

Stream Number 9 Critical Management Studies

Interactive Session

**The Inevitable Path to Registration in Management Education and Practice
in Australia**

Assoc Prof Paul Davidson

School of Management, QUT, Brisbane, Australia

Email: p.davidson@qut.edu.au

Stream Number 9 The Inevitable Path to Registration in Management Education and Practice in Australia

Interactive Session

The Inevitable Path to Registration in Management Education and Practice in Australia

ABSTRACT:

This paper observes that Management may now be on an inevitable path to a profession, with preparation proceeding from graduation and qualifications in accredited courses and certification of individual competence, to registration requiring Registered Professional Managers to practice only within a code of conduct and with continuing professional development. Possibly contentious and unwelcome in the eyes of some, there is the possibility doubt that in time this path will be seen as inevitable regulation of the few for the benefit of the many. Caution is urged in clarifying accreditation, endorsement, and registration of generic and specialist management applications. Three 'cases' are offered to assist this interactive exploration.

Keywords:

Professions claim their distinction based on skill and knowledge and specialised activity. This typically leads to regulation of trade and restriction of entry to those educationally and vocationally qualified through approved and accredited education, sometimes with a period of supervision of new entrants to permit certification by a professional body, to recognize their competence. It may also carry the requirement to practice in the profession only within certain codes of conduct and with continuing professional development. Further, there is a political dimension to this emphasis on a profession's reliance on a *knowledge field*: 'the space occupied by the whole of the people who claim to produce knowledge in this field, and this space is also a system of relationships between these people competing to gain control over the definition of the conditions and the rules of production of knowledge' (Audet & Malouin, 1986).

It seems that knowledge and its application has to be ordered, disciplined and controlled.

Professions profess to do exactly that, but the process is not without questions of assessment of competence and authority to accredit. Much is at stake: educational standards, recognition of personal competence, reputation, employment and livelihoods, organisational performance, and community and stakeholder welfare are just some of the considerations. In Australia, educational preparation is through primary and secondary schooling and on to vocational education and training (VET) and/or tertiary (university) sectors. Standards are set by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), and expressed in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which is the national policy for regulated qualifications. The AQF levels indicate relative complexity and/or depth of achievement and the autonomy required to demonstrate that achievement.

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector, comprises AQF Levels 1-6 (certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas and advanced diplomas. VET sector courses are provided by the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Institutes and various other industry skill centres, commercial and private training organisations, by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) or by providers through RTOs. Standards in the VET sector are set through the process of *accreditation*. Educational courses do not need to be accredited, but accredited courses can be delivered only through RTOs. It is an offence to claim or imply that a course is accredited when it is not. Universities are self-accrediting under the supervision of the ASQA, and provide courses at the remaining AQF levels (7-10), from bachelor to graduate certificate and diploma, master and doctoral degrees.

A complication is introduced by professional associations' accrediting (or more accurately *endorsing*) various courses that they assess as delivering job-ready graduates. While the intent is to bring a practical influence from industry to curriculum and standards, this 'accreditation' or endorsement is self-appointed, and based on the opinion of members or invitees of the association, presuming to represent industry and the community. To avoid confusion in both of these, there is the question whether professional bodies should endorse rather than

‘accredit’ those courses that align with their model curricula. If so, the decision to endorse should be made only by committees with diverse and expert membership. Much may depend upon it.

A second trend is for professional bodies to recognize competence through certification of individuals on the basis of an assessment of qualifications and experience. The same cautions apply: Since employment may (rightly or wrongly) depend on certified status, decisions to certify should be made rigorously and transparently, and only by a diverse and expert panel, independent of sectoral interests, and open to appeal. The same applies to any committee of the professional body charged with arbitrating in matters of complaint or allegations of malpractice or unethical conduct. Not uncommonly, remaining certified beyond a specified period might require professionals to engage in demonstrable continuing professional development, and even periodic re-certification examination (e.g. a 1 hour MCQ online every five years, to encourage currency).

The third phase, after preparation and accreditation, is often that of registration, where a practising professional’s name is entered on a register of registered professionals. The additional post nominals then have legal validity. Eligibility for registration is based on qualifications and experience as a recognition of competence and application within a specified area of application. Failure to comply with a code of conduct may result in deregistration. Typically this registration requires legislation (e.g. for medical practitioners, engineers, psychologists) and a board appointed for the purpose reports to the minister responsible.

Case #1 The Professionalisation of Management

There are no mandated qualifications for calling oneself a manager, and education and training for management roles vary across levels and areas (Schermerhorn, Davidson, Poole, Woods, Simon, & McBarron, 2014). Few would disagree that managers need knowledge and skill, along with personal characteristics of intelligence, integrity and energy. Knowledge is usually acquired through education with an emphasis on the assurance of learning expressed in qualifications; skill has an overlapping emphasis on demonstrated competency based on learned

knowledge and experience. This reflects profound and acknowledged long-term philosophical differences in educational approach (Boyatzis, 1982).

Overall, the profession of management as a generic body of knowledge and skill is becoming professionalised through its increasing sophistication in qualifications: the BBus (AQF Level 8) with a major in management or a management area is a common three-year undergraduate preparation. The graduate generalist qualification is the MBA, which while undertaken normally after a bachelor degree, does not specify that the bachelor degree must be in a business discipline. Post-graduate specialisation in management may be via a MBus(Mgt) (AQF Level 9), or in a specific application such as in Project Management, or Human Resource Management, or change Management. Other well-known discipline areas include financial management and operations management, and contract, sales and marketing management.

The debate about priority for experience (e.g. through placements and internships) over and above 'knowledge about' or even 'knowledge how to' (skill) has been underway for many years. For example, Management researcher Henry Mintzberg famously criticised the multi-million dollar MBA education sector for its excessive emphasis on knowledge at the cost of a balancing emphasis on practical application. (Mintzberg, 2004). His critique highlights not just the debate, but also the fact that most tertiary courses now aim explicitly for a balance of learning theory and knowledge, and acquiring competence and practical skills through placements, and internships, and real world projects. Some base their entire pedagogy on models of Work-Integrated Learning (Margaryan, 2006), and Work-Applied Learning (Abraham, 2012).

However, while formal management education and training at both tertiary and industry level make every attempt to deliver competence based on theory and practice, the process of professionalisation of management is marked by a move to have professional bodies both teach and certify courses as fulfilling their promises, and also to offer 'professional recognition' to managers individually, based on consideration of their qualifications, experience and thereby assumed expertise by either membership grading of the association or certification to practice.

There is a potential conflict of interest in so doing. This trend, not yet well established for management at a generic level, is more clearly observable in relation to particular specialties, as shown in table 1 below. *Certification* of managers generically by professional bodies is still in its infancy, and *regulation* of managers at the generic level is also not yet either a requirement or a reality. Table 1 offers a mapping of the proposed phases of professionalisation and selected examples of management and its specialties.

Insert table 1 here

In the light of VET and Tertiary sector developments, it is possible to claim that there is a limited generic model of management emerging as a profession, and so far it is expressing itself in specific applications, such as in Project Management and HR Management. These areas are examined in more detail below.

It is also likely that the VET sector preparation will continue to supply most industrial and vocational managers, whereas the tertiary sector will provide the generalist and high-level managers, as well as in specialty areas (e.g. project management and HR management).

Perhaps significantly, the Australian Institute of Management (AIM) offers managers the designation of 'Chartered Manager (CMgr) through its partnership with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) UK. Questions still attach to the relevance and likely uptake of this 'new opportunity for recognition', given that it is not mandated for the right to practice, and at this stage is being sold on the basis not of lifting competence but as providing 'benefits such as increased self-awareness and self-confidence' (Gleeson, 2015).

Management education in Australian university business schools, as in most of the world's business schools, is now a mature and very competitive market for domestic and international students. The more established schools compete for rankings with various organisations, and strive for accreditation with leading accrediting international accrediting agencies (AACSB, EQUIS, and AMBA). Only two Australian business schools have the 'triple crown' of accreditation with all three accrediting agencies.

Most tertiary Management curricula vary mainly in their content emphasis (e.g. on sustainability, or entrepreneurship), reflecting the research interests of academic staff, and marginally in specialisation (e.g. marketing management, finance management, etc). Of course, they also vary in level of complexity; this is the inescapable reality that some courses are more difficult than others, and inevitably some have better reputations than others, as reflected in various ranking systems. The details are outside the present scope.

The professionalisation of management through management education is further detailed in relation to values, methods, research and stakeholder dialogue. These topics are also well and thoughtfully examined in other places (Muff, Dyllick, Drewell, North, Shrivastava, & Haertle, 2013). The conclusion for the present purposes is that Management as an activity and occupation is becoming increasingly professionalised through preparation (education and training, and potentially through certification and registration).

Case #2 The Professionalisation of Project Management

It is estimated that in excess of 30 percent of global activity takes place as projects (World Bank, 2012). In Australia this contribution to capital formation is critical to prosperity, with about twice the percentage contribution to GDP of other developed countries (Deloitte Access Economics, 2011). In terms of the criteria for a profession, there can be little doubt that Project Management is well developed as a profession in the minds of managers and their clients. For example, research continues to be reported showing the sophistication of skill and theory integration in the ‘people capability’ of complex project-based organisations (Taylor, Walker, & Maqsood, 2015).

Tertiary courses in PM typically include topics traditionally recommended by the PMI (PMI, 2013). Accreditation or certification by professional bodies is from the Project Management Institute (PMI) or the umbrella international association (IPMA)(of which the Australian Institute of Project Management is a member), and the independent accrediting body of the PMI (The Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs

(GAC) (Morris, Crawford, Hodgson, Shepherd, & Thomas, 2006). The overview of PM education provided by (Bredillet, Conboy, Davidson, & Walker, 2013) concludes that it has grown well beyond its traditional engineering and IT focus to become routine in HR and other management education areas. It gives added weight to the argument that the profession of PM continues to benefit from the added credibility offered by the rigorous accreditation examination undertaken by the GAC. The registration of its practising professionals by a government entity beyond that offered by the professional body seems a logical step to regulate the conduct of the profession. The professionalisation appears likely to stand on its triple foundation of industrial/vocational and tertiary education, professional accreditation/endorsement and certification, and potential legal registration.

CASE #3 The Professionalisation of HRM

There can be little doubt that Human Resource Management (HR) is now an accepted activity of management and as a profession within the broad activity of business. The typical academic qualification in HRM is becoming either the BBus(HRM), or the MBus(HRM), or some associated qualification such as a Graduate Certificate or Diploma. The logical next question is whether the needs of the community and the profession for ongoing development extend to some form of accreditation and/or certification by a professional body, and even registration.

The proposed value of certification and licensure for HR professionals has received research attention and informed comment in recent years. International research indicates that while more than 150,000 individuals in more than 70 countries have become certified in a multimillion dollar certification industry, there is no scholarly evidence regarding the impact of certification on any important individual- and organisational-level outcomes (e.g. individuals' career progression and HR department level effectiveness) (Lengnick-Hall & Aguinis, 2012). They report their own survey of 189 HR professionals, and propose a framework with 14 testable propositions to guide research regarding the value of certification. Their proposal generated

responses from several others (Cohen, 2012), (DeNisi, 2012) (Garza & Morgeson, 2012), Garza and Morgeson (2012), in turn, responses were published (Latham, 2012), (Paxton, 2012), and (Aguinis & Lengnick-Hall, 2012). Aguinis and Lengnick-Hall comment on Latham's conceptualisation of certification 'from the perspective of test validation', and in particular that HR certification tests 'to be content valid must contain items representative of the knowledge a person must possess to perform effectively on the job' (Latham, 2012, p. 269). Implying a need for predictive validity, they affirm that HR certification ought to be associated with criteria such as job performance, and improved firm performance (DeNisi, 2012) It is left to an experienced HR professional to apply the axiomatic caution in all education for a profession that 'certification exams measure knowledge about the HR function, but not necessarily an individual's ability to apply that knowledge to affect business results' (Paxton, 2012). Certification may encourage competence and professionalisation, but does not guarantee it. The certification of individual HR professionals is seen by researchers as being a form of added credibility over and above formal academic qualifications, which some might have expected to provide the adequate preparation and credential to begin with.

Accreditation and Endorsement in HRM education in Australia

Since about 1990, some influence has been brought to bear in university curricula content by AHRI, as the association of HR professionals who have seen themselves as advisers, on behalf of the community and the profession. Since then, an independent committee composed of a rotating membership of nine HR professionals from a variety of sectors and three academics (one as chair), an independent committee has met annually with delegated authority from the Board of AHRI to accredit the courses in HR, against a set of guidelines which serve as defacto curriculum content standards intended to encourage education providers to raise the competence and status of the profession at large. In overview, HRM appears to be following the developmental path of the other 'cases': a steadily-rising standard of academic qualification that is 'accredited' (endorsed)

by the professional body to encourage a core knowledge curriculum and produce job-ready graduates).

The Question of Registration of Management Professionals

The question highlighted by the case of HRM is that of registration of the profession. It is the question that all three cases pose: Is the profession of Management in transition to a status where it will require its members practitioners to be – (tertiary) qualified academically through courses that are (university or VET) *accredited* by statutory authority, and *endorsed* by professional bodies and associations, leading to individual *certification* by professional bodies (with attendant CPD obligations) and to *registration* by a government-appointed board reporting to an appropriate minister in compliance with a state or Commonwealth Act that provides for the regulation of standards for qualification and practice?

For a profession to be registered, there is a requirement that legislation enables the creation and maintenance of a register of the names of professionals who meet some specified minimum standards of qualification and whose professional practice is governed by a code of conduct. The purpose of this is to protect the community from fraudulent or other misconduct, and to lift the performance of the profession through this form of regulation, which may also require continuous and monitored professional development by its registered professionals.

In the alternative, the path may really be a road not to be taken, as management professionals, practitioners and academics determine that it is inappropriate, unnecessary, and hopelessly impracticable. The conclusion may best be expressed as a question: Will the profession of management advance in its aspiration to become a profession and structure in the accreditation, *endorsement*, *certification* and *registration* necessary? Or will such endeavours remain the concern only of management specialties - such as PM and HRM? The answer may be, as for management itself, that it is too differentiated and that there is no 'one right way'. Or not. Perhaps what is important to continue to examine the question in the light of trends and community expectations. In the meantime, it is unlikely to be answered by indifference.

References

- Abraham, S. (2012). *Work-Applied Learning for Change*. AIB Publications.
- Aguinis, H., & Lengnick-Hall, M. L. (2012). Assessing the value of human resource certification: A call for evidence-based human resource management. *Human Resource Management Review*, 22, 281-284.
- Audet, M., & Malouin, J. (1986). *The Indictment of Knowledge in Public administration*. Quebec, Canada: Les Presses de l'Universite Laval, Quebec.
- Boyatzis, R. (1982). *the Competent Manager: A Model for effective Performance*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bredillet, C., Conboy, K., Davidson, P., & Walker, D. (2013). The Getting of Wisdom: The Future of PM University Education in Australia . *The International journal of Project Management* , 31, 1072-1088.
- Cohen, D. (2012). Identifying the value of HR certification: Clarification and more complex models required. *Human Resource Management Review* (22), 258-265.
- Davidson, P. (2014). *Qualifications, Accreditation, and the Profession of Human resource Management in Australia*. Australian Institute of Human Resources. Brisbane: AHRI.
- Deloitte Access Economics. (2011). *Queensland resources Council Queensland Resource Sector State Growth; Outlook Study*. Brisbane.
- DeNisi, A. S. (2012). Certification response: A response to Lengnick-Hall and Aguinis. *Human Resource Management review* (22), 266-268.
- Garza, A., & Morgeson, F. (2012). Exploring the link between organisational values and human resource certification. *Human Resource Management Review* (22), 271-278.
- Gleeson, A. (2015, June). Get the Professional Edge. *AIM* , p. 6.
- Latham, G. (2012). What we know and what we would like to know about human resource management certification. *Human Resource Management Review* , 22, 269-270.

Lengnick-Hall, M. L., & Aguinis, H. (2012). What is the value of human resource certification? A multi-level framework for research. *Human Resource Management Review*, 22, 240-257.

Margaryan, A. (2006). *Work-Based Learning*. Twente, Netherlands: University of Twente.

Mintzberg, H. (2004). *Managers Not MBAs*. San Francisco, USA: Berrett-Koehler.

Morris, P., Crawford, L., Hodgson, D., Shepherd, M., & Thomas, J. (2006). Exploring the role of formal bodies in defining a profession - the case of project management. *International Journal of Project Management*, 24 (8), 710-721.

Muff, K., Dyllick, T., Drewell, M., North, J., Shrivastava, & Haertle, J. (2013). *Management education for the World*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Paxton, R. A. (2012). A practitioner's perspective on the value of PHR and SPHR certification. *Human Resource Management Review* (22), 279-280.

PMI. (2013). *A Guide to the Project Management Book of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide)* (5th ed.). Newtown Square, PA, USA: PMI.

Schermerhorn, J., Davidson, P., Poole, D., Woods, P., Simon, A., & McBarron, E. (2014). *Management*. Brisbane, Australia: John Wiley.

Taylor, D., Walker, D., & Maqsood, T. (2015). Integration of contractors skills and expertise as part of the people capability of complex project based organisations. *International Journal of Managing Projects in business*, 8 (2), 379-392.

World Bank. (2012). *World Bank Indicators*. Retrieved March 31, 2012, from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.GDI.TOTLZS>

Table 1 mapping the phases of professionalisation and selected examples of management and its specialties

AREA	PHASE		
	1 PREPARATION Accreditation Graduation (KNOWLEDGE and SKILL)	2 CERTIFICATION (COMPETENCE) by professional bodies	3 REGISTRATION (APPLICATION)
MANAGEMENT	PhD MBA, MBus(Mgt) BBus(Mgt) Gradcert Mgt Dip Mgt/Dip Bus Admin	Chartered Manager CMgr (AIM) from CMI (UK) FAIM	
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	PhD BBus(AppFin) MBus(AppFin) MFinance	Certified Financial Planner FPAA	
PROJECT MANAGEMENT	PhD DBA DPM MProjMgt BProjMgt Grad Dip PM Dip PM	Project Mgt Professional PMP Certified Associate in PM CAPM(PMI) Program Mgt Professional PgMP(PMI) CPPP(AIPM)	RegPM(AIPM)
HR MANAGEMENT	PhD Bus(HRM) BBus(HRM)	AHRI Certification CIPD (UK) CharteredFCIPD CAHRI/FAHRI	RegHRP
CHANGE MANAGEMENT	Dip Org Change Mgt	Accredited Change Mgr ACM(CMI) Certified Change Mgr (APMG)	
Risk, Contracting, Procurement	MBus BBus GradCert AppRM	ANZIIF RMA	