level enquiry instituted by Keith Joseph into allegations of serious, fraudulent academic bias and lack of objectivity.

(Human Resource Management Lecturer, New Urban University)

Skills

The meaning of the word 'skills' in relation to the curriculum is clearly open to wide ranging interpretation. A number of interviewees made a distinction between vocational (or work-related) and academic skills. Vocational skills were defined as skills which could be applied in a business environment and examples given included teamworking, making an oral presentation, and the use of information technology. Academic skills were seen as techniques related to successful study at university and included essay writing, referencing, note-taking from a lecture and using information sources effectively.

Employers are looking much more for skills-based attributes; communication skills, analytical skills, problem-solving skills, presentation skills, inter-personal skills. The actual knowledge input is less important to employers.

(Course Director and Management Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Lecturers shared a range of concerns with respect to the development of vocational skills on a Business Studies degree. Most lecturers commented that skills development should be the responsibility of employers rather than higher education. They took the view that their role as lecturers was to teach general academic principles and encourage students to become critical thinkers rather than inculcating work-related skills.

I don't see it's our problem to teach people how to ride a bicycle. We're here to communicate principles not skills. It's industry's job to train them. It's our job to teach them.

(Economics Lecturer, New Coastal University)

The work placement on the Business Studies degree was identified by several lecturers as the appropriate place for the development of vocational skills, a distinct division of responsibilities between university-based learning and the workplace. Few lecturers embraced the idea that skills should be explicitly developed within separate teaching units dedicated to this purpose. Indeed, lecturers commented that units such as 'Business Skills' suffered from low academic status and were disliked by both students and lecturers alike.

I talk to a lot of students and the kind of business workshop, skills kind of courses that are run in the first year many of them regard as a joke. Many of the skills are extremely important but the place for developing those skills is the year they go out into industry.

(Economics Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Some lecturers were concerned that the teaching of skills encouraged an uncritical acceptance of agendas from industry. One lecturer cited teamworking as an example of this phenomenon where the development of this 'skill' overlooked the social, economic and political implications of the devolution of managerial decision-making.

We should be raising questions with students about the issue of working in teams.

(Industrial Relations Lecturer, New Coastal University)

What students are likely to get less of after they've left us is critical thinking and what they're likely to get more of is training and skills.

(Human Resource Management Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Other lecturers, however, were keen to see more emphasis on the development of skills as a relevant means of preparing students to enter the workplace.

When you get into business what you really must have is good people skills. The ability to network and relate to people is essential. Anything in the

curriculum that supports that is a good thing.

(Information Systems Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Interviewees also spoke about the nature of vocational skills required by employers. Many lecturers identified “*transferable*” skills needed by employers which students would be able to use immediately in a working environment such as the ability to give a presentation or to use information technology. However, a substantial minority of lecturers made reference to an increasing demand from employers for students to possess certain *personality-based* skills. General social skills and leadership ability in particular were given as examples of personality-based attributes required by employers. According to four interviewees who cited this phenomenon, employers now expect these attributes in addition to traditional transferable skills. They expressed concern that personality-based skills, although demanded by employers, were in effect unteachable personality attributes. One interviewee commented that employers now expect Business Schools to act as a “*finishing school*” and “*teach kids how to hold sherry glasses*”.

Companies have gone past skills. They have now gone into the field of personality and character. Now companies are saying they don’t want people who can just organise teams and run meetings. Now they want people who are going to be visionary leaders. I’m not sure you can teach that kind of thing.

(Economics Lecturer, New Urban University)

Employers are ever more preoccupied with the non-substantive parts of the curriculum. That is not even straight transferable skills but social skills.

(Economics Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Employers

With regard to the development of work-related skills some lecturers expressed the view that Business Studies should resist, or at least be critical of, the ‘needs’ of employers. Although this perspective was not expressed by the majority of

interviewees, most were critical in some way of employers. Some lecturers focused on what they regard as the 'hidden agenda' of employers - keen to express public support for the vocational courses and work-related skills but ultimately recruiting on the basis of elitist criteria. Lecturers from Suburban College were particularly conscious that their students were at a disadvantage in competing for jobs with graduates from universities.

Employers are looking for an all round person who shows the ability to get a good first degree from what the employers perceive is a good institution.

(Accountancy Lecturer, New Coastal University)

The first thing they look for is a degree from an organisation of good repute.

(Marketing Lecturer, Suburban College)

A number of interviewees placed changing employer expectations in the context of the increased participation rate in higher education. These lecturers argued that a degree was now "*a baseline qualification*" and, consequently, employers were more interested in the 'added value' provided by the graduates' personal attributes and/or the reputation of the institution from which a student had graduated.

I don't think employers are after qualifications at all. I think they're after articulate, thinking people. It's not the qualification that they're employing.

The qualification is some sort of signal.

(Marketing Lecturer, New Coastal University)

There was also general criticism of employers who were perceived as purveyors of an incoherent message regarding their expectations of a graduate.

My experience generally is that employers don't have anything exciting to offer.

I don't think they know what they want.

(Accountancy Lecturer, New Coastal University)

I don't think employers are putting across a clear message at all. Its very unclear what employers do want.

(Corporate Strategy Lecturer, Suburban College)

There is no singular view from industry. There is no consensus. There never has been.

(Economics Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Although all four institutions had links with employers, most formally organised at Old Rural University, other lecturers went further in suggesting that employers involved with higher education were often lacking in the requisite status, ability or qualifications to intervene in any competent way. According to one economics lecturer, academics, rather than employers, were in a better position to judge matters concerning the curriculum.

There is a need not to be supine in front of short term, commercial pressures generated by TECs...superannuated, surplus, senior managers close to retirement who get sent off to sit on the Boards of these things who then sit and start to make training policy for other people when they have devastatingly failed for their own firms.

(Industrial Relations Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Employers should be involved but, the main difficulty is that, people who are nominated by organisations are people who have no academic experience, are not up-to-date, do not understand the issues and are, perhaps, contributing to degree programmes that they couldn't have taken themselves.

(Marketing Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Conclusion

The interviews brought into sharper focus the existence of two distinct types of Business Studies lecturer with divergent views regarding aims, knowledge and skills.

A majority of interviewees were drawn from a background largely confined to teaching and research in further or higher education. Some of these lecturers teach context-independent subjects (eg economics) and others, although teaching context-dependent subjects (eg HRM), opposed responsiveness to the context of application because they identify with a context-independent discipline (eg sociology). This academic tradition largely opposes the teaching of vocational skills and regards the development of students as independent, critical thinkers as the primary aim of a Business Studies degree corresponding with that of any 'higher' education. This position is also justified on the basis of an extrinsic, post-Fordist analysis of society's educational needs.

By contrast, a large minority of Business Studies lecturers are drawn from a business or professional background with more limited experience of teaching in higher education. This group of lecturers teach context-dependent subjects (eg management) and do not identify closely with a context-independent first degree discipline. They consider that it is legitimate for knowledge within the Business Studies degree to be continuously re-shaped by the latest development in the context of application. These lecturers regard the teaching of vocational skills as a wholly justified exercise and consider that the aim of a Business Studies degree is to inculcate knowledge and skills which have immediate application in the business environment.

While it is clear that lecturers hold differing views on the extent to which the curriculum should respond to changes in the business environment, the main catalyst for change within the curriculum appears to be derived from the changing role of the student, acting as the consumer. Perceptions that students have limited numerical ability and increased student choice, facilitated by modularisation, is gradually displacing lecturer (or producer-led) influence. While lecturers want to see a balance between hard and soft knowledge and the retention of traditional, but less popular subject areas within Business Studies (such as economics), programmes are being re-shaped in response to student-led patterns of demand. Control of the curriculum is thus passing from the producer to the consumer.

CHAPTER 9

Business Studies : pedagogic realities

Introduction

The national survey and the interview data highlighted a range of key issues regarding the perceptions of Business Studies lecturers. This chapter will analyse how Business Studies lecturers define their pedagogic role suggesting a pedagogic framework by which different perspectives can be understood. Two distinct pedagogic philosophies will be identified : ‘critical evaluation’ and ‘pragmatic synthesis’. The commitment of many business educators to produce students who are ‘critical thinkers’ is a pedagogic position not conventionally associated with Business Studies. This will be explored and explained in relation to the diversity of Business Studies as an academic community, dominated by career academics teaching business subjects rather than ‘business people’, and the post-Fordist perspectives of lecturers.

A pedagogic framework

The interview data provides an account of the reflections of Business Studies lecturers with regard to their own pedagogy. Analysis of this data suggests a pedagogic framework by which different Business Studies lecturers approach the first degree curriculum (Figure 23).

Figure 23 : A pedagogic framework

		Aim	
		For Business	For Life
Pedagogy	Knowledge evaluation	a Critical evaluation for business	b Critical evaluation for life
	Knowledge synthesis	c Pragmatic synthesis for business	d Pragmatic synthesis for life

‘Critical evaluators’ (boxes a and b)

The overwhelming majority of interviewees were committed to the notion that the Business Studies degree is about the preparation of students for future careers in business. However, opinions as to how best to achieve this goal varied and resulted in reflections regarding pedagogy and the organisation of knowledge on the degree. In reflecting on their own personal teaching philosophy approximately one half of the interviewees, and a clear majority of those working in a higher education institution, argued that their principal aim was to produce students capable of being ‘critical thinkers’, to learn how to reflect and evaluate knowledge claims rather than simply acquiring technical knowledge and skills. Several of these interviewees linked this pedagogic goal with the needs of employers claiming that a graduate capable of critical thinking was in a better position to adapt and make a lasting contribution to business in a rapidly changing world.

The purpose (of Business Studies) is to prepare students for business type careers. I have no problem with this but I think the way to achieve that is to prepare peoples minds academically.

(Economics Lecturer, New Coastal University)

We're not here to teach them (ie students) simplistic notions of how organisations work in the real world. We want them to be able to cope with conflicts, differences of approach, the way that the literature is put together and we want them to use that intellectual ability to analyse.

(Industrial Relations Lecturer, New Urban University)

Several interviewees justified this position on the basis that techniques and skills in Business Studies are subject to a short shelf life in industry. By contrast, students with an ability to reflect and evaluate offer employers, and industry in general, better long term value. A number of interviewees indicated that employers often failed to understand the long term value of an 'academic' education and that the demand for people with business skills was indicative of the 'short termism' of British industry. Thus, many of these 'critical evaluators' regard learning how to think critically as vital for the needs of business. They do not see a contradiction between the goals of an academic education, defined in terms of critically evaluating knowledge claims, and the vocational relevance of the Business Studies degree.

According to several interviewees graduates with the ability to think critically are highly valued by certain types of employers. While a degree in Business Studies often meets the needs of small employers unable to afford to train employees, it was argued that large employers preferred to do their own training and were, therefore, less interested in the technical knowledge and skills of a business graduate. These larger employers often expressed a preference for students from 'traditional' degrees disciplines, such as history or psychology, perceiving these graduates as possessing more highly developed intellectual abilities.

While still emphasising the importance of critical thinking, a number of other interviewees regard Business Studies as education for life rather than specifically for business. These 'critical evaluators' regard a Business Studies degree as first and foremost a university education. To some the importance of business is exaggerated and should be approached in a more balanced way with less emphasis on a competitive ethos and more on the role of business as just one aspect of society.

Business Studies degrees should recognise that business is only part of life and not set itself up as a training course but set itself up as an educational process.
(Corporate Strategy Lecturer, New Coastal University)

The perspective that Business Studies should be about trying to engender critical thinking was shared by lecturers from a range of subject areas and disciplinary backgrounds although principally those teaching economics, organisational behaviour and industrial/employee relations. These interviewees held broadly similar positions with respect to the production and organisation of knowledge on a Business Studies degree. According to this group the growth of functional-based subjects within programmes, such as marketing and HRM, made it more difficult to achieve critical thinking among students. These lecturers linked the ability to think critically with the more traditional business disciplines such as economics, mathematics, sociology and social psychology arguing that there is too much reliance on “*fads*” and checklists for business success in functional areas. This group of lecturers sense that by moving too far away from the roots of traditional business disciplines, students will lose the ability to evaluate critically or cope with change in a business environment. The production of knowledge in the context of application (ie in business) is regarded with suspicion by these interviewees who consider that knowledge more legitimately arises out of a disciplinary context.

The distinction between mode 1 and mode 2 knowledge production (Gibbons et al, 1994) helps to illuminate the position of these lecturers. As previously noted in chapter 4, mode 1 knowledge is generated within a “*disciplinary, primarily cognitive context*” whereas mode 2 knowledge is created in the “*context of application*”. It is clear that this group of Business Studies lecturers are unhappy about mode 2 knowledge production becoming a more important part of the curriculum. Interviewees also reflected on the reasons for the growth of some subject areas, and the survival or decline of others. The growth of languages within Business Studies was closely identified with the movement towards greater European integration and the globalisation of business while the decline of industrial relations as a business subject was linked to changes in the employment environment since the late 1970s

which have marginalised Trade Unions. The survival of economics, a core element within Business Studies, was perceived to be less related to the external business context and more closely related to the academic “*seniority*” of economics. There was also a perception that economists, unlike sociologists, have retained control of their discipline. An attendant danger, according to this group of lecturers, is that some functional areas rely too heavily on journalism and the business press contributing to a reinforcement of “*conventional wisdom*” rather than critical analysis.

You cannot reduce it (ie Business Studies) down to teaching them about business because if you’re going to be critical, if you are going to be able to make them think, you have to start off with these things which criticise the way in which you think. You have to start off with philosophy.

(Economics Lecturer, New Urban University)

Functional areas such as marketing, management and HRM are perceived as particularly prone to transitory knowledge. Management ‘gurus’ were singled out as overly influential in these subject areas. ‘Total Quality’ Management and ‘Japanese’ Management were also given as examples of the same phenomenon. Many of these lecturers would like to see a greater emphasis on “*traditional disciplines*” such as mathematics, sociology and philosophy. Two interviewees contended that a “*traditional degree*” in philosophy or classics provided as good a preparation for business as a Business Studies degree.

‘Pragmatic synthesisers’ (boxes c and d)

Other lecturers, while sharing a belief that a degree in Business Studies is a preparation to enter a business career, defined their own approach to teaching it in more pragmatic terms. They regard the inculcation of knowledge and skills as central to their purpose as lecturers contributing to a Business Studies degree. While some interviewees focused mainly on students learning certain knowledge “*inputs*” others stressed the importance of students acquiring a range of skills particularly in presentation, communication, teamworking and computer literacy. Some lecturers

justify the importance of knowledge and skills in terms of the most appropriate preparation of students for business careers. These lecturers were mainly drawn from those teaching accountancy, marketing, management, languages and information systems/information technology.

Accountancy gives students tools and techniques in order to make them (ie students) better managers.

(Accountancy Lecturer, New Coastal University)

A language lecturer pointed out that while “*academic language work*” with an emphasis on accuracy (eg translation) was more common within Language degrees the approach to languages within Business Studies was applied and tailored specifically to the needs of students to communicate in a business situation.

Because it is fundamentally a Business Studies degree we want the students to be able to learn the kind of French or German which is directly relevant and applicable to a working situation. So in the BA Business Studies it is the applied mode which is preferred.

(Language Lecturer, New Urban University)

Knowledge and skills were represented as a generic “*tool kit*” which would help to prepare students for a range of different careers and work-based problems. A business degree was seen as initially equipping students with knowledge and skills and then helping them to select which “*tool*” (or “*tools*”) to use in any given work-based situation.

A subject like Business Studies is very much an applied subject. It’s not academic. As long as you’ve got an ability to identify problems and find a way through a decision-making process, the theoretical issues are relatively limited.

(Management Lecturer, Old Rural University)

Therefore, for these lecturers, encouraging students to be ‘critical’ or ‘analytical’

means being able to synthesise knowledge and select the right 'tool' according to the situation. This interpretation of being critical is wholly different to the way critical evaluators define this term.

A number of lecturers argued that students came to Business Studies with a belief that this degree would provide them with a passport to a job. Therefore, lecturers felt under a particular obligation to equip students with the skills that employers were indicating they wanted such as teamwork and presentation. Employers, it was argued, now expect students to "*hit the ground running*" with knowledge and skills which can be applied immediately in the workplace. Although some interviewees expressed doubts about these employer expectations, they would be "*playing with people's lives*" if they did not respond to these perceived needs. Lecturers expressed disquiet though that employers are broadening their definition of 'skills' to include personality and social attributes such as leadership and, even, etiquette.

Employers are ever more preoccupied with the non-substantive parts of the curriculum. That is not even straight transferable skills but social skills.

(Economics Lecturer, New Coastal University)

A small minority of lecturers consider their pedagogic role in the same terms but, by contrast, defined the purpose of acquiring knowledge and skills in broader terms as part of an education for life. Some language lecturers saw the acquisition of linguistic skills in these terms. A number of information technology specialists also consider that knowledge and skills in this subject area have more far reaching consequences in developing students with a set of techniques useful in life, not just business. These lecturers see Business Studies as an opportunity to develop the life skills of students and define the function of the degree more in terms of the holistic development of students as people.

Critical thinking

All business lecturers would contend that they are committed to developing students as

critical thinkers. However, they clearly place varying interpretations on the meaning of this phrase. Barnett (1990) offers a number of possible meanings of what is implied by developing students' 'critical abilities'. The development of students capable of turning a critical eye on established practices in business and the professions is one such meaning. A second meaning, which Barnett (1990) identifies, is being critical with regard to conventional notions in academic knowledge. Thirdly, the focus on encouraging students to be autonomous, free thinkers is a central goal of a liberal education facilitated by developing students' critical abilities. Finally, being critical might imply gaining a Marxist perspective on society visualising the student as a potential agent of social transformation.

None of the definitions offered by Barnett, however, particularly relate to the notion of critical capabilities held by the pragmatic synthesisers who see critical thinking as the ability to unravel a complex problem by selection from *existing* knowledge. Critical evaluators, though, implied a range of meanings encompassed by Barnett's definitions. They principally defined critical thinking as both being critical about existing academic knowledge and the relationship between business and society. Economists saw critical thinking more in terms of challenging existing academic knowledge whereas sociologists were more likely to make statements about the need for students to critically re-examine the wider relationships and responsibilities of business although their perspective was not necessarily Marxist. Barnett's other definitions of critical capabilities - producing flexible managers capable of challenging norms and as an ethos of liberal education associated with student autonomy - were seen as the goals or the justification for developing students rather than strategies to effect critical thinking. Both of these goals were emphasised and are, to some extent, recognised in the analytical distinction between critical evaluators for business (goal of flexible managers) and critical evaluators for life (goal of liberal education). Economists were more likely to stress the former while sociologists favoured the latter goal.

Post Fordism and pedagogy

Reflecting on the role of sociology within the Business Studies curriculum, Brown and Harrison (1980) neatly summarise the key pedagogic divide revealed by the interviews :

In business education, the critical issue remains a concern about the balance between the teaching of analytical skills in conjunction with vocabularies of problem solution, and the discussion of the limitations and the value premises of these skills and vocabularies.

Brown & Harrison (1980) p.60

In Business Studies, 'critical evaluators' are concerned with the latter while 'pragmatic synthesisers' base their pedagogy on the former. It is important, however, to place these differences in pedagogy in a broader context and explain the justification for the unconventional notion of critical evaluation in relation to a Business Studies education.

Freire's (1972) conception of pedagogy in terms of two opposing models provides an important point of reference. There are similarities between Freire's 'banking' model of pedagogy and the objectives of the pragmatic synthesisers who emphasised the primacy of knowledge "*inputs*" and implicitly validated the notion of students as 'empty cups' although others additionally wanted students to be able to solve problems drawing on this pool of 'knowledge'. However, it would be inaccurate to automatically associate all the power implications of Freire's model with the pragmatic synthesisers many of whom will still employ student-centred teaching techniques within the confines of a 'banking' approach. Freire's 'problem-posing' model may be more closely related the pedagogy of the critical evaluators who wish to help students challenge knowledge assumptions rather than, in Freire's terminology, enter an exchange of deposit and withdrawal.

Other examinations of academic pedagogy may also be related to the pedagogy of

lecturers in Business Studies. Samuelowicz and Bain (1992) suggest a five level classification of conceptions of teaching among academics with a continuum from information presentation to the facilitation of student learning. The continuum implies that conceptions of pedagogy range from a high degree of teacher control to a high degree of student empowerment. However, within the 'levels' identified by Samuelowicz and Bain (1992) a number are closely related to the concepts of critical evaluators and pragmatic synthesisers. Samuelowicz and Bain (1992) describe one such category as *"teaching as an activity aimed at changing students' conceptions or understanding of the world"* (p 98) where subject matter is a vehicle for developing critical thinking about knowledge. The emphasis of teaching within this category is on challenging existing conceptions and building *"conceptual bridges"*. This category closely mirrors the pedagogy of a 'critical evaluator' working within a Business Studies degree. Other categories noted by Samuelowicz and Bain (1992) include *"teaching as facilitating understanding"* (p100) and *"teaching as imparting information"* (p101). Both positions are concerned with ensuring that students are able to understand and apply the subject matter in real situations. The principal difference between the two categories concerns the level of control/empowerment afforded by teachers. These two categories may be linked to the notion of 'pragmatic synthesisers' outlined above.

It is further relevant to explore the justifications for the position taken by some of the critical evaluators since they represent a view of pedagogy which is generally considered 'unorthodox' or 'unconventional' within business education (eg Grey and French, 1996). These justifications may be explained in relation to the post-modern or post-Fordist analysis of business needs. It is widely argued that the economy is moving from a Fordist to a post-Fordist phase of production (eg Sharp, 1996). Fordism is often characterised in terms of mass production for a mass consumer market and is closely associated with a high degree of division of manual labour. Post-Fordism, by contrast, is connected with changing patterns of production and consumption. Production patterns have been significantly affected by the advent of new technology facilitating shorter production cycles and the demand for more highly differentiated products by increasingly sophisticated consumers. Post-Fordism is

characterised by less pronounced divisions of labour and has brought about a restructuring of many occupations. The post-Fordist labour market is often described as divisible into a core and a periphery (eg Handy, 1981, Sharp, 1996). The core consists of the educated, high knowledge workers who are adaptable, self-motivated and flexible while the periphery are the uneducated, low skilled who are either hired as contractors or self-employed.

A post-Fordist analysis of the economy may be explicitly linked with education, and in turn, with pedagogy. Sharp (1996) argues that workers in a post-Fordist economy need to be more cerebral and intellectual in responding to and coping with a changing environment. This, in turn, means that there is a need for a different kind of 'vocational' education, one which places a greater emphasis on developing workers able to take more responsibility and critically reflect on their work practices. At degree level, the intention is to produce graduates capable of becoming managers within the core. Therefore, many of the critical evaluators believe that there is a particular need for undergraduate students of Business Studies to be schooled to engage in the critical analysis of knowledge since specific skills and techniques will become rapidly outdated in a post-Fordist economy.

Other critical evaluators adopted the more extreme post-Fordist position that there is little uniquely that a business education can do to prepare students for business. They base this belief on the claim that the speed of industrial change and the appearance of fast moving 'knowledge' industries is making the notion of an education specifically 'for' business increasingly untenable. Such an education will only give students short-term value in the labour market whereas an education which gets students to think critically about knowledge claims more closely matches the type of skills demanded of employees in a post-Fordist economy. This position was illustrated when two of the interviewees argued that studying philosophy or classics was as good a preparation for business as a Business Studies degree.

These post-modern justifications still recognise the primacy of preparing students for business life. Other critical evaluators drew justification for their position from a more

radical conception of the purpose of a business education. Rehm's (1994) notion of a critical pedagogy and vocational education is useful in exploring this justification. According to Rehm (1994), "*critical vocational educators*" are committed to radical values such as worker solidarity and collectivism who regard vocational students as potential activists to engage in the transformation of conditions for workers. This radical view of a critical pedagogy found some minority support from 'critical evaluators for life' especially the notion that there should be greater emphasis on business as a co-operative, collectivist activity rather than as a conflictual struggle legitimately separated from wider society.

The relationship between the pedagogy of lecturers in Business Studies and their disciplinary background or teaching area is also highly significant. The close relationship between teaching specialisms and attitudes to the curriculum discussed in the preceding chapter were also present within the interviews. The pragmatic synthesisers were mainly lecturers in information technology, languages, marketing and management whereas the critical evaluators were principally drawn from those teaching economics, organisational behaviour and industrial/employee relations. It is important to consider why lecturers from this latter set of subjects should regard the object of their pedagogy as critical evaluation rather than pragmatic synthesis. A key reason appears to be that lecturers subscribing to critical evaluation are far more likely than the pragmatic synthesisers to have an academic background in subjects with a philosophical or sociological perspective. Barnett (1990) identifies these perspectives as particularly powerful in helping to develop an "*external critique*" of the student's core 'discipline' (ie business). It is not uncommon for lecturers in organisational behaviour or industrial/employee relations to hold a first degree in sociology or political science. Moreover, many of those who have advocated a 'critical' perspective within business and management education are lecturers in either organisational behaviour (eg Grey and French, 1996) or sociology (Brown and Harrison, 1980). It is, perhaps, slightly more surprising that lecturers in economics also subscribed to the pedagogy of critical evaluation given that 'positive' economics, with little room for critical reflection on normative issues, is said to dominate economics education (eg Lee, 1975; Healey, 1988). However, several of the economists interviewed wished to

distance themselves from the 'positive' economics paradigm, with its heavy emphasis on mathematics, preferring instead to emphasise the importance of studying industrial structures and the business system.

Conclusion

Producing students who are 'critical thinkers' is a central pedagogic aim of lecturers in higher education (Barnett, 1990). There has been a tendency, though, to characterise ostensibly applied areas of the curriculum, such as Business Studies, as representative of a narrow, training school ethos (O'Hear, 1988) despite research which indicates that lecturers in 'vocational' subjects are committed to "*liberal values*" (Silver and Brennan, 1988). Lecturers contributing to the Business Studies degree appear to be, at least to some extent, committed to the same core beliefs as other higher education lecturers. This is because many lecturers define themselves as *higher education* lecturers, drawn from a broad range of 'traditional' first degree disciplines, teaching on a Business Studies degree rather than 'business people' teaching about business. Indeed, the commitment of this group of lecturers within Business Studies to a notion of a higher education where learning to think critically is considered more important than learning to perform techniques and skills appears to be strongly related to their disciplinary roots in philosophy (economics) and sociology (organisational behaviour). By contrast, lecturers in accountancy, management, marketing and languages tend to be drawn from disciplinary backgrounds outside philosophy or sociology and are more interested in students synthesising knowledge. For these lecturers 'critical thinking' means selecting the appropriate 'tool' in any given situation rather than fundamentally reflecting on knowledge claims.

CHAPTER 10

Business Studies : Tribal Tendencies

Introduction

This chapter, drawing on the empirical findings of the study and the work of Becher (1989), will reflect on the role of ‘academic tribes’ in Business Studies. A ‘tribal’ framework will be presented as a conclusion to this analysis which suggests that lecturer perspectives are closely related to their disciplinary background. Providing a better understanding of business and management lecturers as a disciplinary community is one of the key objectives of this study in re-examining the relationship between Business Studies and higher education. A re-evaluation of the original analytical framework of the study will then be undertaken in the following chapter drawing on the framework for pedagogy and tribe. Tribal and pedagogic dimensions will form the basis of a new analytical framework for understanding the perspective of lecturers in Business Studies.

The academic ‘tribes’

Becher’s (1989) work on identifying and examining ‘academic tribes’ addresses a previously largely overlooked area of enquiry within higher education. He suggests that further case studies are needed to explore applied fields, including ‘management studies’, which represent a substantial and growing, but neglected, area of academic activity in higher education. In terms of management studies, Simon (1969) has, perhaps, come closest to addressing Becher’s agenda writing about the organisational design of American business schools in the late 1960s. Simon (1969) argues that the professional school is essentially split into discipline and practice-oriented camps. To avoid an “*equilibrium state of death*” between these two subcultures, Simon advocates the development of a science of professional practice to bridge the divide. The split between discipline and practice which Simon (1969) identifies is the mirror of the ‘professional’ and ‘academic’ traditions in Business Studies which emerged from the

survey (see chapter 7). In similar vein, Glazer (1974) also argues that in 'minor' professional schools, such as business, there is an inevitable tension between academic and 'practical' professional ideals. Glazer (1974) identifies four major sources of conflict; the teaching of students destined for professional practice by scholars and research workers drawn from academic disciplines, academics consequently regarding the professional destination of the student as inferior to advanced disciplinary study, the tendency to base the curriculum on multi-disciplinary academic interests, and changes in what counts as professional knowledge.

The distinction between professional and academic traditions provides a useful starting point for discussing tribal tendencies in Business Studies. However, the work of Becher (1989) is a more subtle and detailed basis for analysis than the 'broad brush' distinctions between professional and academic or practice and discipline. Becher (1989) makes a key distinction between convergent and divergent disciplinary communities working within higher education. Convergent communities are tightly knit in terms of their fundamental ideologies, common values, shared judgements of quality and awareness of belonging to a unique tradition sharing a "*fraternal sense of nationhood*" (Becher, 1989, p 37). By contrast, divergent communities are loosely knit where members lack a sense of cohesion or identity. Members of a divergent community lack the touchstones of belonging. Lecturers in Business Studies clearly represent a divergent community with members drawn from a wide range of first degree disciplines. Just 16 per cent of lecturers in the national survey held a first degree in business or management. When asked to comment on their sense of identity it was not surprising, therefore, that the overwhelming majority of interviewees did not regard themselves as 'business lecturers'. Interviewees with a recent business or professional background and limited experience in higher education, teaching subjects such as accountancy or information systems, tended to regard themselves as interlopers in an 'academic' culture. Other interviewees, particularly those teaching economics, organisational behaviour and industrial relations identified with first degree and research backgrounds in economics or sociology. They frequently described their role as 'servicing' Business Studies and made it clear that their interests and loyalties lay elsewhere.

Most lecturers in Business Studies do not teach subjects which formed the basis of their own first degree. The national survey established, however, that those teaching economics on a Business Studies degree are, untypically among 'business' lecturers, likely to hold a similar first degree. The economists, perhaps uniquely within Business Studies, operate as a convergent tribe within a divergent community. They regard themselves, and are regarded sometimes grudgingly by colleagues teaching other subjects, as the founding fathers of Business Studies.

If you look at business subject areas you will find that economics has the seniority.

(Marketing Lecturer, New Urban University)

Economists share a range of common values. They regard Business Studies as a broader study about business rather than a vocational preparation to undertake a business career and with many making no secret of their preference to be teaching on an economics degree. Economists also emphasised research as a key aspect of their professional lives. They are highly protective of economics from charges that it fails to adapt and reflect a changing business context. Rather they regard resistance to business fads and transient knowledge as vital in maintaining the integrity of economics as an academic discipline. They are highly critical of newer, context-dependent subjects which are becoming more influential within Business Studies. Marketing, for example, is seen both as a threat in terms of its epistemology and as an increasingly popular rival within a degree structure offering greater choice to students who think economics is 'too hard' or 'irrelevant'. Economists are thus secure in their own sense of identity but insecure in perceiving that other more context-dependent subjects represent a threat to their place within the curriculum. Economics has, uniquely within Business Studies, maintained its status as a distinct discipline. The distinct identity enjoyed by economists is admired by sociologists who now teach subjects such as HRM, organisational behaviour or industrial relations. Whereas economists have been able to maintain the existence of economics as a distinct discipline within Business Studies, sociology is no longer taught as a separate discipline within the modern Business Studies degree and sociologists are splintered

across a range of teaching subjects. One long-serving member of staff commented:

Economics was taught in the Economics Department and still largely is.
Sociology here is taught by Business and Management staff which wasn't the case here years ago. Economists have maintained control of their discipline.
Economists I would pick out more than anyone else have been most reluctant to become more integrated within a business and management Department.
(Organisational Behaviour Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Other lecturers in Business Studies are 'refugees' from a business career or from declining subject areas within the university curriculum. Lecturers from a wide range of academic backgrounds including sociology, languages, secretarial studies and politics had drifted into Business Studies or, in some cases, had specifically re-invented themselves in seeking refuge from a declining area of further or higher education provision.

When I came here I came as the Head of the Secretarial Division which within two years was disbanded. So I realised that I was going to be out of work in effect. So I reverted back to my interest in marketing and got a masters degree at Thames Poly so I could teach management and marketing. So I switched over.
(Marketing Lecturer, New Urban University)

Most Business Studies lecturers were typical of a 'winding track' career path which Weiner (1996) identifies as typical of many women in higher education. In contrast, most economists teaching within Business Studies had 'straight road' (Weiner, 1996) careers.

Becher (1989) uses a "*gallery of stereotypes approach*" (p 28) to describe how different disciplinary groups are perceived by their colleagues within the wider academic community. He reports that sociologists "*are seen by some as highly politicized, guilty of indoctrinating students and very left*" (p 57). There was a perception among some interviewees that this reputation for radicalism among

sociologists had accelerated their decline as a distinct academic group within Business Studies.

The sociologist has been seen in some cases as rather too radical for Business Studies students by some of the Business Studies staff and also by some other students.

(Organisational Behaviour Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Sociologists from an Industrial Relations background argued that the marginalisation of Trade Unions in the workplace had led to a parallel marginalisation of Industrial Relations as a legitimate academic field and as less 'relevant' to Business Studies students.

Becher (1989) identifies epistemology as the vital touchstone in establishing the identity and status of an academic tribe and reports that "*roughly speaking, hard knowledge domains are regarded more highly than soft ones, and pure than applied*" (Becher, 1989, p 57). Despite the fact that Business and Management departments may be perceived by those outside such departments as unacademic or anti-intellectual, epistemology is the crucial factor used by lecturers in determining the status of teaching specialisms within Business Studies. The pecking order created by lecturer perceptions based on epistemology was clearly demonstrated in the interviews. Economics was perceived by interviewees teaching a range of subjects as both hard and context-independent. The economists are admired by many sociologists for retaining the separateness of economics as a discipline within Business Studies. Moreover, sociologists and economists share common values with respect to the importance of critical thinking, resistance to the business context as a source of knowledge and a research orientation. Although many 'pragmatic synthesisers' resented the status of economics within Business Studies and criticised the insularity of economists from the business context most regarded the study of economics as central to a Business Studies education.

According to Becher (1989), "*economists look down on sociologists*" (p 57) because

hard knowledge domains have a higher status than soft ones. While this characterisation appears to be accurate, economists and sociologists share, as indicated above, an important set of common values. Crucially, both are resistant to context-dependent knowledge and keen to emphasise the primacy of critical thinking. These values make economists and sociologists natural allies within business and management departments with similar views on pedagogy.

However, while economists largely teach economics, sociologists find themselves teaching subjects such as organisational behaviour and HRM diffusing their sense of identity and causing them concerns regarding the context-dependent nature of their adopted teaching specialisms. Indeed, many lecturers teaching highly context-dependent subjects, such as management or marketing, have academic backgrounds in subjects such as economics or sociology. These lecturers are frequently torn between a sense of loyalty and identity with the context-independent values of their first degree and the requirement to teach a context-dependent specialism. They find themselves teaching a context-dependent area of the curriculum but are strongly committed to resisting context-dependent knowledge. This creates an ambiguity of identity for many lecturers. A number of interviewees, especially those with a background in sociology who now teach HRM for example, have serious qualms regarding the legitimacy of the subject they now teach.

Although I teach Marketing I cringe a little bit when people ask what I teach. I don't fully feel it is a good thing because we are forgetting people in this rush to market everything.

(Marketing Lecturer, New Urban University)

In contrast, lecturers with a first degree background in accountancy or other context-dependent specialisms do not have such a clearly defined sense of 'tribal' membership and some feel a loss of identity in the setting of an academic institution. Several interviewees were aware that their identity as a business or professional practitioner would, perhaps inevitably, decline the longer they remained in a higher education environment. Lecturers in context-dependent areas expressed resentment, at more than

one institution, at the implicit 'pecking order' within Business and Management departments favouring the economists.

We, in Marketing, have had to fight to get a presence and we are still looked down upon by other divisions such as Economics. They have always been treated better than other people in terms of promotion and resources.
(Marketing Lecturer, New Urban University)

A tribal framework

While (most) lecturers accept the notion that Business Studies is a preparation for a business career, certain 'tribes', notably the economists and the sociologists, are resistant to the idea that the curriculum should respond too slavishly to changes in the business environment. Remaining detached, circumspect, and, above all, critical of contemporary ideas is the *raison d'être* of the economists and sociologists. By contrast, the *raison d'être* of other disciplines, notably management, information technology/systems and marketing, is to embrace all contemporary business developments within the curriculum. Many interviewees were sharply divided with regard to this issue.

Students should be able to emulate what is happening in industry.
(Information Systems Lecturer, New Coastal University)

There is a need not to be supine in the face of short term, commercial pressures.
(Organisational Behaviour Lecturer, New Urban University)

A dichotomy which expresses the fundamental difference between these two statements is context independence/context dependence. *This dichotomy represents a split in the attitude of lecturers to business knowledge.* By suggesting that accountants have a context dependent attitude to knowledge it does not infer that accountancy as a subject is entirely dependent on the business context for knowledge since there are mathematical aspects to accountancy which will remain unaffected by this

environment. In similar vein, although it is argued that most economists see their contribution to business knowledge as essentially context-independent aspects of the study of economics as a subject do clearly involve, for example, a monitoring of business data to inform or appraise economic models. The second dimension used in analysing tribes in Business Studies stems from lecturer perceptions of each other. These perceptions were used to determine the status of subject lecturers contributing to Business Studies. Status in Business Studies, as in most other academic areas, is determined by the distinction between hard and soft knowledge. Therefore, it follows that high status subjects are largely hard while low status ones are largely soft. A tribal framework is represented in figure 24 below.

Figure 24 : A tribal framework

		Attitude to knowledge	
		Context-dependent	Context-independent
Disciplinary Status	High	High-dependent eg Accountants	High-independent eg Economists
	Low	Low-dependent eg Marketers	Low-independent eg Sociologists

High-Independent

Lecturers in economics have a high status within the Business Studies community. This is partly derived from the prominent role economists have played, and continue to play, in the organisational structure of business and management education and as founders of the Business Studies degree. The Business Studies degree at Old Rural University was staffed almost entirely by economists who had first introduced the programme in the late 1980s. The economists at New Urban University also regarded

themselves as the 'father figures' of the Business Studies degree. The economists are also generally more research active than other Business Studies lecturers and teach an area of the curriculum which is perceived, by fellow lecturers, as epistemologically 'hard'.

Economists believe that disciplinary knowledge should take precedence over context-based developments. This resistance to the business context is justified by a concern that this new 'knowledge' is epistemologically 'soft', 'faddish' and transitory in nature. This attitude also represents an instinct to be 'critical' about new knowledge claims. There is also a degree of tribal defensiveness in the attitude of economists who are resistant to newer business subjects, such as marketing, which are perceived as a threat to the position of economics within the Business Studies curriculum. Economists are also resistant to increasing student choice in the curriculum which may accelerate the declining influence of their discipline.

Low-Independent

Sociologists have played an important role in the development of the Business Studies degree. However, although the study of sociology has been supplanted in the curriculum, mainly by the study of organisational behaviour (OB), sociologists continue to contribute as lecturers in OB. The replacement of sociology within the Business Studies curriculum has undermined the status of sociologists compared with economists who have, uniquely, retained the presence of their own discipline within the curriculum. Moreover, as sociology and organisational behaviour are perceived as epistemologically 'soft', sociologists are attributed a comparatively low status.

In terms of pedagogy, though, sociologists share a characteristic attitude of context-independence in common with economists. Their pedagogy is strongly centred on the notion of critical evaluation of knowledge which demands a sceptical attitude towards new, context-based knowledge.

High-Dependent

There are two principal reasons why accountants enjoy a high status within the Business Studies community. Firstly, accountancy is the preeminent business profession. Accountancy lecturers are often professionally qualified and are able to retain credibility as business practitioners. Secondly, accountancy is perceived as 'hard' because of the mathematical and analytical nature of the subject. Accountants though, in contrast to economists, are less likely to be research active.

However, unlike economists and sociologists, accountants teaching in Business Studies must be highly responsive to the changing business context especially in terms of legal and regulatory changes and, increasingly, information technology packages facilitating the analysis of accounting data. Accounting has a close relationship to its professional context with new knowledge deriving from practice. The absence of a direct professional context means that new knowledge in economics and sociology is more likely to stem from academic research than business or professional practice.

Low-Dependent

Within the context of a Business Studies community, marketers have a comparatively low status. This is related to the epistemology of marketing, which is regarded as 'soft', the comparative newness of the subject within Business Studies, and to the context-dependency of Marketing. While subjects such as accountancy or law are regarded as legitimately dependent on changing legal and regulatory structures, a lower status attaches to Marketers because they are dependent on the business context for 'soft' knowledge. This 'soft' knowledge from the business context is regarded by economists and sociologists as transitory and faddish often relying too heavily on 'guruship'. Linguists contributing to the Business Studies degree may also be placed in this category. Although the study of languages may be regarded as highly subject-dependent with certain universal rules of application, in terms of grammar and vocabulary for instance, linguists are regarded (and regard themselves) as peripheral to the Business Studies curriculum. Language lecturers usually have only modest, if

any, business experience (McGuire, 1988). Moreover, they are overwhelmingly drawn from a background in teaching rather than research contributing to a relatively low status. Although learning a language may contain rules which suggest a high degree of context-independence, the linguists interviewed indicated they believed in being highly responsive to the needs of the business environment. Linguists adopted a different, less context-independent approach when teaching languages to business students.

If you are a Modern Languages student a great deal of your time will be spent doing conventional academic language work, a lot of reading of the press, and a lot of translation, producing dossiers, transcription, summaries and analysis. If you do a BA in Business Studies with Languages you learn applied French. You learn how to answer the phone, how to write a business report. You learn very little outside that business framework. Because it is a Business Studies degree we want the students to be able to learn the kind of French or German which is directly relevant and applicable to a working situation.

(Languages Lecturer, New Urban University)

The language specialists interviewed and other linguists, such as McGuire (1988), appear to be prepared to adopt a practical, vocational approach to teaching languages on business programmes. This contrasts with the attitude of the economists who were not generally prepared to make the same kind of compromise by teaching a different kind of, more applied, economics to business students.

Conclusion

There is no "*fraternal sense of nationhood*" (Becher, 1989, p 37) in Business Studies. Rather, Business Studies is a federation of disciplines with economics as the titular head. This diversity may be symptomatic of a wider shift in higher education from a homogeneous to a more heterogeneous community (Winter, 1996). Disciplinary background has a clear relationship to pedagogy and attitudes to knowledge. Lecturers from a background in economics, sociology or other social science

disciplines are the 'high priests' of Business Studies attempting to defend disciplinary knowledge within the curriculum from the constant changes in the business context. Accountants enjoy a relatively high status within the Business Studies community as representatives of the best known business profession legitimately dependent on a changing business context. However, marketers, and perhaps, to a lesser extent, management lecturers, are highly dependent on 'soft' knowledge changes in the business context which may not stand the test of rigorous, intellectual scrutiny and may be more narrowly, company or situation-specific.

Section D

**BUSINESS STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION : TOWARDS
A NEW UNDERSTANDING**

CHAPTER 11

A New Analytical Framework

Introduction

In concluding this thesis it is important to begin by reflecting on the original analytical framework outlined in chapter 5. The framework identified two important dimensions for understanding Business Studies in relation to both aims and knowledge. The first dimension, discussed in chapter 3, concerned a distinction between a study for or a study about business while the second dimension, originally examined in chapter 4, was provided by the division between hard (science-based) and soft (humanities-based) knowledge. Although this framework was helpful as a basis to start researching the perspectives of Business Studies lecturers its appropriateness can now be re-assessed in the light of investigations into their individual perspectives. This chapter will, therefore, present a new framework for understanding the Business Studies curriculum at the pedagogic level. Although this new framework is designed to explain the micro or pedagogic context the impact of macro/policy level issues such as the philosophy of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), definitions of 'skills', institutional settings and modular strategies will also be discussed illustrating the dynamic nature of the new framework. The applicability of the new framework will also be demonstrated in relation to wider professional education. The possible relationship between the new framework and Schon's (1983) concept of the 'reflective practitioner' will also be explored.

A new analytical framework

Lecturers largely accept that the aim of a Business Studies education should be a study 'for' business in the sense that they are preparing students explicitly for careers in business and management. There is comparatively little dissent from this perspective. Lecturers do have differing perspectives though on how best to achieve this common aim. Both critical evaluators and pragmatic synthesisers want to prepare students for

business careers. Critical evaluators believe this can best be achieved by getting students to reflect critically on what constitutes business knowledge. This approach necessarily involves some reflection on the relationship between business and society, rather than regarding it as entirely unproblematic. In effect, approaching the study of business with a critical perspective involves a study 'about' business which, in the opinion of many critical evaluators, will produce more critically aware, autonomous students 'for' business. Given the post-Fordist demands of the changing competitive environment perceived by lecturers (see chapter 9) it is possible to argue that a study 'about' business has direct relevance as a study 'for' business. By contrast, pragmatic synthesisers want students to learn business knowledge and solve problems by applying various techniques. This, they believe, is the most appropriate way of preparing students for business.

Clearly determining what counts as being 'critical' is crucial in maintaining the integrity of this new dichotomy between critical evaluation and pragmatic synthesis. Two of Brookfield's (1987) components of 'critical thinking' are helpful in illustrating what business lecturers mean by being 'critical'. According to Brookfield (1987), *"identifying and challenging assumptions that underlie ideas, beliefs, values and actions"* (p 7) is a key component. This is similar to being critical about conventional notions of academic knowledge, one of the meanings Barnett (1990) attaches to the phrase 'critical abilities'. Some of the critical evaluators want students to be capable of challenging the basis of disciplinary knowledge in their own subject areas such as economics or marketing. However, lecturers place a higher premium on getting students to be critical in their understanding of the broader business context, beyond being critical about conventional knowledge in a particular subject. This mirrors what Brookfield refers to as *"challenging assumptions about context"* (p 8). This contextual awareness is a component of being critical (Brookfield, 1987) and may be illustrated by reference to the views of a number of lecturers.

Business Studies is not apolitical. It is not neutral.

(Human Resource Management Lecturer, New Coastal University)

If people are going to have a degree they ought to have the ability to think critically about the issues they confront.

(Industrial Relations Lecturer, New Coastal University)

I'm trying to help my students understand the theories, ideas and concepts of marketing but also to give them a critical context for that.

(Marketing Lecturer, New Coastal University)

They'll pick up skills in the first year or two they're out in industry. They'll never pick up that ability to understand what's going on around them.

(Economics Lecturer, New Urban University)

Students should develop in their mind a more critical, evaluative thinking framework so that they don't just accept that what they see in *The Sun* or what they read in the corporate newsletter.

(Marketing Lecturer, New Coastal University)

There was, thus, a determination among most critical evaluators to make students 'contextually aware' to ensure students understand that there is a broader political context to business organisation and behaviour in society. There is, as a result, a certain amount of common ground between critical evaluators concerning what they mean by being 'critical'. Pragmatic synthesisers, by contrast, are concerned with transmitting disciplinary knowledge.

Therefore, while the aim of a Business Studies degree is not in dispute the means of achieving it is. The pedagogic dimension - synthesis or critique - is more relevant to an understanding of different attitudes to the aim of Business Studies than the distinction between a study for or about business since a large number of lecturers regard a study about business as an appropriate means of preparing students for business. It follows that relying on the for-about business distinction is less helpful in explaining the varying pedagogic goals of lecturers.

Lecturers also largely accept that there should be a balance between hard and soft knowledge. Most, if not all, lecturers consider that there is a need for both in the curriculum. Moreover, the notion of hard and soft knowledge has greater relevance to some lecturers than others. While it is a dichotomy recognised by economists, it was found to have little resonance for linguists. However, the closeness of the relationship between knowledge and the context of its application is an issue which concerns *all* business lecturers. As outlined in chapter 10, some lecturers, notably in economics, are strongly resistant to new knowledge emerging in the context of application. They believe that knowledge in Business Studies should not be overly responsive to changes in the business environment which may be purely transitory in nature. They are committed to a body of disciplinary knowledge which they want to preserve and pass on to students. Their attitude to knowledge may be described as one of context-independence. Another group of lecturers, largely teaching functional subject areas like accountancy or marketing, believe that knowledge in Business Studies should respond rapidly to all contemporary developments in the business environment. These context-dependent lecturers are, by contrast, less likely to be committed to an established body of academic knowledge and may have worked more recently in a business context. Context dependence/independence is largely a function of tribal tendencies in Business Studies and symbolises a significant divergence in attitudes to knowledge. Those with an academic career background are likely to favour context-independence while lecturers with a predominantly business or professional background tend to endorse context-dependency. This tribal dimension - context independence/context dependence - is a more important dividing line than that provided by the distinction between hard and soft knowledge. It is a touchstone relevant to the concerns of all business lecturers. On the basis of this analysis, a new framework emerges (see figure 25) replacing the original analytical framework for the study (figure 4).

Figure 25 : A new analytical framework

		Pedagogic dimension	
		Synthesis	Critique
Tribal dimension	Context-dependence	a A context-dependent synthesis	b A context-dependent critique
	Context-independence	c A context-independent synthesis	d A context-independent critique

Context-dependent synthesis

This type of business education involves students synthesising knowledge in a subject area, such as accountancy, where what counts as knowledge is largely determined by the context in which it is applied. Lecturers may generally (but not always) have a tribal allegiance to the business context rather than to a body of disciplinary knowledge and believe that the best way of preparing students to enter business is by keeping them up-to-date with contextual developments in practice. Teaching strategies emphasise the absorption of current knowledge and selection from this knowledge pool to solve practitioner-based problems. In the broader context of business education, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), based on the ‘functional analysis’ of job tasks, would also rest within this category.

Context-dependent critique

Knowledge which forms the basis of certain subjects within the Business Studies degree may *prima facie* be determined, to a substantial extent, by the business context. Subjects such as marketing and HRM ‘correspond’ to parallel business functions.

Government intervention plays a significant role in the shaping of knowledge in industrial relations and law. In this sense, some business subjects are more context-dependent than others such as economics or statistics which have no direct 'correspondence' to a functional aspect of business. However, lecturers in context-dependent areas of the curriculum may adopt a critical pedagogy. This is more likely to take the form of seeking to raise 'contextual awareness' (Brookfield, 1987) about business practice because there may be limited scope to debate subject knowledge in such relatively immature academic subjects. Lecturers with a first degree background in a context-independent discipline, such as sociology, who find themselves teaching a context-dependent subject, such as HRM, are particularly likely to adopt this approach to pedagogy.

Context-independent synthesis

Knowledge in Business Studies may also be derived from a largely disciplinary context with indirect, rather than direct correspondence to the business context. Knowledge which is primarily 'subject-dependent' rather than 'environment-dependent', using Corder's (1990) terms, such as statistics, will be context-independent and probably more widely taught outside the confines of a Business Studies degree programme than context-dependent areas. Some lecturers in these subject areas may, in common with some lecturers in context-dependent knowledge, approach pedagogy on the basis of synthesis rather than critical analysis of knowledge claims.

Context-independent critique

Finally, other lecturers in context-independent areas, especially economics and sociology, may adopt a critical approach to their pedagogic role. These lecturers are less likely to have business experience and are more likely to be career academics having spent longer in higher education institutions. Their first degrees will often match their teaching specialism. These lecturers commonly justify their critical pedagogy on the basis of a post-Fordist analysis of the needs of the economy. As

these lecturers are teaching disciplines which are well established outside the confines of a Business Studies degree their critical pedagogy is often focused on debates about the integrity of knowledge claims within subject area although this does not preclude raising 'contextual awareness' about business practice.

The dynamics of change

It is important to reflect on how the new analytical framework corresponds to a broader set of micro and macro-level issues concerning business and higher education. Despite the identification of four distinct positions, the framework is far from static. A range of factors, from the micro to the macro level, will have an impact on the orientation of Business Studies lecturers within this framework.

The pedagogic dimension

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), sponsored by the NCVQ, represent perhaps the most important development in contemporary English and Welsh vocational education (Sharp, 1996). While NVQs are work-based and break jobs down into constituent competencies, GNVQs identify a range of work-related core skills within the context of an educational programme. Proposals have been made to extend GNVQs into higher education and, should this occur, it will have major implications. The emphasis of NVQs and GNVQs, as formulated by the NCVQ, is on the *synthesis* of knowledge. It is significant that the NCVQs consultation paper on higher level GNVQs did not include any reference to the concept of critical thinking (Barnett, 1995). In relation to the pedagogic dimension identified in this research, GNVQs might encourage synthesis rather than critique. Moreover, the NCVQ has also neglected 'values' and the moral dimension (Hyland, 1995) which are an important basis on which a critical evaluation of business knowledge may take place.

The NCVQ model was designed as a means of credentialising low skilled jobs especially in the new service industries such as retailing and catering (Sharp, 1996).

The reduction of labour processes into highly specialised, simple and repetitive operations is based on the management philosophy of Taylorism (Schmidt, 1995) and the assumptions of Fordism rather than post-Fordism. Moreover, the philosophy of the NCVQ is designed for the 'periphery' (or low and semi-skilled) rather than the 'core' (or highly skilled) workers of post-Fordism. The approach to education adopted by the NCVQ is neo-Fordist rather than post-Fordist and inappropriate for future core workers. The National Vocational framework poses a threat to critical pedagogues eroding the space in the curriculum for critical and subversive teaching (Grey, Knights & Willmott, 1996). The neo-Fordism of the NCVQ promotes an approach to pedagogy based on synthesis whereas the post-Fordist perspective of many business lecturers in higher education will promote a critical pedagogy.

While GNVQs have yet to be introduced into higher education, they already play a significant role in further education where considerable higher education funding for degrees in Business Studies has been secured. Many further education lecturers teaching on a Business Studies degree also contribute to GNVQ programmes as part of their timetable. NVQ units have also been introduced as a means of training further education lecturers (Sharp, 1996). The research found that, unlike their counterparts in higher education, further education lecturers are more receptive to the idea that the GNVQ model should be applied to the Business Studies degree. This suggests that provision of the Business Studies degree in a further education institution is more likely to promote approaches to pedagogy based on synthesis rather than critique.

There may also be a relationship between research and pedagogy. The 1992 and 1996 UK Research Assessment Exercises determining research funding allocations has increased the pressures on Business Schools and business lecturers to bolster their research profile. During the interview phase of the research, the programme director at New Coastal University saw this trend as directly affecting recruitment practice into the Business School. Research activity is a key factor to consider because there are indications of a close link between research and attitude to pedagogy. There is a perception among business lecturers that staff who engage in research are more likely to "*challenge students*" by their higher expectations (Rowley, 1996). According to

Grey, Knights and Willmott (1996) those who are sympathetic to a critical approach to pedagogy are more likely to be research active as a consequence of their intellectual and moral commitments. This all suggests that lecturers who are involved in research will favour a critical pedagogy compared to their teaching-only counterparts.

The notion of 'skills' is highly problematic (Blunden, 1996). Widely divergent definitions are used by researchers, employers and government agencies. There is a tendency to lump a vast range of human knowledge and activity under the 'skills' umbrella. However, in making sense of the meaning of skills a distinction has been made between lower order skills, such as physical and motor skills, by contrast to higher order skills, such as intellectual, perceptual and creative skills (Barrow, 1987). In a specific consideration of skills in higher education, Bridges (1993) makes a similar dichotomy between transferable and transferring skills. Transferable skills may either be low-level abilities applicable in a variety of settings (eg keyboard skills) or context dependent (eg negotiating skills tailored to a particular international business culture). Transferring skills are meta-level or 'second order' skills where knowledge gained in one cognitive domain/context may apply, extend or modify this knowledge in relation to another. For example, historians accustomed to analysing the validity of historical documents may apply this 'skill' in the context of preparing a briefing document for a government minister as a civil servant. These distinctions are helpful in considering the impact of the wider debate concerning skills on the pedagogic dimension. The development of some low-order skills (eg motor skills) clearly promotes a pedagogy based on synthesis. On the other hand, defining this contested concept in terms of higher order, intellectual skills is more likely to promote the values of a critical pedagogy. A philosopher, for example, may possess the 'skill' of critical thinking.

Lecturers perceived a growing preoccupation among employers to demand 'social' skills which were regarded by interviewees as essentially 'unteachable'. It is not clear what effect the changing emphasis of employers will have on the pedagogy of lecturers since these demands essentially relate to the 'character traits' of students. Indeed, social skills are difficult to locate in terms of the new analytical framework

although they appear to fit within a lower order definition of skills (Barrow, 1987) promoting synthesis. Employers, having become accustomed to Business Studies graduates possessing certain lower order skills as standard (eg keyboard skills), may have simply expanded the lower order skills agenda by adding behavioural/social skills. Figure 26 summarises the dynamic forces across the pedagogic dimension as outlined above.

Figure 26 : The pedagogic dimension : Dynamic forces

Forces driving synthesis	Forces driving critique
Neo-Fordism →	← Post-Fordism
Further Education provision →	← Higher Education provision
Research-inactivity →	← Research-activity
Low-order skills →	← High-order skills

What is the future direction of pedagogy in Business Studies ? The answer to this question appears to depend, to a large extent, on whether Business Studies continues to be largely taught in the higher education sector or largely in further education as part of a new 'tertiary' education sector. The research findings indicated that further education lecturers were more likely to be pragmatic synthesisers. The conditions which seem to underpin critique, such as research activity, depend largely on the environment unique to a higher education rather than a conflated tertiary sector incorporating further education. Despite the renewed emphasis on research in higher education prompted by a heightened level of inter-institutional competition for research funding there are also signs that a conflated tertiary sector is beginning to emerge. The decision of the University of Derby to merge with neighbouring further education colleges will create the UKs first fully merged Higher and Further Education

institution (Thomson, 1997). There are, thus, conflicting signals regarding the dynamic forces which affect the future direction of pedagogy in Business Studies. However, the Dearing report (1997) has recommended that there should be no growth in degree level qualifications offered by further education colleges (p 260). If the provision of Business Studies remains principally based within higher education institutions, as currently defined, critique, as a pedagogic goal, is likely to be preserved. On the other hand, if the government permits a renewed growth in the provision of Business Studies at degree level in further education synthesis will become increasingly common approach to pedagogy.

The tribal dimension

A distinction may be made between subjects within the curriculum which relate to a specific functional aspect of business (eg marketing, accountancy, HRM) and others which occupy a less specific relationship to the business context (eg economics, organisational behaviour). Subjects with a direct relationship to a business function tend to be more context-dependent than those which relate indirectly. Greater representation of functional subjects, such as marketing, will, thus, make the curriculum of Business Studies more context-dependent. However, the background of Business Studies lecturers will also play a key role. The survey indicated that most lecturers in context-dependent subjects are drawn from an academic background in a context-independent subject. The future recruitment pattern of Business Studies lecturers is likely to be increasingly affected by the concern of institutions to attract research funding. The survey also revealed that lecturers in Business Studies are mainly career academics, rather than business practitioners who have recently transferred into education. Using Weiner's (1996) distinction, Business Studies lecturers are more likely to have a 'straight road' rather than 'winding track' career taking in considerable experience in a business context.

The pressure on lecturers to undertake more publishable research as a result of the funding arrangements for UK higher education has been commented on in the context of pedagogy. However, funding criteria is also likely to have an impact on the tribal

dimension. Although there is an increasing expectation that academic staff in all subjects will engage actively in research, this demand represents a particularly significant change of culture and direction for business lecturers clustered in the former polytechnics (Harris, 1995). According to Rowley (1996), the UK Research Assessment Exercises have adopted criteria which have underscored the preeminence of refereed journal articles effectively discouraging other types of research output such as publication in less prestigious professional journals. The division between 'academic' and 'professional' journals is a mirror image of the distinction between context-independence/context-dependence. Given that business lecturers perceive that their prospects for career advancement are dependent on their research output (Rowley, 1996), and publication in 'academic' journals is being valued more highly than other more practitioner-oriented types of research output, there is a strong likelihood that career academics in Business Studies, committed to context-independent knowledge, will prosper.

The university wants to develop its research and increase the numbers of research students. You don't do research in Business Studies. You do research in a particular discipline.

(Economics Lecturer, New Urban University)

Indeed, the imperative for lecturers to undertake research in UK higher education may soon extend beyond a concern for career advancement. The University of Wales Swansea has made it clear that staff performance in the 1996 research exercise will be used as a criterion when making redundancies and there are indications that other institutions are planning to follow suit (Kingston, 1997). Interviewees at all institutions visited showed an awareness of the growing pressures on lecturers to undertake research especially at the new universities.

Modular strategies are becoming common across higher education and may have the effect of bolstering the context-independent tribe. Modularisation of the curriculum is permitting students to 'aggregate' combinations of modules/units from a range of university subjects (Raffe, 1994). To permit the widest possible range of student

choice in combining modules, aspects of the Business Studies curriculum are being re-written as self-standing units. The integration of business knowledge, pioneered by BTEC, demands greater context-dependency whereas the process of modularisation sweeping higher education in the 1990s, whereby students can aggregate knowledge, inevitably favours context-independence. It means that business knowledge can be taught as a series of discrete subjects. Modularisation permits lecturers in context-independent business areas to justify 'ring fencing' their subject because it will be taught to both business and non-business students, the latter of which would not be expected to understand, or even necessarily take an interest in, the 'relevance' of this knowledge to a business context.

There is widespread recognition that modularisation acts as a barrier to 'vocational relevance' (Burgess, 1977) and bolsters the tribal interests of those lecturers seeking to protect context-independent areas of the curriculum. Buttery, Mackay and Richter (1981) argue that there is a tendency for business lecturers teaching 'discipline-based' courses to leave the 'business context' to those teaching 'integrated' courses, abdicating any responsibility to link theory with practice. This perspective is shared by Schon (1987) in his reflections on re-designing a core curriculum for design students. The type of integrated curriculum for professional education, advocated by Schon (1987), is hampered by American-style modularisation of the higher education curriculum.

In order to accept a reflective practicum, a professional school would have to make room for it. The traditional program of the schools is divided into courses of a semester's duration, and students are usually expected to take four or five such courses each semester. But a reflective practicum demands intensity and duration far beyond the normal requirements of a course.

Schon (1987) p.311

Modularisation was also perceived by one of the interviewees to have buttressed the context-independent tribe:

The specialists, the economists, the social scientists, the statisticians...they go for the high ground of intellectual superiority. The modularisation fits and seems to be convenient for the people who want to be protected within this wall.
(Marketing Lecturer, New Urban University)

Moreover, the integrated curriculum is politically isolated in the sense that it fails to represent the interests of any particular business tribe. Economists want to teach economics. Accountants want to teach accountancy. Very few lecturers want to teach 'business' or management' *per se*. Burgess (1977), Buttery et al (1981) and Schon (1987) all recognise that an integrated curriculum is unpopular with subject specialists in higher education. Furthermore, the renewed emphasis on research productivity in higher education will further institutionalise recognition for established disciplinary frameworks and their associated tribes.

Figure 27 summarises these wider trends across higher education in relation to the tribal dimension.

Figure 27 : The tribal dimension : Dynamic forces

Forces driving context-dependence	Forces driving context-independence
Functional business subjects →	← Non-functional business subjects
Winding track careers →	← Straight line careers
Practitioner research →	← Academic research
Integrative curriculum →	← Aggregate curriculum

The direction of tribal forces appears to suggest movement toward greater context-independence in Business Studies. This depends, however, on continued emphasis on

competition for research funding in higher education and the modularisation of the curriculum protecting the traditional role of subject specialists.

Wider professional education

In chapter 6, the applicability of the original analytical framework was demonstrated in relation to other subjects within higher education. The applicability of the new analytical framework (figure 25) may also be illustrated in this way with particular reference to other areas of professional education. Although it has been argued that the position of Business Studies is ambiguous within the context of professional education (see chapter 2) business is nevertheless perceived as one of the ‘minor’ professions (Glazer, 1974). There are, though, important parallels between the study of business and other professional areas within higher education, such as medicine, engineering and teaching, where similar tribal tensions exist between academic (largely context-independent) and professional (largely context-dependent) groups. Most professional schools are, like Business Studies, divergent communities rather than a convergent group of scholars, with a similar potential for conflicting approaches to pedagogy and tribal schism. There is also a similar sense of historic dislocation between professional education and liberal-humanist notions of higher education. Goodlad (1976) makes this point where he asserts that there is a potential conflict between professional education and *“the wide-ranging institutionalised scepticism and detachment which is implicit in the traditional university approach to knowledge.”* (p 16)

The need for students to assimilate large quantities of information to make them ‘competent’ or safe to practice is common in many professional fields. The heavy emphasis on ‘technical’ content within much initial professional education creates a weight of expectation that lecturers will *“cover the ground”* (Goodlad, 1984) to help students accumulate vast quantities of information. Technical competence is an essential part of providing a professional service. This pressure has traditionally been particularly strong within medical education (Seager, 1984). An ever-changing body of knowledge places a heavy onus on lecturers and practitioners to keep abreast of

such developments throughout the course of their professional life. Medical students are required to synthesise vast areas of scientific knowledge including human anatomy, physiology, biochemistry and genetics with an attendant emphasis on regular assessment through written examinations. Engineering education has also, by tradition, placed technical competence as the major objective of learning (Harrisberger, 1984). Curricula throughout engineering is knowledge-based.

However, the work of Schon (1983; 1987) has been heavily influential in the re-assessment of pedagogy for a range of professions including Medicine, Nursing and Engineering which have previously been dominated by approaches to education based on the synthesis of technical knowledge. The intended outcome of Project 2000 Nursing programmes has been to *“produce critical, problem-solving, autonomous professionals, knowledgeable doers, who are able to respond flexibly to different situations”* (UKCC, 1986). Nurse education is thus shifting from a pedagogy which has traditionally emphasised technical rationality to one based on reflecting on experience. The sheer amount of information within biomedical education has also led to a re-evaluation of the curriculum with a greater emphasis placed on problem-based learning (Vang, 1994).

Other professions, notably teaching, have also been heavily influenced by Schon's concept of the reflective practitioner. The HELLP project (How to Enable Learning through Professional Practice), concerned with the supervision of placements in pre-service education in teaching and health visiting, champions a professional 'artistry' model based on Schon (Fish, Twinn & Purr, 1991). In a survey of modes of teacher education, Whitty, Barton, Miles, Whiting and Furlong (1997) found that 'reflective practice' was by far the most popular discourse of professionalism among teachers.

There are though a number of different interpretations of what is meant by a 'reflective practitioner' (eg Zeichner & Liston, 1987; Hill, 1996). This has led to a tendency to conflate the words 'reflective' and 'critical'. Reid and Parker (1995) in commenting on the role of sociology of education in teacher education, for example, argue it plays a vital role in *“producing the educated, critically reflective professional teacher”* (p

411). The terms 'critical' and 'reflective' appear to be interpreted here as virtually synonymous. This might suggest that business lecturers who regard themselves as critical evaluators are close relatives of reflective practitioners in other areas of professional education. Some caution, though, needs to be exercised in making this link since being 'critical' may be defined as a different characteristic of professional discourse than being 'reflective' (Whiting, Whitty, Furlong, Miles & Barton, 1996).

There appear to be important parallels, and differences, between the positions identified in the new analytical framework and Schon's (1983) notion of the reflective practitioner. Those adopting a critical pedagogy recognised some of the problems with professional education also highlighted by Schon (1987). Schon argues that professional education, premised on technical rationality, is poor at dealing with the *"indeterminate zones of practices - uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict"* (Schon, 1987, p 6). Lecturers favouring a critique argued that these same conditions of a post-Fordist business environment meant it was crucial to prepare students capable of reflecting critically in the workplace. However, while Schon emphasises the primacy of using a practicum - or 'virtual' world - as a context for students to reflect on, most critical pedagogues favoured student reflection on traditional, academic knowledge and/or the context of business as part of wider society, Brookfield's 'contextual awareness'. Schon wants students to reflect on problems arising from a practical context (the epistemology of practice), a process many critical pedagogues saw as divorced from their role but naturally occurring once students entered the workplace because they had been schooled to reflect on the epistemology of academic knowledge. It is difficult, also, to expect Business Studies students to reflect on a practical context as few will have any substantial work experience except, perhaps, following a sandwich year. It is, thus, only in the final year of a Business Studies degree that students may be sufficiently equipped to reflect on the epistemology of practice.

In terms of the new analytical framework, Schon's position is probably most closely related to a context-dependent critique. Knowledge in this domain is closely related to the business context and thus provides an opportunity to get students to reflect on the

epistemology of this practicum. However, lack of substantive business experience among students will act as a major barrier to such reflection regardless of the commitment of lecturers to Schon's pedagogy. In order to realise Schon's vision of a professional education students need to have something to reflect on. Trainee teachers will go on teaching practice at an early stage in their programme giving them something to reflect on. Business Studies students, by contrast to nearly all other 'professional' students, only gain formal work experience in the final year of their degree, if at all. It is problematic, therefore, to apply Schon's model to the education of Business Studies students due to the belated and increasingly limited role of work experience in their educational programme. In this respect Schon's notion of the reflective practitioner is probably more relevant to postgraduate management education where students already have some practical experience upon which to reflect.

The major schism which concerns Schon (1987) is between technical rationality and artistry. He argues that technical rationality is the dominant model of professional education which drives out education for artistry. This distinction is also useful in drawing out differences between a context-dependent critique and a context-dependent synthesis. Lecturers favouring the latter were predominantly drawn from technical or hard subjects, such as accountancy, where, in Schon's terms, professionalism is defined as competence rather than artistry. There is growing evidence, though, of serious interest in Schon's notion of the reflective practitioner among accountancy educators to produce the 'reflective accountant' (Velayutham & Perera, 1993) despite surveys which suggest that accountancy is still firmly wedded to technical rationality and traditional, didactic teaching methods (Brown & Guilding, 1993). Therefore, although the traditional model of accountancy teaching might be a context-dependent synthesis there is interest in moving towards a context-dependent critique getting students to think more critically about business practice.

Business Studies lecturers were divided on whether academic knowledge should ape or distance itself from rapid changes in the business context. Similar debates appear to exist in other branches of professional education. In medical education, the pace of research creates a particular problem for educators who need to decide to what extent

the curriculum should reflect or deflect changes which may only be of short term significance. On the other hand, there is a danger of failing to recognise new research which will have profound and long term effects on professional practice. Vang (1994) highlights this particular dilemma in discussing how the creation of new sub-specialisms has remorselessly expanded the scope of the curriculum for medical education.

Much of the information taught had a very short half-life in consequence of the rapid development of new knowledge.

Vang (1994) p.68

This concern about the long-term value of new knowledge emerging from the research context is a mirror image of the context-independent attitudes of many business lecturers.

There are clearly important parallels between business and wider professional education. The sense that business (or management) is a 'marginal' profession is a perception other professions share concerning their relationship with society. Henkel (1994), for example, suggests that social work is an incorrigibly marginal profession. Moreover, many lecturers in Business Studies are drawn from a background in Humanities or Social Sciences (see chapter 7) in common with lecturers in other professional areas. An academic background in the Humanities is closely connected with an ability to reflect critically on knowledge claims (Barnett, 1990). O'Hear (1987) argues that the humanities provides the best way for someone to criticise the values on which institutions are based while the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) also comments on the unique quality of a humanities education in similar terms.

The critical techniques and traditions of the humanities can play an important role in giving graduates a measure of balance, making them aware of the limitations and implications of arguments and encouraging objectivity and disinterested enquiry.

It seems likely that many lecturers from a background in the humanities who now find themselves working in various branches of professional education may seek to pass on this 'critical' tradition in teaching professional students.

The pedagogic attitudes and tribal affiliations which have been identified in connection with Business Studies lecturers may be similar to many other professional schools. However, in many respects Business Studies represents a particular case within higher education. Opportunities for context-independence are greater for business lecturers given the absence of a unified professional body which might otherwise seek greater influence over the curriculum and act as a bridge between the academic and the professional setting. Unlike teacher education or social work, the business curriculum in higher education has not been subject to major government intervention since it is not perceived as a provider of a distinct public service. Despite the rhetoric of Industry-Higher Education links these often take place in the context of science and technology or on an institution-wide basis rather than specifically with business and management departments.

Conclusion

The new analytical framework provides a better understanding of the key issues which divide Business Studies lecturers. It suggests that pedagogic philosophy and tribal membership provide more important points of departure than conventional distinctions concerning aims in Business Studies and hard and soft knowledge. Moreover, the framework derived from this analysis can be examined by reference to dynamic forces of change affecting higher education. Lecturers in Business Studies represent a range of academic tribes. Gaining a more sophisticated understanding of this diverse community has important implications for re-evaluating the characterisation of Business Studies as the antithesis of higher education, a task which will be the focus of the next chapter. The new analytical framework may also be relevant to the examination of pedagogy and tribal affiliation in other areas of higher education,

particularly other divergent communities of professional educators.

CHAPTER 12

Business Studies in Higher Education : Towards a New Understanding

Introduction

This chapter begins by re-evaluating the specific claims, outlined in chapter 2, that Business Studies and higher education are dislocated by separate identities. The thesis has demonstrated that there is a substantial gulf between the simplistic representations of aims and knowledge in Business Studies at the macro-level and the belief-systems of lecturers at the micro or pedagogic level. There is, in reality, a more complicated relationship between the stated goals of the Business Studies curriculum and the pedagogy adopted by many lecturers in Business Studies than a macro-level analysis would suggest. There has been a tendency to polarise the debate and emphasise the differences between Business Studies, as a vocational education, and the principles underpinning a higher education at the macro level rather than examining the similarities. However, the empirical research, undertaken as part of this thesis, has shown that many lecturers in Business Studies closely identify with pedagogic principles which lie at the heart of a liberal higher education. Furthermore, context-independent tendencies in Business Studies favour a curriculum subject to 'academic rule' (Moodie, 1996), one of the central claims of academic freedom, a concept widely recognised as a cornerstone of higher education (Russell, 1993). While Business Studies cannot be considered a liberal education in the sense of an entirely disinterested pursuit of knowledge, many lecturers are committed to a liberal process of education which helps to produce autonomous individuals. Thus, the relationship between Business Studies and wider higher education is not as dislocated (see chapter 2) or as polarised by conflicting objectives as commonly represented. This chapter will also reflect on the wider changes in the nature of both vocational and higher education. A new understanding of Business Studies within higher education will emerge on this basis.

Paradigm and pedagogy

Although lecturers in Business Studies largely perceive their goal as preparing students for the workplace this vocational objective does not preclude commitment to a pedagogy which rests comfortably within a liberal tradition of higher education. While the ideology of vocationalism may have sought to “*reverse the main elements of liberal-humanism*” (Hickox and Moore, 1995, p 45) this is a debate which has largely taken place at policy level, led by bodies such as the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). It does not imply that vocational educators share the ideology of the NCVQ. However, critics of subjects with vocational objectives (eg Squires, 1990) often imply that lecturers in such subjects occupy a wholly different paradigm than lecturers in non-vocational subjects. For example, Carr (1993) drawing on the work of Feinberg (1983) identifies ‘vocational education’ and ‘general education’ as two distinct paradigms of education. However, the difficulty with such paradigms is that they give rise to, and legitimise, a whole series of assumptions regarding curriculum knowledge, guiding educational metaphors and teaching methods. ‘Vocational education’ is associated with ‘technical knowledge and practical skills’ whereas ‘critical knowledge, cultural awareness, and social understanding’ are connected with ‘general education’ (Carr, 1993). While ‘vocational education’ is synonymous with ‘relevance, ‘enterprise’ and ‘practical instruction’, ‘general’ education is concerned with collaboration and participation both as guiding metaphors and teaching methods (Carr, 1993). Parallel assumptions apply in higher education where academic (or general) education and vocational education are conceived as opposites (de Weert, 1994).

Goodlad (1997) draws on Rothblatt’s definition of a liberal education as “*a broad understanding of human nature, society and institutions, accompanied by a critical capacity to make choices and distinctions and to exercise, where necessary, a responsible independence of mind*” (p 13). Writing from an avowedly ‘liberal humanist’ perspective, Goodlad (1997), building on earlier work (Goodlad, 1988), identifies a number of ‘heresies’ in higher education which deviate from this position. Utilitarianism is defined as “*the adaptionist tendency to see learning always as a*

means to some social end, concerned with 'practice', never as a source of personal enlightenment, revelation or satisfaction to the individual" (p 28). Goodlad (1997) goes on to link the 'heresy' of utilitarianism with teaching methods which over-emphasise the needs of society (or industry) or the demands of the discipline. The connection which Goodlad makes is that a utilitarian education, such as Business Studies, is not capable of delivering emancipatory educational goals and is, further, fundamentally incompatible with liberal principles. However, is it not possible, as Silver and Brennan (1988) suggest, to be a 'liberal vocationalist' committed to the notion of preparing students for the workplace and yet, at the same time, concerned to provide a liberal education ? The fact that many Business Studies lecturers are drawn from this same liberal humanist tradition lends strong support to this proposition. The possibility, that Business Studies lecturers perceive the development of the student as a critically aware, independent thinker, does not neatly dovetail with the notion that paradigm predetermines pedagogy.

The identification of highly generalised paradigms concerning vocational and academic (or general) education should not be confused with the pedagogy of higher education lecturers. Despite such paradigms, it is not logically inconsistent for a lecturer in Business Studies to be committed to developing students as autonomous, independent thinkers. Hodkinson (1991) makes a similar point in the context of school education arguing that the pedagogy of some vocationalists has much in common with 'liberal educators'. According to Hodkinson (1991), there are both 'progressive educators' and 'progressive trainers' who share a pedagogy which emphasises the primacy of student development and emancipation as a learner. This demonstrates that although there may be differences between the objectives of vocational and general education, there may be common teaching and learning strategies. Moreover, the notion that vocational teachers can be critical educators is not confined to the work of Hodkinson (eg Lakes, 1994). There is growing interest in the notion that vocational education can be reconciled with the principles of liberal education (Silver and Brennan, 1988; Pring, 1995). The intellectual aridity of vocational education and the elitism of liberal education are identified by Pring (1995) as the enemies of both traditions.

Vocational educators and critical pedagogy

The possibility that many vocational educators are committed to a critical pedagogy has been largely debated within the context of school-based rather than higher education. However, this research has demonstrated that the context of higher education is important in the development of the pedagogy of lecturers in Business Studies. This study found that business lecturers working within higher education institutions had a largely different pedagogic perspective than those working in further education institutions. Many in the former group were keenly aware of the uniqueness of a 'higher education' and the importance of developing students as free, independent thinkers. Business lecturers in higher education were passionate about their role as educators rather than simply regarding their role as imparting business knowledge. By contrast, those working in further education did not share the same sense of common values expressed by those working in higher education. Further education has much closer historical links with industry and does not provide an environment or working culture conducive to staff research (Elliot, 1996).

Working in a higher education environment may play a significant role in the pedagogic development of lecturers in Business Studies. Tom Bournier, one of the most prolific contributors to writing and research concerning the business curriculum in higher education over the last fifteen years, recently reflected (Bournier, 1996) on his own evolving pedagogic philosophy as a business lecturer working in higher education. He tracked his development in a series of stages. As a student, he saw education primarily as concerned with the transmission of information and ideas while as a young lecturer he had a similar philosophy but felt the added responsibility to pass on information as up-to-date and *useful* as possible. After a decade as a lecturer, Bournier identifies the third stage of his personal development as helping students to develop their critical faculties and encourage them to test ideas and evidence. Bournier's (1996) personal reflection highlights a possible correlation between the age or experience of a lecturer and their pedagogic philosophy. It could be, for example, that, as in Bournier's case, older lecturers are more likely to embrace the concept of critical evaluation as central to their purpose. In the research undertaken, the interview

phase did not pay particular attention to the age/experience of the interviewee as a factor in determining their pedagogic views. However, in the survey it was found that older lecturers were more supportive of the notion that Business Studies should be a study about, rather than for, business which appears to be indicative of a more critical perspective. Blackmore (1995), interviewing newly appointed higher education lecturers both at the beginning and towards the end of their first academic year, indicates that pedagogic attitudes can change even over a relatively short period. He discovered that many lecturers had re-evaluated their initial perception of the pedagogic role between the first and second interviews. Lecturers who, at the outset, had seen their role as the “*source of all information*” had moved away from this perception now regarding students as contributors to the teaching and learning process. The notion that the role of the lecturer is that of a ‘pragmatic synthesiser’, one of the main pedagogic positions identified in chapter 9, could thus be related to inexperience. Further research is needed to examine, in greater detail, the relationship between pedagogy and the ‘maturation’ of a Business Studies lecturer.

Academic freedom

‘Academic freedom’ is a concept which has been widely discussed and disseminated. It is regarded as a crucial precondition to preserve the uniqueness of a higher education (eg Barnett, 1990; Russell, 1993). According to Russell (1993), increasing state control of UK higher education and attempts to steer the curriculum towards the perceived needs of the economy are posing a serious threat to academic freedom. Business Studies, as an assumed associate of economic (and Statist) interests, stands accused of helping to erode this independence of expression. Moodie’s (1996) analysis of academic freedom is helpful in understanding the perception that Business Studies contributes to an undermining of academic freedom.

Moodie (1996) analyses academic freedom in terms of three distinct claims. The term ‘academic freedom’ refers to the right of academics to take their own decisions without fear of retribution while ‘university autonomy’ makes similar claims for higher education institutions. The third claim on ‘academic freedom’ concerns the

right of academics to exercise decision-making powers with respect to a range of issues including educational standards, resource allocation, staff appointments, and, the syllabus or curriculum. Moodie (1996) labels this third claim 'academic rule'.

The notion of 'academic rule' in relation to control over the syllabus or curriculum has special significance in understanding why Business Studies is perceived as a threat to academic freedom. The perception that the business community, and not academics, shape an uncritical agenda for business studies (Barnett, 1990) indicates a breach of 'academic rule'. However, there is only limited evidence to suggest that Business Studies poses a serious threat to 'academic rule' as earlier research has demonstrated (Boys, 1988). Further, the tribal schism in Business Studies between context-independence and context-dependence indicates that a substantial body of lecturers want to preserve 'academic rule' over the curriculum. While some lecturers in Business Studies with a context-dependent attitude to knowledge may favour giving up some measure of 'academic rule', the context-independent tribe wish to preserve the dualist separation between university knowledge and knowledge in society. Thus, maintaining independence and autonomy in constructing the curriculum is a value which many business lecturers share with others working in higher education.

Liberal education and Business Studies

There are many interpretations of a 'liberal' education and this brief section will not attempt to dissect this vast literature. However, reflecting on Peters' (1977) three interpretations of a liberal education it is clear that a Business Studies education may be compatible with at least one of his three definitions.

According to Peters (1977), liberal education may be interpreted as the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. This classical conception excludes the pursuit of knowledge for utilitarian or vocational ends. It appears unlikely that Business Studies could be reconciled to this classical conception of a liberal education. It is conceivable to approach 'Business Studies' purely as a sociological study of the relationship between business and society without any vocational purpose. However, this scenario

would be highly improbable and may, at best, form just a small part of a Business Studies education. As noted in chapter 2, critics have singled out Business Studies for censure on precisely these grounds; that it is unconnected to the disinterested pursuit of knowledge (a Professor of English cited by Bain, 1990).

Peters (1977) second definition concerns liberal education as a general education. In other words, liberal education should not be confined to a single discipline. Newman (1976) argued in favour of all-round development; people should be allowed to develop in various directions rather than over-specialising. While Business Studies contains a wide diversity of contributing disciplines it would be difficult to contend it constituted a general education. Although many other modern first degrees are considerably more narrow and specialised than Business Studies it could hardly be argued that this constituted a general, liberal education by default.

However, it is Peters (1977) third interpretation of a liberal education which provides the closest match to the practice and aspirations of a large number of Business Studies lecturers. This third interpretation focuses on the development of the 'free man' and is, perhaps, more concerned with the educational process. According to this interpretation, liberal education is about the development of the autonomous, free thinker someone with *"a willingness to revise opinions and assumptions"* (Peters, 1977, p 64) and capable of *"approaching what one is told critically"* (p 65). Of course, it might be argued that many business lecturers only embrace this conception of a liberal education in order to produce better problem-solvers for modern organisations rather than encouraging the development of autonomous, free thinkers. There is a certain amount of truth in this criticism with respect to some, though not all, critical evaluators (see chapter 9). Pragmatic synthesisers only tend to link 'critical' thinking to these kind of immediate, practical situations. By contrast, many 'critical evaluators' ultimately want students to think critically and develop independently for their own benefit as individuals. The resulting benefit to employers is a byproduct of this educational process rather than its rationale. However, the fact that students educated in this way may match the needs of employers in a post-Fordist economy does not, in itself, disqualify this process as illiberal. An educational process can be both

emancipatory and, inadvertently, vocational. These critical evaluators are therefore, at least to some extent, liberal educators. Circumstances may reinforce this liberal tendency among business lecturers. Secure life-long employment in large business organisations has been in decline for several years. Corporate life is itself in decline (Sampson, 1995) and increasingly, 'organisation' man is being replaced by 'portfolio' man (Handy, 1981). Thus, the changing nature of work is placing a higher premium on educating individuals who will control their own careers rather than fitting the immediate needs of employers.

Changing higher education

Misunderstanding the complex nature of between a Business Studies education in higher education is not confined, though, to previously erroneous deductions that a curriculum committed to a vocational aim precludes a critical pedagogy or that Business Studies lecturers will automatically defer to business interests, relinquish academic rule, embrace a monist view of knowledge and threaten all aspects of liberal education. The nature of both higher education and a 'vocational' education are undergoing a process of re-evaluation. The relationship between higher education and employment is now much closer. It is widely accepted that higher education in Britain has become more explicitly vocational (Williams, 1985; Pratt, 1992). The provision of work placements is no longer confined to vocational courses and *"there is a recognition that for all students higher education is a preparation (for future employment) rather than a retreat or a postponement."* (Winter, 1996, p 80). A new consensus is forming around the vocational role of all forms of higher education, vocational and non-vocational alike. This new consensus contrasts with the long-standing polarisation of the 'vocational' as opposed to 'non-vocational'. Commenting on higher education in the 1970s, Burgess (1977) argues that *"vocational is interpreted narrowly and non-vocational is held to mean leisure time and cultural activities"* (p 85). A further indication of this new consensus was provided in evidence to the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education under the chairmanship of Sir Ron Dearing. The Society for Research into Higher Education, for example, contended that ensuring students graduate in possession of certain 'core' skills is one

of the key 'responsibilities' of higher education (Society for Research into Higher Education, 1996).

While Business Studies was in the vanguard of vocational degrees in higher education in the 1960s and 1970s many other more specifically vocational degrees now exist. Business Studies is no longer at the cutting edge of "*vocational intent*" (Brennan, 1985) with a diffuse rather than specific relationship to a particular type of employment. Other, newer degree subjects, such as Hospitality Management, are more directly relevant to a specific employment context and have consequently replaced Business Studies as a target of scepticism regarding academic integrity (Lashley, 1996). Brennan's analysis, and the emergence of more specifically vocational subjects, demonstrates that Business Studies, although still associated with the language of vocational education, now rests more clearly within the mainstream of the higher education curriculum. Moreover, given that nearly all forms of higher education can act as a prelude to entry into the labour market the extent to which students regard their education as a preparation to enter employment may be currently underestimated if viewed simply on the basis of subject choice.

There is growing realisation that even areas of the higher education curricula apparently unrelated to daily life, such as history, philosophy or literature, can, unintentionally, impart professional 'transferable skills' (Goodlad, 1997). A process labelled 'deferred vocationalism' (Wellington, 1993b) may be occurring whereby choice of a non-vocational degree is determined by the belief that many employers place a higher value on 'traditional' university disciplines. Similarly, Williams (1994) contends that 'indirect vocationalism' takes place whereby the traditional school curriculum is used as a covert mechanism for vocational preparation. Recruitment practices in chartered accountancy, for example, clearly favour graduates from high prestige institutions without accountancy courses (Fisher & Murphy, 1995). British employers have always placed a high premium on employing graduates with a 'trained mind' (Teichler, 1989) and this preference is likely to be strengthened by the demands of a post-Fordist economy. Indeed, a recent joint report produced by the Council of University Deans of Arts and Humanities and the Council for Industry and Higher

Education contends that arts graduates do just as well in the jobs market as graduates from more vocational programmes (CIHE, 1997). Furthermore, the new occupational profiles which are emerging in many post-Fordist growth industries, such as informatics, telematics, communication and services, are incompatible with a binary divide between academic and vocational education (de Weert, 1994).

There is nothing new in the notion that students (and parents) have a long-standing interest in the vocational relevance of their studies (Silver & Silver, 1997). However, these concerns have reached new heights in the fiercely competitive employment market of the 1980s and 1990s. Growing numbers of graduates have brought about a 'devaluation of the currency' (of a degree) whilst increasing financial pressures mean that obtaining permanent employment immediately after graduation is a necessity for most students. Even these changes, though, are not potentially as significant as those signalled by the modularisation of the curriculum and the opportunity afforded for students to pick and choose modules. Now, as never before, students are empowered to impose their vocational priorities on the curriculum as consumers of higher education. The emerging modular framework for higher education is facilitating fusion between 'academic' and 'vocational' degrees. Students can, and do, choose to study a range of modules which span the academic-vocational divide translating their vocational priorities into course demands. Students are experiencing a mix of academic and vocational education taking place through 'aggregative' rather than 'integrative' strategies (Raffe, 1994). Modularisation means that students are becoming a serious force in shaping the higher education curriculum alongside the traditional 'players'; the state, employers and the academic community. If studies indicating the vocational priorities of students are correct this will have important repercussions for the future direction of higher education.

Changing vocational education

While the curriculum of higher education is becoming more explicitly vocational (Halsey, 1992), both at a national and international level (McInnis, 1995) the type of vocational education required by employers is itself undergoing a transformation.

Rapidly changing patterns of employment have put paid to the notion of life-time employment and stable career patterns (Handy, 1995). The movement from a physical-capital or Fordist pattern of mass production to a human-capital or post-Fordist business environment in the latter part of this century has highly significant implications for the pattern of work and employment. Organisational theorists argue that change and uncertainty will produce a business environment full of “*constantly emerging new realities*” (Levitt, 1986). The certainties of long term organisational employment are being replaced by a rise in self-employment and a “*portfolio way of life*” (Handy, 1995, p 26) where individuals must develop a product, skill or service themselves and then seek their own customers. Increasing employment levels in small and medium-sized enterprises in many European countries including the UK (Kivinen, Ahola & Kankaanpaa, 1995) are also creating the need for individuals with more generalist knowledge and skills to perform a wider range of managerial tasks. Thus, specific skills and techniques will become rapidly outdated in a post-modern economy. This means that in a post-industrial or post-Fordist economy a narrow, job-specific approach to education is becoming increasingly untenable because specific jobs, and even whole occupations, are being swept away by the pace of change. In short, a job-specific vocational education will have diminishing vocational relevance because the forces of post-Fordist change will make it obsolete.

Post-Fordist trends are reflected in the changing nature of school-based vocational education. Wellington (1993a) identifies a shift from ‘vocationalism’ to ‘enterprise’. While ‘vocationalism’ emphasised the collective, role-specific preparation of students for work, ‘enterprise’ stresses the development of students as flexible, creative and autonomous individuals, the characteristics required in a post-Fordist economy. Increasing emphasis is being placed on ‘thinking skills’ whereby making decisions and solving problems have been identified as central to the needs of employers (Wellington, 1993b). The interviewees who contended that philosophy would be a more appropriate preparation for business than Business Studies are not alone in their thinking. The British industrialist, Sir Douglas Hague has also argued that it is more appropriate to study philosophy than information technology or Computer Science as a preparation to work in management (Johnson, 1990). This has led others to argue

that the nature of 'new' vocationalism can be logically connected with the tradition of liberal education.

Fundamental changes in the economic infrastructure and the structure of occupations have forced increasing parallels to be drawn between vocational education and liberal education.

Jamieson (1993) p.200

While it has always clearly been the case that vocational education and liberal education are not mutually exclusive, in that what is vocationally relevant can be personally satisfying and enriching and what is personally satisfying and enriching can also be vocationally relevant (Williams, 1994), the economic conditions of post-Fordism are now demanding that the values of a 'liberal education', with an emphasis on the enrichment of persons as free thinkers (Williams, 1994), are fused with a vocational education. Indeed, Hickox and Moore (1991) describe 'progressive education' as post-Fordist, despite the fact that the former predates the latter.

The average American worker now changes occupation between four and six times in a lifetime (Rosenstock, 1991). This has led to a parallel debate in the United States where post-Fordist trends have brought about a re-evaluation of vocational education (Rosenstock, 1991). Post-secondary vocational education in the United States is moving away from a job-specific rationale toward more broadly based 'cluster-related' programmes which attempt to give students a firmer grasp of 'generic' skills (Vaughan, 1991).

In UK higher education, there is increasing recognition of the need to alter previously limited conceptions of preparation for work. Coldstream (1996), indulging in the futurology of higher education, contends that all employees will be taught to approach work in a critical and self-critical way by the early part of the twenty-first century. The Business Studies degree, although not linked to a specific vocational occupation, has always been connected with entry into management a notion supported by a large number of interviewees. Literature concerning the manner in which managers should

be educated has increasingly emphasised the form of learning required in a post-Fordist economy. O'Connor (1993) contends that the manager of the future will need to work more effectively with a range of groups and cultures, anticipate and cope with constant change and take more responsibility as a decision-maker. The 'common denominator' will be the ability to 'think' defined in terms including deconstructing arguments and observing and evaluating one's own thought process (O'Connor, 1993). These intellectual or thinking skills will be central to successful management in a post-Fordist economy. There is a clear link being made in much literature between the facets of a liberal education and economic needs. Fatchett (1991) directly asserts that *"the person who best manages modern technologies can best be developed through a broad liberal education."* (p 55). This is also a perspective shared by the Council for Industry and Higher Education (1990) which has strongly supported the notion that a broad liberal education has a central role to play in preparing students to enter employment and in generating an interest in lifelong learning.

The nature of pedagogy is being re-evaluated, and support is gathering among management educators for the notion of a 'critical pedagogy' (Grey, Knights and Willmott, 1996), in the light of this apparent reconciliation between liberal education and vocational preparation. Getting students to think critically is seen as vital in preparing for a business career, both as a manager or a worker, which will demand the deployment of more rigorous intellectual skills.

A critical pedagogy of management is not simply a new way of teaching existing management knowledge: its concern is to reflect critically on such knowledge as part of a more general development of critical management studies.

Grey, Knights & Willmott (1996) p.100-101

Given the speed of technological change a focus on narrow training provides students with soon-to-be-obsolete skills. Throwaway skills for throwaway workers come at the expense of academic skills and problem-posing skills for the new workplace - an environment that requires self-learning.

Rosenstock (1991) p.434

The shift which is taking place reflected in new thinking on business and management, and perhaps wider vocational education, is changing the emphasis from learning which stresses the immediacy of the ever-changing *context*, be that the job, the organisation, or the industry, to the development of the individual with sufficiently robust intellectual skills to withstand the vagaries and uncertainties of the business environment. There is also growing recognition of the need for greater emphasis within higher education on the systematic analysis of the marketable skills of *individuals* faced with an uncertain labour market (Goodlad, 1997).

Although a 'critical pedagogy' may signal relatively new thinking in relation to business and management education it represents an approach to teaching which rests comfortably with many lecturers who work in higher education. Nixon (1996) found that promoting dialogue and autonomy in learning and getting students to 'think for themselves' emerged as an important part of the pedagogic values of higher education lecturers from a range of disciplines. In similar vein, Rowland (1996) found that lecturers predominantly want to be identified with a 'liberal' tradition in which teaching and research is closely related and students are encouraged to adopt a critical and independent relationship to knowledge. Barnett (1990) has also argued that producing students who are 'critical thinkers' is a central pedagogic aim of lecturers in higher education while Goodlad (1997), drawing on the work of MacIntyre (1981), contends that a university should be "*a place of constrained disagreement*" in which a central responsibility is to initiate students into conflict which is tolerant of everything except intolerance itself. Thus, it is apparent that a critical pedagogy justified on the basis of the needs of post-Fordism will bring business lecturers closer to the pedagogy practised and espoused by other higher education lecturers.

Business Studies in higher education : towards a new understanding

There is particular reason to argue that higher education will be in the vanguard of the reconciliation between a vocational and an academic education suggested by Rosenstock (1991). The notion of a critical pedagogy cannot be disassociated with the idea of a higher education. Indeed, according to Barnett (1990), "*criticism is the*

essence of higher education" (p 163).

It has been noted that business lecturers in higher education had a largely different perspective to their colleagues working in further education. This may be illustrated by reference to the attitudes of lecturers to the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) framework. Virtually all higher education business lecturers interviewed were scathing in their criticism of the notion of higher level GNVQs (General National Vocational Qualifications) arguing that it would pose a major threat to the intellectual development of students. Hyland's (1994) criticisms of the NCVQ approach were a mirror image of the perspectives of higher education lecturers. The NVQ framework, although perhaps suitable for assessing certain basic skills, was considered largely irrelevant to the type of learning that takes place in higher education and would fail to develop students as critical thinkers. Therefore, although the NCVQ may be representative of current vocational ideology at policy level, there is little or no support for 'competence-based' approaches at the micro level among vocational educators in business. By contrast, lecturers working in further education were less concerned about GNVQs with several expressing support for this form of assessment. The vehemence of opposition to GNVQs among business lecturers in the higher education institutions indicates the extent to which *higher* education lecturers are committed to a more critical definition of pedagogy. However, the extent to which support among business educators for a critical pedagogy is a function of disciplinary culture, response to the needs of a post-Fordist economy, the process of developing as a higher education lecturer (eg Bourner, 1996), or, perhaps, a combination of all three is a matter which requires further research. Is the commitment of many to a critical pedagogy born out of a practical judgement concerning the (post-Fordist) needs of the economy or does it really reflect an attempt to defend the values of disciplinary culture within a higher education institution ? The post-Fordist justifications preferred by several of those lecturers identified as critical evaluators may cloak a traditional defence of a liberal education put forward by Bailey (1984).

We involve pupils in what is fundamental because understanding of human experience is intrinsically worthwhile, but in doing this we are necessarily

providing pupils with the knowledge and understanding that has the most general relevance and utility for anything they are likely to want to do.

Bailey (1984) p.29

Post-Fordism may thus serve as a convenient 'cover' for a predilection for liberal values among a significant section of business lecturers. If a new Fordist business environment emerged would this group of lecturers be prepared to abandon liberal ideals such as developing students as critical thinkers ? It would be highly improbable that the commitment of critical evaluators to liberal ideals would be abandoned given this hypothetical circumstance.

Barnett (1990) has made it clear that vocational degrees are not a welcome or legitimate addition to higher education unless they can be used as an "*educational vehicle*" (p 78) and embrace its essentially "*emancipatory promise*" (p 78).

Those who advocate the development of vocational skills or wider transferable skills can have their way, just so long as they are prepared for the practices in question to become the object of critical appraisal on the part of the student. A practice can only be tolerated in higher education provided it is susceptible to examination, evaluation and, if necessary, repudiation. It cannot be allowed to become a routine, a technique, a mere habit.

Barnett (1990) p.78

The guarantee which subjects like Business Studies must give if they are to be accepted in higher education is clearly set out by Barnett (1990). They must encourage students to critically appraise knowledge which means that lecturers need to adopt a critical pedagogy. However, it has been demonstrated that a large section of Business Studies lecturers enthusiastically espouse this pedagogic purpose and want students to question and evaluate what counts as business knowledge. Pring (1995) indicates how the reconciliation between the liberal and the vocational may take place.

There seems no reason why the liberal should not be conceived as something vocationally useful and why the vocationally useful should not be taught in an educational and liberating way.

Pring (1995) p.183

The 'liberal' is already conceived as something useful in higher education as indicated by the employment destination of many graduates and the acceptance of vocational agendas within non-vocational programmes. There is, though, perhaps insufficient recognition that many business lecturers are fulfilling the other half of this 'bargain' by teaching the vocationally useful in an educating and liberating way.

Conclusion

Unhelpful stereotypes misinform understanding of, and exaggerate the differences between, lecturers in higher education. More specifically these assumptions have fuelled the sense of a division between those offering a vocational education, such as Business Studies, and other 'academic' disciplines. According to the University of Warwick Union of Students back in 1968, a university education should be one which 'teaches one to think' rather than just providing a vocational education (Silver & Silver, 1997). There is a presumption that subjects such as Business Studies pose a 'threat' to the 'traditional' values of a higher education. However, in determining what really constitutes the uniqueness of a *higher* education over other forms of education encouraging students to reflect critically on knowledge claims is a key ingredient (Barnett, 1990). There seems no reason why a vocational education cannot, also, teach students to think critically especially given the commitment of many business educators to this goal. This thesis has demonstrated, that many business educators are committed to a critical pedagogy which seeks to emancipate students. This is related both to the fact that Business Studies lecturers are drawn from a divergent, but in many respects, academic disciplinary community and to the changing nature of a vocational education which now places a high premium on the long term economic value of students learning to think critically. While commitment to a critical pedagogy is not shared by all business educators it is a clearly more mainstream perspective than

has previously been acknowledged. What Business Studies lecturers have in common with other lecturers in higher education may be more significant than the differences which exist between them. This fact has important implications for understanding the nature of Business Studies in higher education. It further suggests that, at a broader level, a new, more convergent relationship may be emerging within higher education between 'vocational' and 'academic' education.

CHAPTER 13

The Future of Business Studies

Introduction

Business Studies is in the vanguard of the expansion of UK higher education. Thus, many of the changes which are currently affecting the sector as a whole, particularly rising student numbers, modularisation of the curriculum and semesterisation of the academic year, are also having a major impact on Business Studies. This reality was reflected in the comments of many interviewees regarding the future of Business Studies:

We will have to live with a world with huge numbers, relatively few staff, less staff-student contact and, frankly, less bright students.

(Economics Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Therefore, the changes which face Business Studies are, in many respects, system-wide, rather than subject-led. The formal role of the CNAA in monitoring and evaluating the Business Studies curriculum has been removed and the forces of change affecting higher education will dictate the future shape and direction of the curriculum. The role of the CNAA in promoting a subject-specific debate during the early development of the Business Studies degree has been largely displaced in the 1990s by broader agendas in relation to higher education. The period 1984 to 1994 witnessed an unprecedented expansion of higher education with the percentage of school leavers entering institutions rising from 20 to 30 per cent (Harris and Palmer, 1995). Debate focusing on the structure and underpinning philosophy of the Business Studies degree have receded while more pragmatic concerns such as coping with larger numbers of students, the implications of widening access and the effects of semesters and units of study have come to the fore.

Coping with larger numbers of students has resulted in considerable reflection on

teaching methods with a growing emphasis on individual or independent learning strategies as elsewhere in higher education (Rowley, 1994; Harris and Palmer, 1995). Growth in student numbers has not been matched by a proportionate increase in the number of academic staff employed (Harris and Palmer, 1995). Strengthening the induction period to introduce students more thoroughly to expectations of independent learning, the use of 'packs' of learning material and study support units are strategies which have been used with Business Studies students at a number of institutions including Southampton Institute (Harris and Palmer, 1995). In part, this concern with student learning is also driven by new bodies charged with the assessment of the quality of teaching across higher education, conducted by the HEFCE, and through the assessment of an institution's quality processes, HEQC and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Re-organisation of the academic year has occurred in many institutions on the basis of semesters and the associated teaching of courses on the basis of semester-long units of study which act as transferable credits under the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS) first launched in 1986 (Bocock, 1994). Credit systems offer students the opportunity to tailor their own degree around their own individual set of interests and ambitions. However, it also means that lecturers are no longer in control of a set of students pursuing a traditional three or four year degree programme (Bocock, 1994). Lloyd (1996b) comments that within the BA in Business Studies, while units may be open to all, this is at the expense of course integration and coherence. Hence, the system of unitisation is helping to sustain and reinforce a bounded, multi-disciplinary approach to Business Studies and militates against an integrated approach to the business curriculum.

System-wide change in higher education is, therefore, the key factor which will affect the future of the Business Studies degree. However, there are particular trends which point to the future direction of the Business Studies degree although the role of disciplinary interests in resisting change should not be overlooked.

Student choice

Despite their reputation as radical activists, students during the 1960s and 1970s were largely powerless in shaping their educational experience (Burgess, 1977). However, the student experience of the 1990s has changed radically since the era of student activism (Silver & Silver, 1997). Higher Education institutions are being increasingly viewed from a post-modern perspective with universities offering a means of educational 'consumption' and students acting as 'consumers' of educational 'goods' (ie degrees and diplomas) (Ritzer, 1996). Scott and Watson (1994a; 1994b) argue that students, acting as customers, have begun to play a more important role in shaping their courses in higher education in sharp contrast to erstwhile "*student impotence*" (Burgess, 1977, p 115) with respect to course design. Student choice will play an increasingly important role in the future design and development of the Business Studies degree. Modularisation and semesterisation facilitate greater student choice and this will have significant implications for areas of the business curriculum, such as economics, which prove unpopular with students. Despite the senior position of economists within Business Studies education, the 'greying' of economics lecturers coupled with the popularity of newer business subjects, notably marketing, will inevitably lead to a decline in the teaching of economics within Business Studies. At Suburban College the programme director commented that 95 per cent of students had opted for the marketing pathway within the Business Studies degree.

Most interviewees reported that students hold increasingly instrumental goals with regard to the curriculum. Lloyd (1996a), in commenting on the role of micro-economics within business programmes, reports that "*students are more critical and less patient of material with less than direct relevance to career development and/or (business) application*" (p 169). This instrumentalism will probably be exacerbated by the possible levying of tuition fees adding still further to high existing levels of student debt. As Ritzer (1996) points out, students and parents are increasingly approaching higher education with a consumerist mentality applying the same expectations relating to quality, service and cost as they would for any other consumer product. The growth of mature students, with more experience of a consumer society and apt to be

spending their own money, will extend this trend (Ritzer, 1996).

However, the process of managing the decline of an unpopular subject such as economics within the curriculum will still, initially at any rate, be overseen, and thus resisted, by a large number of economists. The pressure for greater context-related material is likely to be kept in abeyance in an attempt to preserve the theoretical foundations of economics. In re-writing the economics syllabus at South Bank University, within the context of modularisation and semesterisation, particular attention was paid to ensuring that micro-economics was retained.

A more restricted syllabus concentrating upon the role of the market, and an examination of micro economic theories and principles, it is hoped, should permit a sounder appreciation of the 'science' of economics, albeit at the expense of less attention or focus upon contemporary business issues.

Lloyd (1996a) p.169

Retreat into (and retention of) the 'basics' of the discipline is more likely than a growth of context-related, integrative approaches as tribal identities are preserved. Also, as one economist commented at interview, it is easier to teach microeconomics than the economic analysis of business practice.

Despite greater student choice in tailoring degrees to their own individual requirements it is likely that students will still wish to take a 'Business Studies' degree. Degree subjects are still an important touchstone of student identity and several interviewees did not regard increased choice as an important threat to the notion of a rounded Business Studies degree:

Students come to do a BABS degree or an Engineering degree. I don't think there will be a major explosion of students doing a 'mix 'n match' degree.

(Industrial Relations Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Students can pick 'n mix as they require. But students don't want to pick 'n mix. They have no intention of going to Geology to pick up Rocks in the Jurassic Age and Marketing Communications from the Business School. They like a common pathway.

(Marketing Lecturer, New Coastal University)

Students will still emerge from higher education as 'biologists', 'economists' or 'business' graduates. The importance of the 'course' in providing students with their basic source of self-identification in an academic environment should not be underestimated (Berry, 1995).

Decline of integration

It also clearly emerges from this research that the twin processes of modularisation and semesterisation occurring across higher education will preserve, and indeed, strengthen a multi rather than an interdisciplinary model of Business Studies. The commitment of the CNAA to interdisciplinary approaches to the curriculum in the 1970s and 1980s has been replaced by a subsequent re-assertion of multi-disciplinary control, a process which has, in many respects, mirrored the rise and fall of interdisciplinarity across higher education (Barnett, 1990, p 176). A number of interviewees commented on this trend with several arguing that there was more integration before modularisation/unitisation of programmes took place. Lloyd (1996a) also states :

Integration is now something that occurs more mysteriously in student minds as links between units are made perhaps in a more vertical fashion as students move into later stages (of the degree) and have to suffer prerequisites.

Lloyd (1996a) p.168

These forces will also, therefore, inadvertently, strengthen the role of the academic 'tribes' who will be able to preserve the separateness of their respective disciplines. Given the lowly national status of business and management research compared to that

in separate 'business' disciplines such as economics and econometrics, or law, for example (see chapter 2), it is likely that the four yearly Research Assessment Exercise will also play an important role in buttressing disciplinary communities within Business Studies rather than promoting integration in approaches to the curriculum. A number of interviewees commented that research was becoming a driving force within Business and Management departments, a point particularly stressed by the programme director at New Coastal University.

The new skills agenda

A new agenda for the development of skills is emerging within Business Studies programmes. Information technology skills, teamwork, basic communication and presentation skills are all examples of skills development which have long been accepted within Business Studies. However, the research identified that lecturers are perceiving growing demand for a different type of skills development which stresses the importance of personality rather than technical competence. This 'new' skills agenda represents a heightening of expectations from employers who now expect graduates with drive, enthusiasm and leadership qualities.

This new agenda for skills is symptomatic of post-Fordist trends. Rising numbers of graduates mean that employers, as 'consumers' of graduates, are becoming increasingly discerning and demanding. These rising expectations mean that students need to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive jobs market. Possessing technical skills associated with information technology or participant skills associated with teamwork is no longer sufficient to guarantee the interest of employers. Rather, employers are now looking at personality attributes, such as leadership qualities, in order to differentiate and thus select graduates.

In the current state of commercial reality, potential employers are increasingly demanding other qualities of our students, beyond the acquired skills platform and knowledge, and related closely to the personal characteristics of students. The need for confidence, personal and social skills has always been there, but

employers in today's labour market are planning an even greater emphasis upon such attributes.

Lloyd (1996b) p.77

However, it is probable that this new skills agenda will be resisted and marginalised. As degree programmes are trimmed to meet the requirements of new unitised structures it is highly unlikely that additional space will be given over to 'skills' units. Lecturers, as this thesis has argued, closely identify with their own disciplinary community and regard skills units as low in academic status. They also perceive that teaching such units will do little to further their own career aspirations. The perception that 'business skills' is a low status area though has always been a long standing obstacle to the development of such units within Business Studies. The new skills agenda is of particular concern to lecturers because many regard skills such as 'leadership' as at best unteachable and, at worst, a dubiously artificial attempt to remould the personalities of students.

Moreover, the growth of student numbers and greater dependence on independent learning strategies is generating a demand for the teaching of study/academic skills. As there is currently little space within the curriculum units ostensibly designed to impart 'business' skills often focus on study/academic skills, which may also be of some utility in a business context. A large number of lecturers also believe that analytical and critical thinking are the most valuable business 'skills' and that these are best developed in conjunction with traditional subject study.

Furthermore, the skills agenda is increasingly one affecting the *whole* of higher education and is no longer unique to ostensibly vocational subjects such as Business Studies. The Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative, for example, attempted to encourage greater emphasis on business skills across the higher education curriculum and was not specifically targeted at business-related programmes. Growing interest in definitions of 'graduateness', formally considered by the HEQC's Graduate Standards Programme, are linked very closely with identifying the 'core' skills which all graduates should possess. The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher

Education, chaired by Ron Dearing (Dearing, 1997)⁶ has recently recommended that communication skills, numeracy, the use of information technology and learning how to learn are 'key skills' central to the future success of all graduates.

As a system, higher education is now widely acknowledged to possess a much closer relationship with the economy. The teaching of 'business skills' are becoming available to all degree students through elective programmes. Modular strategies mean that academic and vocational programmes can be integrated across rather than within existing programmes (Raffe, 1994). Students can, thus, combine academic and vocational modules to meet their individual needs. Hence, vocational education is becoming part of the higher education curriculum for *all* students.

Decline of the work placement

Larger student numbers combined with a depressed employment market for much of the 1990s have added to the practical difficulties of providing students with a high quality work placement (Lloyd, 1996b). The increasing scarcity and diminishing quality of work placements will accelerate the decline of the work placement, for so long an article of faith within nearly all programmes. Fewer dedicated placement officers also mean students are increasingly under pressure to find their own placements with very limited institutional support and guidance. Personal networking skills are increasingly the basis upon which students are expected to secure work placements (Winfield and Ellis, 1993). At Suburban College, the programme director commented that students were encouraged to take any work placement, regardless of quality, *"even if that means working at McDonald's"*. Moreover, the changing profile of students in the 1990s means the average undergraduate is now older (DfE, 1993) and likely to have work experience or be in some form of employment (Ford, Bosworth & Wilson, 1995). The broader ethnic background of Business Studies students at New Urban University was also cited as a barrier to obtaining placements by an economics lecturer who summarised many of the contemporary problems

⁶ It should be noted that the empirical research and the writing of this thesis were substantively completed before the publication of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education published its findings in July, 1997.

associated with work experience.

It is increasingly difficult to get enough and good training places. There is a lack of good placements. There may be a lack of resources being put into that area from the university side because it can be expensive. Further, I think, also, as you increase the number of students on Business Studies some of those students would find it more difficult to get placements whereas when you were taking a small, elite group with contacts and a little bit of power they were the ones able to get placements. Sadly, for some of our students from inner London and ethnic backgrounds it is quite difficult to convince companies that they should be given placements.

(Economics Lecturer, New Urban University)

A more fundamental response to the problem of obtaining work placements has been to do away with them altogether, a scenario which, during the early development of the Business Studies degree, would have been quite unthinkable. The BA in Business Administration (BABA) is a degree programme identical to Business Studies except for the absence of a work placement year. This three year alternative has grown rapidly in response to problems associated with obtaining work placements for ever larger groups of students. The BABA degree has also grown in response to considerations of wider student access by excluding the need for a mature student with previous or current work experience to re-enter industry on a work placement through the accreditation of prior learning (Morris, Newman and Stringer, 1993). The work placement has, therefore, begun to decline within the contemporary Business Studies degree as a response to the pragmatic concerns of widening access and rising student numbers rather than as a result of past criticisms that it has failed to link theory with practice.

The requirement that a Business Studies degree should contain a work placement, a pillar of the Crick report and subsequent CNAAP policy, also needs to be re-evaluated in the context of the changing nature of higher education. Recent research has shown that between 25 and 30 per cent of all undergraduates work part time and study

simultaneously (Ford, Bosworth & Wilson, 1995). Most students work outside of term/semester time and the poverty of full-time students means that part-time work is now routinely combined with full-time study (McNay, 1994). This means that many students are already combining study with work experience, a trend which, given the current funding arrangements in higher education and the introduction of top-up student fees in 1998, is likely to continue.

The closer relationship between higher education and the economy means that *all* students, not only those studying business, are preparing to enter the workplace. The Dearing report (1997) argues for an expansion of work placement opportunities emphasising the value which employers place on recruits with such experience. The report clearly signals that work experience should not be confined just to students on vocational programmes. This development outdates the notion that work placements are something unique to a Business Studies degree. Although the report places considerable emphasis on the need to improve on present levels of work experience among undergraduates, citing examples of good practice, this objective will be difficult, in practice, to achieve given the expansion of student numbers, increasing levels of self-funding among students requiring part-time paid employment and other practical impediments. The decline of the traditional four year Business Studies sandwich degree is an exemplar of the impact of these trends.

Differentiation and diversity

There is growing awareness among higher education institutions of the need to differentiate themselves from their competitors in the marketplace. Analysis of institutional mission statements indicates that this process is already well underway (Mackay, Scott and Smith, 1994) The participation rate in higher education reached 31 per cent of all 18 year olds by 1993 (Opacic, 1994). Though degree results have improved the market attractiveness of the average undergraduate has been eroded (Murphy, 1994). Therefore, in the age of the mass graduate students are increasingly faced with the need to differentiate themselves from their peers. Similarly, within this broader context there is increasing realisation among programme directors that degree

programmes need to differentiate to survive. The standard 'product', the four year sandwich general Business Studies degree, is being replaced by a range of differentiated programmes focusing on a more specialised business subject, allied to the study of a language or a particular industry. Product differentiation is another significant post-Fordist trend which is occurring across higher education. All programme directors were aware of their 'market position' and the particular strengths, and weaknesses, of their programme and institution. One of the interviewees at Old Rural University was clear that the competitive advantage of their programme lay in small student numbers, high tutorial contact and the close link with the Food industry.

There is only one place we can be in the marketplace. We would be about the highest cost. We have to be right at the top end of the market with a strong quality image and a quality product, high care, lots of seminar and tutorial work. We are not in the volume business.

(Marketing Professor, Old Rural University)

The degree programme at Old Rural University is designed as a specialist degree reflecting the traditions of the institution and the background, interests and contacts of staff. By contrast, the degree at Suburban College is set in a further education institution and was styled on old CNAA documentation to be a general Business Studies degree with relatively small student numbers (under 50). Its appeal is largely confined to 'repeat customers' (ie students completing the college's own Higher National Diploma in Business and Finance), mature students from the local area or those unsuccessful in applying to study Business Studies at a higher education institution. Staff stressed that students attracted to their programme were unlikely to be high flyers and that their graduates would probably have better prospects of employment with smaller, local employers than with larger, national companies.

We're not churning out civil servants and leading economists in the City of London. We're hopefully producing people who are useful in local businesses.

(Programme Director, Suburban College)

Both New Urban and New Coastal University's offered a combination of generalist and specialist degrees although New Urban University had a larger range of such specialist routes linked to Languages. Both programmes had large student numbers (well in excess of 100 students per year) and each institution was formerly a polytechnic with a long standing Business Studies degree. There was particular awareness at New Urban University of the needs of local students many of whom experienced difficulties with using English.

The institutions visited represented an interesting spectrum of Business Studies provision and point up the increasing importance of differentiation of degree programmes in attracting students. Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency indicates that there is a growing trend for a larger proportion of students to study at an institution in their home area (Charter, 1995) due, perhaps in part, to the declining value of the student grant since the early 1980s. This trend was reflected in the keen awareness of both New Urban University and Suburban College, in particular, to tailor their curriculum to meet the perceived needs of students drawn from the local population. Moreover, lecturers at different institutions had varying expectations of the type of employment students would obtain on graduation. The degree programmes at New Urban and New Coastal University sought to prepare students for employment in large, national or multinational organisations. By contrast, the programme at Old Rural University was aimed at employment in a particular sector, the Food industry, while at Suburban College lecturers believed students had a better chance of getting a job with a small, local employer. There was a clear 'binary divide' between the universities and the further education institution in terms of both student intake and employment expectations. This is perhaps unsurprising given that across the old 'binary divide' of higher education, between universities and polytechnics, Roizen and Jepson (1985) found that the type of institution attended was the single most important factor in determining the value of a degree in the employment market. This new 'binary divide' based on expectations of student employment may also have implications for the type of business education students will receive. Smaller businesses are less likely to be able to afford to educate and train their own staff in comparison with larger national and multinational businesses. Thus, Suburban

College may be under greater pressure to focus on low level skills with immediate value to a potential small employer than the institutions in the higher education sector.

Conclusion

Increased student choice, made possible by modularisation and semesterisation, will have significant implications for the future shape of the Business Studies degree. Unpopular subjects will come under increasing pressure to give up their place in the curriculum as student demand, coupled with institutional requirements to teach a high ratio of students to staff, will ensure that 'producer' power will be gradually replaced by a more customer-driven degree. Several aspects of the traditional Business Studies degree, especially the development of business skills and the work placement, can no longer be regarded as specific to Business Studies given the changing nature of higher education. However, while institutional change in the form of modularisation and semesterisation will increase the influence of students in curriculum design, these changes and others affecting higher education such as heightened competition for research funding will also, ironically, strengthen the hand of the traditional disciplinary communities within Business Studies. The twin forces of curriculum unitisation and competition to attract research funding will enable disciplinary groups to preserve and, indeed, enhance their identity while the curriculum will increasingly represent these factional, multidisciplinary interests moving further away from any genuine integration of learning about business practice.

Epilogue

The significance of the study

Inquiring into the aims of business lecturers demonstrated that many are committed to pedagogic principles in common with other lecturers in higher education. These business lecturers want students to reflect on knowledge claims in academic disciplines and/or to be 'contextually aware' of the relationship between business and society. They want students to think critically. By contrast, other business lecturers have more limited pedagogic goals expecting students to synthesis knowledge rather than critically evaluate it. Business lecturers are not members of a distinct academic tribe. They represent a range of tribal interests with economists particularly influential. Only a minority of business lecturers have recent or relevant business experience. Therefore, at one level, the study provides a sociological understanding of Business Studies lecturers as an academic community in terms of their beliefs, goals and tribal affiliations.

At another level, this understanding of lecturers who teach Business Studies helps in a re-assessment of the role of a Business Studies education as part of higher education. Traditionally, concerns have been expressed that a business education fails to respect liberal-humanist values. However, this claim seems largely exaggerated. This is partly because Business Studies is a divergent knowledge community comprised principally of career academics. It is not a Trojan horse for bringing business values into higher education. It is also possible to have a business education which both respects the needs of business and those of the individual. Indeed, producing autonomous, critical thinkers, part of the emancipatory conception of higher education, is something which best serves the needs of a post-Fordist economy.

Higher education is changing rapidly. Business Studies, along with other vocational subjects, has played a significant role in this recent expansion. However, this does not mean that Business Studies constitutes a departure from or a threat to liberal-humanist

goals or academic freedom. While Business Studies may not be compatible with the classical definition of a liberal education as one concerned with the 'disinterested pursuit of knowledge', there is still no reason why it cannot provide students with an emancipatory educational process. The humanities play an important role in a Business Studies education providing a basis for critical reflection about knowledge. Business lecturers are concerned about ethical issues in relation to business practice and are not apostles of free market capitalism seeking to slavishly promote 'business' values. While unrestrained market forces became the dominant economic ideology of the 1980s (Lawton, 1989) and have since been applied in relation to higher education, lecturers in Business Studies are largely academics rather than advocates of the free market. While there may be increasing emphasis on market direction in the UK higher education *system* this should not be confused with the business curriculum which is still largely the product of 'academic rule' (Moodie, 1996). The fact that Business Studies is not directly relevant to any specific occupational context means there is little direct involvement in the curriculum from government, professional or employer organisations. Academics, despite modularisation, still have comparatively free hand in constructing and re-constructing the curriculum which means that academic knowledge rather than knowledge from the context of application plays a more significant role in Business Studies.

The publication of the Dearing report in the summer of 1997, containing recommendations on a range of issues, marks an important watershed for UK higher education. It also signals a significant shift in attitude toward traditional conceptions of vocational and academic purposes in higher education. The Robbins committee (1963) identified two distinct purposes for higher education : instruction in skills for employment and promoting the general powers of the mind. This distinction draws a clear line between vocational and academic aims in higher education reinforcing the notion that an employment-related education is incapable of developing intellectual capabilities. However, it is significant that the Dearing report (1997) rejects this stark dichotomy arguing that *"they do not find it helpful to make a clear-cut distinction between them (ie vocational and academic education)"* (p 74). The report embraces the notion that the academic and the vocational are inextricably linked. According to the

report, developing the intellectual skills of students also equips them for work and knowledge and understanding for its own sake benefits the economy. Less encouragingly though, while the report acknowledges that an academic education may also prepare students for employment, there is no mention of the opposite side to this equation; that, to paraphrase Pring (1995), the vocationally useful may also be taught in a liberal way.

Further research issues

The new analytical framework was developed as a means of understanding the perspectives of lecturers teaching on a Business Studies first degree. Although asked to relate their perspectives to this specific context, it is likely that many lecturers responded on the basis of their broader role as lecturers contributing to a variety of business and management programmes at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level. This raises the question as to whether lecturers would express similar pedagogic aims and tribal attitudes to knowledge on the basis of teaching on a postgraduate management programme. In general, a pedagogy based on the critical evaluation of knowledge might be expected to play a more important role at a higher, postgraduate level. However, there is evidence to suggest that practising managers participating as students prefer a highly prescribed curriculum and have a passive approach to learning leading to a pedagogy in management education which *“would appear to be closer to the primary school than to the university”* (Salaman & Butler, 1990, p 186). Employers, directly paying for student managers, may also be wary of lecturers committed to a critical pedagogy. While it has been noted that employers play a relatively minor role in the design of the Business Studies first degree curriculum, a number of business schools have tailored management education programmes, such as the Masters in Business Administration (MBA), to the specific organisational needs of large employers. In a client-based programme, a sponsor may have certain expectations regarding pedagogy. Boot and Evans (1990), commenting on an MBA programme for British Airways managers, highlight the possibility that the pedagogy favoured by lecturers may conflict with the expectations of the employer.

Similar difficulties arose concerning what the formal teaching content should be and who should deliver it. Should there be unitary frameworks and clear prescriptions for action, or critical exploration of alternative models with judgements about action left to individuals ? Which is more desirable in presenters - dynamic delivery or academic rigour ? And if there is disagreement who should have the final say ?

Boot & Evans (1990) p.17

There may be reasons, therefore, why lecturers committed to a critical pedagogy have a freer hand to exercise this philosophy at undergraduate level. Further research might investigate postgraduate management education to determine the impact of employers and student managers on the pedagogy of lecturers.

The research has been limited to an investigation of Business Studies lecturers working in the United Kingdom although this did not exclude lecturers born and educated outside the UK but working in English, Welsh or Scottish institutions. The applicability of the new framework might, thus, be tested in relation to business lecturers outside the UK. Recruitment patterns and tribal affiliations might be quite different. In some cultures the pedagogy of lecturers might place a greater emphasis on the importance of synthesis rather than critique. In Asia, for example, research indicates that management educators largely favour a highly didactic pedagogy and are expected to offer the students the 'right' answer (Chow, 1995). This suggests an approach based on a pragmatic synthesis of knowledge.

This research has analysed lecturer perspectives as expressed on the basis of a questionnaire and subsequent interviews. However, it has not sought to observe lecturers in a classroom situation recording and analysing how lecturers interact with business students. It is possible that lecturers who espouse their commitment to a critique may not, in fact, not practise this form of pedagogy in a classroom situation. Alternatively, interviewees who appeared to indicate a firm belief in the synthesis of business knowledge might practise a form of pedagogy closer to a critique of that knowledge. As Nisbet and Watt (1980) contend, the problem with interviews is they

only reveal what people *perceive* happens rather than what *actually* happens. Therefore, an opportunity exists to test out this research through an alternative instrument of investigation such as participant or non-participant observation to check the reliability of the data gathered in this investigation. This type of research might also facilitate understanding of how business students can be taught to ‘think critically’ building on currently limited literature (eg McEwen, 1994).

Finally, further research might reflect on the link between critical evaluation and reflective practice. To what extent do the terms overlap both in theory and in practice ? Do lecturers in applied areas of the curriculum mean different things when they refer to wanting students to be ‘critical’ as opposed to encouraging critical reflection ? Is undergraduate business education even legitimately part of professional education ? These and other questions may help to form an important research agenda for the future.

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Glossary of Acronyms

BABA	BA in Business Administration
BABS	BA in Business Studies
BEC	Business Education Council (forerunner of BTEC)
BTEC	Business and Technological (formerly Technician) Education Council
CNAA	Council for National Academic Awards
CIHE	Council for Industry and Higher Education
CPVE	Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education
DES	Department of Education and Science
DFE	Department for Education
EHEI	Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
HNC	Higher National Certificate (of BTEC)
HND	Higher National Diploma (of BTEC)
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
HRM	Human Resource Management
MBA	Masters in Business Administration
NCTA	National Council for Technological Awards
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OB	Organisational Behaviour
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
UFC	University Funding Council
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admission System

Appendix 1

Business Studies survey

BUSINESS STUDIES SURVEY

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This questionnaire focuses on the Business Studies first degree curriculum. It is divided into five sections.

All responses will be treated in confidence. The results of this questionnaire will contribute to a research study into the aims and character of first degrees in Business Studies.

Please answer frankly. The only answer required is your personal opinion so please do not consult any other person while completing the questionnaire. Thank you, in anticipation, for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

SECTION A

This section seeks an understanding of yourself as a lecturer on a Business Studies degree programme.

1. Please tick the appropriate box to indicate your gender:

Male	Female
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Please tick the appropriate box to indicate your age:

Below 35	35 - 50	51 and above
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Please tick the appropriate box to indicate the basis of your employment as a lecturer:

Part-time	Full-time
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If part-time, please indicate any other current employment.....

4. Please state the subject area of your first degree (or equivalent award).

.....

5. Please state which area of the Business Studies curriculum you are primarily responsible for teaching.

.....

6. Please state your faculty or department.

.....

7. Please tick the appropriate box to indicate the nature of your most recent previous employment:

Student/Research student	Business/Industry	Lecturer	Other(please state)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION B

Section B seeks to establish the aims of the Business Studies undergraduate degree at your institution. Please indicate the aims, as you perceive them, which actually prevail within the curriculum in practice and not what you think those aims should be.

Below each pair of statements, please record your response by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

- ¹
☐ if you strongly agree with statement A
- ²
☐ if you agree on the whole with statement A
- ³
☐ if you regard both statement A and B as equally valid
- ⁴
☐ if you agree on the whole with statement B
- ⁵
☐ if you strongly agree with statement B

Statement A

Statement B

8. Our Business Studies degree is a specific preparation of students for business careers.

Our Business Studies degree is a general education about business.

¹ ☐ ² ☐ ³ ☐ ⁴ ☐ ⁵ ☐

9. Our Business Studies degree mainly seeks to develop students with educational skills (eg analysis, research)

Our Business Studies degree mainly seeks to develop students with business-related skills (eg teamwork, communication)

¹ ☐ ² ☐ ³ ☐ ⁴ ☐ ⁵ ☐

10. Our Business Studies curriculum reflects the wishes of employers.

Our Business Studies curriculum reflects the wishes of lecturers.

¹ ☐ ² ☐ ³ ☐ ⁴ ☐ ⁵ ☐

11. University/College-based learning is the most important element of our Business Studies degree.

Substantial work experience is the most important element of our Business Studies degree.

¹ ☐ ² ☐ ³ ☐ ⁴ ☐ ⁵ ☐

12. We foster academic skills, such as research and analysis, because they are qualities valued by employers.

We foster academic skills, such as research and analysis, because they are an important part of a university/college education.

¹ ☐ ² ☐ ³ ☐ ⁴ ☐ ⁵ ☐

- 2 -

SECTION C

Section C seeks to establish your opinion with respect to the aims which undergraduate degrees in Business Studies should embrace in practice.

Below each pair of statements, please record your response by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

- 1
☐ if you strongly agree with statement A
- 2
☐ if you agree on the whole with statement A
- 3
☐ if you regard both statement A and B as equally valid
- 4
☐ if you agree on the whole with statement B
- 5
☐ if you strongly agree with statement B

Statement 1

Statement 2

13. Business Studies should be a specific preparation of students for business careers.

Business Studies should be a general education about business.

1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

14. Business Studies should mainly help to develop students with educational skills (eg analysis, research)

Business Studies should mainly help to develop students with business-related skills (eg teamwork, communication).

1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

15. The Business Studies curriculum should reflect the wishes of employers.

The Business Studies curriculum should reflect the wishes of lecturers.

1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

16. University/College-based learning should be the most important element of the Business Studies degree.

Substantial work-based experience should be the most important element of the Business Studies degree.

1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

17. Academic skills, such as research and analysis, should be fostered because they are qualities valued by employers.

Academic skills, such as research and analysis, should be fostered because they are an important part of university/college education.

1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

SECTION D

Section D seeks to establish the balance between the traditions of science and the humanities on the Business Studies degree at your institution. Please indicate where this balance lies within your curriculum and not what you think Business Studies ought to embrace in practice.

Below each pair of statements, please record your response by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

- 1
☐ if you strongly agree with statement A
- 2
☐ if you agree on the whole with statement A
- 3
☐ if you regard both statement A and B as equally valid
- 4
☐ if you agree on the whole with statement B
- 5
☐ if you strongly agree with statement B

Statement A

Statement B

18. Our Business Studies degree mainly focuses on numeracy and quantitative analysis.

Our Business Studies degree mainly focuses on ideas and issues.

- 1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

19. Our Business Studies degree mainly encourages students to analyse the social consequences of the business system.

Our Business Studies degree mainly encourages students to analyse the operation of the business system.

- 1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

20. Our Business Studies degree mainly encourages an understanding of business as a rational network of cause and effect.

Our Business Studies degree mainly encourages an understanding of business in which human judgement is central.

- 1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

21. Our Business Studies degree encourages students to examine ethical issues.

Our Business Studies degree encourages students to examine technical issues.

- 1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

22. Our Business Studies degree principally focuses on relationships within and between businesses.

Our Business Studies degree principally focuses on the relationship between business and the wider society.

- 1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

SECTION E

Section E seeks to establish your opinion with respect to the balance which should exist in practice between the traditions of science and the humanities on a Business Studies degree.

Below each pair of statements, please record your response by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

- 1
☐ if you strongly agree with statement A
- 2
☐ if you agree on the whole with statement A
- 3
☐ if you regard both statement A and B as equally valid
- 4
☐ if you agree on the whole with statement B
- 5
☐ if you strongly agree with statement B

Statement A

Statement B

23. Business Studies should mainly focus on numeracy and quantitative analysis.

Business Studies should mainly focus on ideas and issues.

- 1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

24. Business Studies should mainly encourage students to analyse the social consequences of the business system.

Business Studies should mainly encourage students to analyse the operation of the business system.

- 1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

25. Business Studies should mainly encourage understanding of business as a rational network of cause and effect.

Business Studies should mainly encourage understanding of business as a study of 'feel' and human judgement.

- 1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

26. Business Studies should mainly encourage students to examine ethical issues.

Business Studies should mainly encourage students to examine technical issues.

- 1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

27. Business Studies should principally focus on relationships within and between businesses.

Business Studies should principally focus on the relationship between business and the wider society.

- 1 2 3 4 5
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

Please return to : Bruce Macfarlane, Department of Business and Management, Canterbury Christ Church College, Canterbury CT1 1QU using the business reply envelope provided by November 30th, 1995.

Appendix 2

Institutions surveyed by status and number of respondents

<u>Name of Institution</u>	<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Status</u>
Bournemouth University	20	New university
University of Buckingham	3	Independent university
De Montfort University	3	New university
University of Derby	7	New university
Doncaster College	9	Further education college
University of Glamorgan	27	New university
Glasgow Caledonian University	16	New university
University of Hertfordshire	18	New university
University of Huddersfield	19	New university
Leeds Metropolitan University	8	New university
Napier University	19	New university
NESCOT	4	Further education college
Nottingham Trent University	13	New university
Portsmouth University	21	New university
Sheffield University	10	Old university
South Bank University	23	New university
Swansea Institute of Higher Education	16	Institute/College of HE
University of Wales, Swansea	8	Old university
Wye College	<u>4</u>	Old university
	<u>248</u> ⁷	

⁷ This includes 4 responses received after data analysis was completed on the basis of 244 replies.

Appendix 3

Interview Themes

The preamble included an explanation of the nature and purpose of the research, the format of the interview (semi-structured), undertakings with respect to confidentiality and permission to tape record.

There were four main discussion topics :

Professional identity

Teaching area/subject; career background; membership of professional and academic groups; teaching/administrative role in Business Studies; relationship/identification with Business Studies as an academic community

Knowledge in Business Studies

‘Hard’ and ‘Soft’ knowledge; subject-based and problem-based knowledge (organisation of knowledge); generation of knowledge - university, industry, NVQs; relationship between school-based and university subject area/Business Studies

Aims in Business Studies

Academic and vocational aims; personal teaching philosophy; relationships with professional bodies; expectations of stakeholders (ie students, employers, lecturers, government, other bodies)

Future developments

Future curriculum design - aims, knowledge, role of stakeholders; impact of institutional developments, impact of changing environment of UK higher education.

Appendix 4

Interviewees by teaching subject and institution

<u>Teaching Subject</u>	<u>Institution</u>
Accountancy	1 x New Coastal University 1 x Old Rural University 0.5 x Old Rural University
Economics	2 x New Urban University 2 x New Coastal University 1.5 x Old Rural University 1 x Suburban College
Human Resource Management	1 x New Coastal University 1 x New Urban University
Industrial Relations	1 x New Coastal University
Information Systems	2 x New Coastal University
Languages	2 x New Urban University
Management	1 x Old Rural University 1 x Suburban College
Marketing	2 x New Coastal University 3 x New Urban University 1 x Old Rural University 3 x Suburban College
Organisational Behaviour	2 x New Coastal University
Strategic Management	2 x New Coastal University

Appendix 5

Tables

Table I : Prevailing aims in Business Studies

Statement	Aims (valid %)			Statement
	For business	For and about business	About business	
Our Business Studies degree is a specific preparation of students for business careers.	32.8	37.8	29.5	Our Business Studies degree is a general education about business.
Our Business Studies degree mainly seeks to develop students with business-related skills (eg teamwork, communication)	35.5	45.9	18.6	Our Business Studies degree mainly seeks to develop students with educational skills (eg analysis, research)
Our Business Studies curriculum reflects the wishes of employers.	30.7	33.2	36.1	Our Business Studies curriculum reflects the wishes of lecturers.
Substantial work experience is the most important element of our Business Studies degree.	16.1	47.5	36.4	University/College-based learning is the most important element of our Business Studies degree.
We foster academic skills, such as research and analysis, because they are qualities valued by employers.	23.8	46.4	29.7	We foster academic skills, such as research and analysis, because they are an important part of a university/college education.

Table II : Preferred aims in Business Studies

Statement	Aims (valid %)			Statement
	For business	For and about business	About business	
Business Studies degrees should be a specific preparation of students for business careers.	32.4	34.0	33.6	Business Studies degrees should be a general education about business.
Business Studies degrees should mainly seek to develop students with business-related skills (eg teamwork, communication)	28.0	59.4	12.5	Business Studies degrees should mainly seek to develop students with educational skills (eg analysis, research)
The Business Studies curriculum should reflect the wishes of employers.	46.2	42.4	11.5	The Business Studies curriculum should reflect the wishes of lecturers.
Substantial work experience should be the most important element of the Business Studies degree.	16.7	56.5	26.8	University/College-based learning should be the most important element of the Business Studies degree.
Academic skills, such as research and analysis, should be fostered because they are qualities valued by employers.	25.2	51.7	23.1	Academic skills, such as research and analysis, should be fostered because they are an important part of a university/college education.

Table III : Prevailing knowledge in Business Studies

Statement	Knowledge (valid %)			Statement
	Science -based	Science & Humanities	Humanities -based	
Our Business Studies degree mainly focuses on numeracy and quantitative analysis.	12.0	44.4	43.6	Our Business Studies degree mainly focuses on ideas and issues.
Our Business Studies degree mainly encourages students to analyse the operation of the business system.	58.6	33.8	7.6	Our Business Studies degree mainly encourages students to analyse the social consequences of the business system.
Our Business Studies degree mainly encourages an understanding of business as a rational network of cause and effect.	19.8	49.4	30.8	Our Business Studies degree mainly encourages an understanding of business in which human judgement is central.
Our Business Studies degree encourages students to examine technical issues.	46.2	43.3	10.5	Our Business Studies degree encourages students to examine ethical issues.
Our Business Studies degree principally focuses on relationships within and between businesses.	41.8	43.0	15.1	Our Business Studies degree principally focuses on the relationship between business and the wider society.

Table IV : Preferred knowledge in Business Studies

Statement	Knowledge (valid %)			Statement
	Science -based	Science & Humanities	Humanities -based	
Business Studies should mainly focus on numeracy and quantitative analysis.	11.0	62.0	27.0	Business Studies should mainly focus on ideas and issues.
Business Studies should mainly encourage students to analyse the operation of the business system.	25.0	60.2	14.8	Business Studies should mainly encourage students to analyse the social consequences of the business system.
Business Studies should mainly encourage an understanding of business as a rational network of cause and effect.	18.3	57.0	24.7	Business Studies should mainly encourage an understanding of business in which human judgement is central.
Business Studies should mainly encourage students to examine technical issues.	20.8	67.4	11.9	Business Studies should mainly encourage students to examine ethical issues.
Business Studies should principally focus on relationships within and between businesses.	15.3	69.1	15.7	Business Studies should principally focus on the relationship between business and the wider society.

Table V : Preferred aims and knowledge in Business Studies by sex, age, last employment and institution (composite measure)

Category	Total number	Aims (valid %)			Knowledge (valid %)		
		For business	For and about business	About business	Science-based	Science & Humanities	Humanities-based
All	244	47.9	20.5	31.6	33.2	35.3	31.3
<u>Sex</u>							
Male	162	46.5	18.5	35.1	36.5	32.1	31.3
Female	82	50.6	24.7	24.7	26.3	42.1	31.4
<u>Age</u>							
Under 35	32	62.5	12.5	25.0	25.8	41.9	32.3
35-50	152	45.9	24.3	29.9	29.9	35.4	34.8
Over 50	54	44.4	14.8	40.9	46.3	31.5	22.4
<u>Last employed</u>							
Business	101	53.5	17.8	28.8	34.0	34.0	32.0
Lecturer	95	40.4	25.5	34.1	31.2	39.8	29.1
<u>Institution</u>							
Old university	22	27.3	36.4	36.3	55.0	40.0	5.0
New university	178	48.3	18.0	33.9	30.9	32.0	37.2

