Fads, Fashion and Fantasies:
Reflections on Management Trends
and on University Business Schools

A Professorial Lecture

by

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> *Shelley once claimed that poets are 'the unacknowledged legislators of mankind'. Today that honour belongs to management theorists. Names such as Drucker and Peters may not have the same ring as Wordsworth or Keats; yet wherever we look, management theorists are laying down the law, reshaping institutions, refashioning our language and, above all, reorganising people's lives. Indeed, at its most extreme fringe, where management theory merges with the self-help industry, gurus are actually ordering people's minds, teaching them how to think and about everything from organising their desk to reassessing their love-life.* (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 1997:5)

We will not proceed to reassess our love lives here, but will examine the role of management gurus and contrast it with the role of university business schools. We will discuss the phenomenon of management fads and the way in which they have had an impact on management fashion out of proportion to their real merits, and speculate about the reasons why management thought should be so prone to 'faddism'.

Some people have said that good management is no more than common sense. Others have argued that you cannot learn how to be an outstanding manager, that a few people have what it takes, but most do not. By founding schools of business, universities all over the world have implicitly rejected those notions. It is now widely accepted - although by no means universally - that it is possible to conceptualise what managers do, to learn why some managers are better than others, and then to help people to learn the appropriate skills, styles and alternative approaches to good management.

University business schools have at least two primary tasks: exploring and explaining what constitutes good management in various contexts, then translating our findings to principles and practices which students and practitioners can learn. The first task is research; the second is teaching. These tasks constitute much of the work of our school just as they do in schools of science, arts or Asian studies. Our work is subject to three important conditions. The first is that the study of management may be affected by a large number of variables, so our knowledge must always be held contingently: in other words, it must always be open to reexamination in the light of new evidence. The second condition is that because we are studying how certain people direct the activities of other people, it is not practical to divorce management study from subjective values; for example, we cannot explain how well managers achieve organisational objectives without expressing an opinion, even if it is only implicit, about what an organisation's objectives ought to be. Third, organisational objectives reflect wider social influences which change, like cultural values and government policies. It follows that 'good management' is not something to be defined, like a mathematical theorem, but must always be subject to revision and it also may vary according to the context.

Of course, we are not alone in having to accommodate these complexities. They are also features of other fields of study. We also share with such fields the fact that our body of knowledge is expressed at different levels. As scholars, we prefer new insights to be based on fresh evidence rather than as a plausible new notion. Practising managers, however, call on the body of management knowledge at a different level, to set the guidelines for the ways they may play their role in their enterprise. They cannot examine the evidence which underpins every management principle and practice, but most of them nevertheless accept that there is a body of knowledge which constitutes ‘good management’.

Fashion and Fads

We can use the term ‘management fashion’ as a shorthand term for the body of knowledge and practice which is currently seen as constituting good management. It is not a derogatory term: most fields of human activity are subject to fashion, because we cannot be constantly reinventing the wheel. In politics, economics, education, the arts, environmental awareness and many other aspects of our lives we operate within the limits of a prevailing fashion, and so it is in the case of management. While it is subject to change, fashion shifts gradually: Paris couturiers may switch from ankle length skirts to the mini in one season, but fashionable hemlines usually creep up and down in relatively small increments over a period of several years. The concept of *fashion* has, however, to be distinguished from *fads*, which tend to emerge quickly, have a brief life, and may not leave much of a lasting legacy.

> One dictionary defines a fad as a short-lived but enthusiastically pursued practice or interest. The use of the verb ‘pursue’ reminds one that ‘faddism’ is a characteristic not of the technique (be it management by objectives or quality circles) but of its pursuers, that is of the managers who consume it. (Huczynski 1993a:278)

Let us now discuss the development of management fashion, and in particular, the way in which fashion in management has been unusually susceptible in recent years to the influence of management fads.

A medical analogy might be useful to explain this terminology. Medical science has examined the role of diet in promoting health, and identified the roles played (amongst other things) by fibre and fat. No doubt this knowledge is held contingently, in the sense that it may be modified by new research which finds that fibre is useful only in certain amounts or that only certain types of fat are harmful. Nevertheless, medical scientists are sufficiently confident of their findings to have encouraged what might be called a medical fashion amongst general practitioners and in the community at large, to the effect that fruit and vegetables and so on are good for us but that we should limit our intake of saturated fats. However, we are all aware of various dietary fads which are promoted from time, such as no fat diets or obsessions with eating enormous quantities of bran. These fads do not reflect mainstream fashion, but they spring from it and may come to affect it over time, particularly if they make people aware of soundly-based advances in the state of medical knowledge. To take an example, the Pritiken Diet may have been enthusiastically pursued as a fad, but to the extent that it educated people about the value of certain food groups in their diet, the Pritiken Diet has had an enduring effect on dietary fashion.

Management Gurus

The substitution of fads for a more considered management fashion has been called 'guru theory', and described as:

> ambitious claims to transform managerial practice, organizational structures and cultures and, crucially, organizational performance, through the recommendation of a fundamental almost magical cure or transformation that rejects the past, and reinvents the organization, its employees, their relationships, attitudes and behaviour. (Clark and Salaman, 1998:137)

What is a 'management guru'? A guru is, according to the Macquarie Dictionary, 'an influential teacher or mentor'. Management gurus are people who have a high profile in the business community, and sometimes more widely, because of the solutions which they appear to offer to management problems. They might be called 'organizational witchdoctors' (Clark & Salaman, 1996). Peter Drucker suggests that people use the term 'guru' only because they do not want to say 'charlatan'. In most cases they have written one or more books, but their status as management superstars does not depend solely on this. Their style of writing usually expresses management in metaphorical terms, so that readers come to think of themselves as adventurers engaged in thrillingly dramatic struggles or battles. In the words of one guru, 'management has joined the ranks of the dangerous professions' (Champy, 1995:7).

The identification and dissemination of a new fad may resemble the launching of other consumer products. Because it is competing in a crowded market, a new fad has to stand out, and that can lead to extravagant claims for the fad's potential benefits or assertions that a new system of management has been discovered which renders earlier ideas obsolete. Few fads sell themselves only by virtue of the power of their evidence or logic; they rely on heavily promoted publications, videos and above all, on 'events' like conferences and executive seminars. The atmosphere at some gurus' presentations has been compared to that of a religious revival meeting, combining elements of entertainment and emotional manipulation. We were recently invited to part with large sums of money to participate in a guru road show which included General Schwarzkopf and ex-President Gorbachev. It was staged, appropriately enough, at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre. The relevance of these eminent individuals to the study of management may lie in the symbols and metaphors used by gurus, whose

> tales are of miraculous strategic virtuosity, of heroic organizational turn-arounds, of battles with organizational monsters ... about the necessary virtues for organizational success and how these virtues may be gained. Above all they are of the heroes/heroines who make success possible - the new manager. (Clark & Salaman, 1998:146)

Some gurus rise to fame on the back of a quasi-autobiographical book, which purports to explain an outstanding record of achievement. Examples include: the former CEO of Avis Robert Townsend's *Up the Organization* (1970) and ex-Chrysler chief Lee Iacocca's *Autobiography* (1984). The message is, 'Anybody can run a company successfully if you do what I did', and the author is what Huczynski (1993a) calls a 'hero manager'. This type of faddism illustrates what any serious observer would recognise as the fallacy of generalising from a few anecdotes (Marchington, 1995:57). It assumes that there is 'one best way' to manage, an assumption which underpins many of the other fads to be described later. However, other management fads may claim a more substantial basis than one person's experience, and deserve, therefore, a more serious examination than the work of 'hero managers'. First, however, it might be useful to discuss briefly the field of management studies.

Management Studies Are Relatively New

Why do gurus seem to have such a large influence on management fashion and why does it appear to be so subject to faddism? One reason is that management problems may be complex and intractable and may not always be easily solved. But gurus encourage managers to think that there is a solution out there somewhere. Hence managers may be inclined to clutch at quick-fix straws that promise instant solutions. Another reason is that scholarly investigation of management is relatively new. The first business school, Wharton, was founded in 1881, and the Harvard Business School was established in 1908. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, management teaching began in 1914 as an adjunct to the study of engineering. This was also the case at the Manchester School of Management (where I studied), which began in 1919. It claims to be the first in Europe. In Australia, the earliest mention of 'executive development courses' I could find was at the University of Melbourne in 1956.

The comparatively late development of management as a separate field of study is illustrated by its literature. Few books on 'management' were published before the 1960s, but the number of releases grew in the 1970s, to be followed by a proliferation of publications in the 1980s and 1990s. The seeds of management fads, then, lie in the late arrival of this field of study, and in the recent over abundance of popular literature on the subject. Unlike the physical sciences or even some of the social sciences, like psychology, sociology and economics, perhaps there has not been enough time for succeeding generations of managers to develop a sense of professional identity based on a solid core of theory. In this context, many managers appear to believe that constant 'progress' is being made by the adoption of new management techniques (Abrahamson, 1996:256). That idea has been encouraged by the growth of a business media which markets itself on its ability to serve up predigested accounts of the 'next big thing' to managers who have little time or inclination to investigate the merits of new theories themselves.

Taylorism

Early management thinkers included: military leaders, the Egyptian who organised the construction of the pyramids, Roman Emperor Hadrian who built a wall across northern England, and of course Machiavelli (cf. Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 1997:7).

Arguably the first management guru of the twentieth century was Frederick Taylor. He attempted to articulate a universal set of management principles and techniques. His work was controversial, and was even the subject of an inquiry by the US Congress. He set an enviable performance standard for later gurus, once attracting a crowd of 69,000 to a lecture on scientific management in New York *(The Economist*, 1994:62). Taylor was, of course, an American, as were most of the subsequent instigators of management fads. A wry observation has been made about the US that 'the variety of concepts, and prescriptive models ("paradigms", to use managerial hip), the profusion of gurus hawking them and, above all, the willingness of executives to seek and try out novel approaches, buzzwords and theories are unmatched by any other nation' (Thackray, 1993:40). Americans tend to see themselves as trailblazers in notions of management as a reflection of the USA being a dominant world force in terms of popular culture as well as political economy. Many people in other countries have accepted this American self-assessment, and have accordingly tended to adopt American notions of management partly in the belief that they represent what we now call 'best practice'.

Like other gurus, Taylor appeared to be passionate about the superiority of his principles of management. Moreover, his enthusiasm extended beyond the workplace, and he argued that to be truly effective, scientific management demanded a reordering of the social and political worlds. Taylor's approach therefore contained two other elements which we find in the promoters of several other management fads: first, a belief that enterprises could all be successfully managed by adopting one reasonably straightforward set of principles, and second, a tendency to assume that contextual and external factors are irrelevant or that they can be altered to suit the demands of those principles. The unrealistic nature of these two fundamental assumptions accounts for the failure of so many management fads to achieve the longer-term results which their advocates promise.

Central to Taylor's principles of management were two more beliefs: one, that any given work task could be broken down into its component parts, which could then be redesigned for maximum efficiency, and two, that left to their own devices, workers would never perform their tasks in anything like that most efficient way. The role of management, therefore, was first to find out the best way to perform a task, and then to ensure that workers carried out their tasks in the specified manner. Taylor explicitly held that his theories were applicable to all tasks, and argued that the work of professional employees was just as susceptible to scientific management as that of the machinist. Nevertheless he resorted to simple examples when he wanted to illustrate his principles. He failed to explain satisfactorily how the same principles were to be applied to workers undertaking tasks requiring high levels of creativity, knowledge and intelligence. He also failed to explain satisfactorily how workers were to be motivated to perform at peak efficiency for prolonged periods. Like many latter-day management gurus, he operated in a one-dimensional world of values where work was simply the outcome of a market transaction between employers and those they employed.

Taylor vehemently rejected the idea that unions had any role in workplaces. The reality that unions did exist, and played an increasingly significant role in employment relations even in early twentieth century America, often presented an obstacle to the introduction of Taylorist principles which proved difficult to overcome. Taylorism also demanded a high level of supervision, because if workers were not closely supervised, they were likely, according to Taylor, to revert to what he called 'soldiering', or a collective tendency to hold production below the level which could be achieved. Unfortunately for adherents to Taylor's principles, increasingly more complex tasks require increasingly complex and costly supervision, soon reaching the stage where it may outweigh the benefits claimed by the proponents of scientific management.

Henry Ford's approach to the mass production of cars is one of the most significant applications of Taylorism. None the less, there is a robust debate amongst management scholars about the extent to which Taylor's methods were fully implemented in industry more generally. Certainly the difficulties of providing supervision and the resistance of workers, not least through unions, meant that Taylorism did not become the universal system which its founder envisaged. Nevertheless, it had a powerful impact on management fashion by articulating a role for managers which emphasised their prestige and intellectual superiority compared with those they managed. Many of Taylor's ideas are still influential, not only in the Western countries but in developing nations like China. It has been suggested that in the privacy of their clubs, Australian managers still yearn for a world where workers unquestioningly do what they are told and accept what management decides they should be paid (McEachern, 1995). This is a fantasy which neatly captures Taylor's view of how workplaces should operate and of the role of the manager.

Taylorism was an engineering solution to the problems of management, which was inadequate because it could not explain how to control the behaviour of workers or how to cope with wider economic, social and cultural impediments to its introduction. Management fashion has often reflected a dialectic between technical solutions and those that recognise the need to obtain the cooperation of the people who must implement them; the human relations school represented a move in the latter direction.

The Human Relations School

The human relations school developed almost by accident. In 1924, researchers were commissioned by the Western Electric Company in the USA to examine the effects on productivity of different levels of illumination in the workplace, using the hypothesis that better lighting would lead to improved productivity. The results were unexpected: productivity went up with every experiment, no matter whether the light improved or became so gloomy that workers could hardly see what they were doing. The inference was that other factors were important beyond illumination, so additional research was commissioned. From 1928 it was led by an expatriate Australian, Elton Mayo. He attributed the productivity improvements to two major factors. The first was noticed because workers were organised into groups for the purposes of the experiments. Mayo concluded that group dynamics had a powerful effect on performance. The second was that as part of the experiments' methodology, workers were interviewed. Mayo concluded that these interviews acted as a 'lightning rod' for grievances, improving workers' motivation and productivity. One of the most significant practical outcomes of what became known as the Hawthorne experiments was the introduction of a counselling program, which remains an element of management fashion to this day.

Of course, later writers have suggested other explanations of the Hawthorne results, for instance, that the improved productivity of the workers may have reflected their being under close observation. Another context was that the human relations school was developed when many US managers were alarmed about the growth of unions and they were looking for ways to counter this growth, in an attempt to ensure that employees' loyalty could be won and retained by their employer, so that they might be discouraged from unionisation. Differing interpretations of Taylorism and of the Hawthorne experiments continue to be the subject of debate in business schools. These debates illustrate how hard it may be to draw firm conclusions about cause and effect in the study of human behaviour, yet as we shall see, management gurus have frequently promoted fads by assuming that only one of a range of possible interpretations is the correct one. Moreover, many subsequent popularisers have fundamentally mis-represented original research findings including those of the human relations school (Huczynski 1993a).

The human relations school was further developed after the second world war by several other psychologists. For example, Abraham Maslow popularised the well-known 'hierarchy of needs', which aims to explain how people first try to satisfy their hunger, thirst, sex drive and so on, then attempt to establish a sense of self, and finally, but only after they have satisfied those inferior needs, attend to the 'superego' by seeking self-fulfillment. Frederick Herzberg applied this model to the workplace, and argued that so-called 'hygiene' factors like pay might detract from motivation if they were too low, but that they could not serve as positive motivators once a worker's basic needs had been satisfied.

Douglas McGregor claimed that managers tended to behave in accordance with one or the other of two contrasting sets of assumptions, which he labelled 'Theory X' and 'Theory Y'. Theory X presented employees as reluctant workers who had to be coerced into working, while Theory Y assumed that work was a natural activity and that people would use it as a means of self-fulfillment, if given the opportunity. McGregor argued that managers should adopt a Theory Y management style.

If Taylorism's contribution to management fashion was a Fordist model embodied in mass production assembly lines, the human relations school made a contribution of a different kind. It explained how financial incentives and close supervision could not by themselves ensure optimal production, but that managers should have regard for the needs and wants of workers, individually and collectively. The two strands of scientific management and human relations together constituted a developing management fashion, giving managers a body of knowledge to which they could refer in devising how they would perform their jobs.

One more name worth mentioning here is that of another Australian, the late Fred Emery, who had a long association with the Tavistock Institute in London. Among his contributions was helping to develop the socio-technical approach to organisational analysis. It was based on many studies, from Durham coalmines to Indian textile mills. This approach was valuable in reminding us to pay attention to the importance both of human *and* technological factors. However, like scientific management and human relations, the socio-technical approach tended to neglect considerations of employment relations and the wider economy and society (Bamber and Lansbury 1989: 19-21).

Strategic Planning

Drawing on the experiences of large corporations and the military, several gurus promoted notions of 'strategic planning', for example, Alfred Sloan (former boss of General Motors) and Peter Drucker (an Austrian who rose to prominence in the USA).

Drucker went on to develop MBO, which does not, as 1980s' management students might think, stand for 'management buyout', but for 'management by objectives'. MBO was closely associated with the concept of strategic planning, which prescribed that managers were to cease their preoccupation with process to concentrate on outcomes. Instead of evaluating managers on how well they performed a range of functions, strategic planners urged that measurable targets be set and that success or failure be judged by whether those targets were met.

Strategic planning, then, was an important and influential technique. As it was developed, however, strategic planning and MBO also became preoccupied with process. Corporate leaders were obliged to prepare 'mission statements' and to concentrate on their 'core business'. A wide range of people were to be involved in the planning process; identifying the core business and setting objectives involved prolonged discussions and debate which often took the participants into a fantasy world, divorced from the external environment in which their organisation had to operate. Many mission statements bore a disconcerting resemblance to each other, usually along the lines of aspiring to be 'innovative' and 'the best' in the business. Since it was self-evidently impossible for everybody to be 'the best', it was apparent that many managers still had little idea of how to make planning a realistic strategy.

All too often strategic planning was very time-consuming to implement and could inhibit flexibility and innovation. Managers or other employees with a vision or a potentially good idea might not allowed be to proceed with it if it departed from The Plan. For some large enterprises, the strategic plan was akin to the now discredited five-year plans of the Soviet regime. The centrality of the role allocated to corporate strategic plans also helped to undermine their credibility. Middle managers asked to prepare a five-year plan for their section often found the exercise a futile and frustrating one, because of the many variables that were outside their control. Some of these variables were controlled by other elements of a large enterprise, others were completely out of reach, external to the enterprise or even to the country in which it operated, for example, exchange rate fluctuations or investment/divestment decisions taken at the headquarters of multi-national enterprises.

As managers had to undertake the annual ritual of revising their plans, it became more and more evident that they did not really control much of their futures. For many managers, strategic planning and MBO failed to fulfill their promise and were therefore discarded as a waste of time. One of the famous '14 Points' of total quality management, which I shall return to shortly, explicitly told managers to 'reject management by objectives' (Deming, 1986).

The Emergence of Competitive Pressures on Western Enterprises

In the post-1945 period, strong consumer demand, driven by economic growth in the period of postwar reconstruction and low unemployment, meant that many enterprises experienced an excess of demand over their supply capabilities. Management fashion tended to focus on increasing output. However, this situation changed abruptly in the 1970s. The first 'oil shock' ushered in an era of 'stagflation', in which American and European manufacturers found that they had increasing difficulty competing internationally with products from Japan and some of the other newly industrialised economies of Asia. This was not generally due to the latters' superior technologies, because Japan and the others had acquired or copied much of their technology from the USA and Europe. A mild panic erupted, particularly in America, to find out the reasons for this sudden loss of a preeminence which had come to be taken for granted.

The discovery that other countries' ways of doing things could have as much as or even more merit than 'ours' has profoundly altered the Western outlook on many aspects of life including cuisine, health care and appreciation of art and music. In the field of industrial production, it was a discovery that helped to shatter American and European complacency and to inspire more vigour and internationalism in management studies. Unfortunately, it also provided a fertile field in which to cultivate 'quick fix' packages of management, which would allegedly apply to an old-fashioned operation the 'latest' techniques, promoted by a guru after being discovered in exotic, but notoriously competitive, foreign lands.

The seemingly irresistible juggernaut of change which has rolled over many aspects of our society since then has allowed fads to flourish, nourished by the belief that even if yesterday's fad was a good one, it no longer suits today's novel circumstances. The literature is replete with a trendy jargon of organisational transition, with one writer having identified eight 'new ages' ranging from the information age to the age of global interdependence (Amin, 1994: 1-3). One of America's most hyped management 'gurus' has explicitly repudiated much of his early writings on the grounds that events have overtaken them. Of course this is also an unanswerable reason to buy not only his first book and expensive video sets, but also his second, his third and so on!

It would not be possible here and now to do justice to the various management fads which have come into vogue in the last few decades. One writer has, after all, identified 35 such fads (Ashkenas, 1994:26). However, let us look at a few more of them in an attempt to understand how they gained popularity and how, nevertheless, other fads were soon promoted to take their place. In the process I will inevitably be guilty of the sin of oversimplifying, and I beg forgiveness in advance if I offend anybody who has a particular enthusiasm for one of the techniques mentioned.

'Japanisation'

The numerous studies into Japanese production systems usually argued that one of the main reasons for Japanese industrial superiority after the 1970s' oil shocks was the different relationship between workers, managers and technology in that country. The reforms recommended to Western manufacturers largely consisted of attempts to replace the traditional paradigm of Fordist mass production with the apparently more successful Japanese model.

'Japanisation' comprised a number of elements, including total quality management (TQM), 'just-in-time' stock control, continuous improvement (*kaizen*), and the use of multidisciplinary teams. Later writers acknowledged that these techniques were part of a holistic approach to what has been called the Toyota Management System or 'lean production' which could not necessarily be adopted piecemeal (cf. Womack et al 1990). A series of management fads came to be promoted in Western countries including Australia, which consisted of attempts to promote one or more of these elements as panaceas. One study has concluded that about a dozen such fads 'were spawned during the 1985-90 period ... a period of intense competition with Japan and other emerging south east Asian economies' (Huczynski, 1993b:448).

Total Quality Management

The TQM fad was perhaps the most influential of those which originated in the study of the reasons for Japan's competitive success. The title of the book which did most to popularise TQM – *Out of the Crisis* (Deming, 1986) – illustrated the prevailing air of uncertainty. Simply put, TQM is a management philosophy that enterprises should be 'customer driven'. If the Fordist mentality could be summarised in the famous line that 'customers can have any colour they like as long as it's black', because that best suited the needs of mass production, then the TQM response is that customers can have any colour they want and the firm's job is to restructure its operations to meet their demands. Not only that, but each enterprise must put structures in place which allow them to monitor constantly their customers' requirements and to obtain feedback about the extent to which it was satisfying them. A new concept in TQM was that everybody in an enterprise has customers, either external and/or internal, and that the worth of an individual's work depends on how well they are satisfying those customers.

Like several other fads, TQM was soundly based, but it could not bear all the weight of expectations placed upon it by its evangelists. Some enterprises could gain more from adopting it than others. But, it was far from painless. It demanded a huge investment of management time and effort in training and in establishing new procedures like quality circles and benchmarking. The results could take a long time to appear, and indeed some of the advocates of TQM have stressed that it is a philosophy for the long haul. Despite this, one survey found that 'more than 80% of Fortune 500 companies that adopted [quality circles] in the 1980s had abandoned them by 1987' (Abrahamson, 1996:258). A survey of the literature in the UK found that implementing TQM appeared to have had few positive effects on performance (Hill & Wilkinson, 1995:11). Incidentally, increasing the degree of 'bureaucratization' may have been an 'unintended consequence' in many organisations of the introduction of total quality management.

In this respect TQM illustrates a common feature of management fads. They are often marketed as quick fix 'magic bullets', but in fact, they will involve substantial investment outlays over several years if they are to be implemented with any integrity. As one manager observed in frustration:

> If only we would take these management *good ideas* to heart and incorporate them into some basic hard work. Then we would get there. Instead of that we keep chasing rainbows [fads], going through the motions without thinking out properly what we are doing things for.
> (Watson, 1994:905, emphasis in original)

Many of the anecdotes used to support the merits of one fad or another report only on the benefits of a new system, in terms of profitability, productivity, rejection rates, wastage and so on, without analysing the costs and downsides of introducing the new technique (Farias & Varma, 1998:29). The most common reason for disillusionment with TQM in enterprises which have introduced it seems to be that they failed to define the objectives which it was supposed to achieve, with the result that they had no measure against which to assess the additional costs which it entailed. Management fads should, therefore, be subjected to the same rigorous cost/benefit analysis as would the purchase of new plant or relocation to new premises. Instead, what may happen is that the CEO sees or hears about an oversold new fad in a magazine picked up at an airport and then applies it almost as a whim, a phenomenon that has been called 'Heathrow Organization Theory?' (Burrell, 1989). Managers seem especially likely to fall for such fads because they tend not to read thorough analyses of them in books, rather they read such magazines in which the articles are popular and short enough for them to focus on even though they may be jet-lagged, while waiting for their next flight.

Continuous Improvement

'Continuous improvement' is an element of TQM, but sometimes promoted as an independent technique. Again, the basic idea is simple and appears to be little more than common sense. To some extent, it is a rejection of one of the central tenets of Taylorism, namely, that it is management's task to devise the single best way to perform a task. Continuous improvement holds that we never achieve the 'best' way to perform a task; that improvements can always be made, and that the people who are in the best place to make those improvements are the people performing the operation. Continuous improvement therefore depends on institutionalising worker feedback as a source of operational change. Instead of the cosmetic 'suggestion schemes' and the like which have been around for many years, continuous improvement formally involves workers in analysing problems and their own performance and then in identifying ways in which it can be improved.

Attempts to introduce continuous improvement in Western organisations have often met obstacles. For one thing, it can be seen as a challenge to the traditional role of middle managers, specialist technical staff and especially first-line supervisors. It is one thing to tell supervisors that they must become 'coaches' and 'counsellors', but such exhortations ignore the reality that supervisors might gain much of their self-esteem from the belief, on their part and that of others, that they know much more about how to perform a task than do the people they supervise. Again, continuous improvement is not a simpler way of managing. In many ways it is more complex than more traditional approaches, involving time-consuming discussion groups and procedures for documenting and following up suggested improvements. Furthermore, the success of continuous improvement in Japan itself has sometimes been called into question. Together with other aspects of Japanisation, it has been accused of constituting 'management by stress' (Parker & Slaughter, 1988).

A serious impediment to the successful introduction of continuous improvement is that it is predicated on a context of national and organisational cultures in which most workers really want to contribute. It is no use putting procedures in place if people have no enthusiasm for the concept or worse still, set out deliberately to undermine it. The nature and extent of employer - worker antagonisms in Western countries is a matter of debate, but it is arguable that the relationship is often one of mutual dependency rather than of mutual interest. In other words, continuous improvement, like scientific management, assumes a commitment on the part of its human participants which may not exist in practice. The growth of the domain of human resources management represents an acknowledgement of this reality, but it too has witnessed all sorts of fads, as we shall see.

> It has been suggested that most fads fail because they are introduced in a way which fails to address the ways in which “real” problems are tackled in “real” organizations which are immersed in political rivalries, staffed by individuals who ... [may] not regard work as a central life interest, and are confronted by situations which are not of their own making .… (Marchington, 1995:54)

Multiskilling

Another example of Japanisation was the Western discovery that in Japan, operators on the production line were trained and authorised to maintain their machines and to carry out simple repairs when required. This was contrasted with the usual Western system in which the division of labour (as advocated by Adam Smith and Taylor) had separated the tasks of operation and maintenance, so that if the production line stopped because of a breakdown, operators had to wait until a maintenance worker could come and fix the fault. More recently, it seemed only common sense that the Japanese system was more efficient, and in many ways it probably is. However, attempts to introduce this Japanese-style of work organisation in the countries that have longer industrial traditions have sometimes been fraught with difficulties, because they have to confront these legacies; they constitute a workplace culture which is different from that in Japan.

We have seen this process since the 1970s in the promotion of the notion of ‘multiskilling’. To take but one example, a colleague at Griffith University has undertaken research into nursing homes. Some homes have introduced multiskilling by requiring nurses to undertake tasks which used to be done by nursing aides or even cleaners and catering workers. There is no question of a loss of pay, but some nurses have resisted the changes because they feel that their vocation has been degraded. The same response has been noted in other workplaces where employers have tried to replace long-standing craft classifications with multiskilled teams. For better or worse, craft skills are associated with concepts like personal status and even social class which resonate far beyond an individual workplace. Attempts to introduce multiskilling without recognising these broader implications may, therefore, fail to deliver the benefits promised by a management guru whose field of vision or terms of reference are limited to narrow questions of productivity.

Japanese production strategies also involve much higher levels of training and development (at least for the core employees of the ‘blue-chip’ large enterprises) than has usually been the case in the West. In the British tradition vocational training has tended to be seen as the responsibility of the State, and it is individual workers, not the firm, who have been seen to have the greatest interest in generating vocational skills. Multiskilling, therefore, like many other management fads, has ramifications which extend well beyond the simplistic way in which it is sometimes presented by its proponents. Multiskilling also illustrates another aspect of faddism, in that it is hardly new. Some large American corporations implemented it as early as the 1920s in an effort to avoid seasonal layoffs (Jacoby, 1997:28). The way in which jobs are structured is usually an outcome of many years of historical experience, and is not to be reformed lightly. For some enterprises, the potential benefits are worth making the substantial investments of time and effort necessary to achieve that reform. For others, it would not be worth the effort. Faddism ignores these complex differences in favour of a 'Simon says' approach where organisations are all portrayed as operating within broadly identical parameters.

Making a Virtue of Uncertainty

Despite the fads that represented attempts to apply Japanese remedies, there was another class of fads which did the opposite. These were much more popular in the USA for they proposed Uncle Sam's home-spun solutions to the decline in American competitiveness. In lieu of planning, monitoring and controlling, these management fads emphasised the virtues of liberating creativity, encouraging passion and taking advantage of uncertainty.

The work which launched this trend was *In Search of Excellence* by Peters and Waterman (1982), 'the most popular book of any kind in Harper & Row's publishing history' (Silver, 1987:105). There was an interesting attempt to develop an Australian approach to this theme at Griffith University (by Limerick *et al.* 1984).

Tom Peters in particular has built on the excellence fad to write a series of books, including *Liberation Management: Necessary Disorganization for the Nanosecond Nineties* (1993) and *The Pursuit of Wow!: Every Person's Guide to Topsy-turvy Times* (1994). The theme of these works - to the extent that they have a theme - is that successful organisations reflect the wider social context in which they operate. Two strands recur in Peters' work: change and culture. One of Peters' main arguments is that the pace and magnitude of change in industrialised societies over the last three decades mean that managers cannot control the destinies of their enterprises no matter how carefully they plan. To be successful, they have to develop a culture which thrives on change, seeing it as an opportunity rather than a threat. Peters therefore urges a management style which encourages individual workers to be entrepreneurial, even if this means that they sometimes make mistakes. Peters' work almost celebrates its rejection of the central proposition underpinning MBO, and in doing so is one in a line of fads which have explicitly argued that earlier management fashion is so out of date that it cannot be reformed; it must be discarded completely and a new fashion put in its place. In encouraging managers to forget everything they thought they knew, this kind of fad tries to establish a relationship of dependency between manager and guru, with the guru the only rock to which managers can cling in a sea of organisational uncertainties.

The *Thriving on Chaos* (Peters, 1987) school has been influential, but it too has failed in most cases to deliver the results that it promised. Peters' approach is a very individualistic one, and it therefore requires individual employees to behave in certain ways. Like some other management gurus, he advocates reforms which can be driven only by charismatic leaders.

In an influential book published shortly after *In Search of Excellence*, a guru-professor at Harvard, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1983), concluded that inspirational leaders often played a crucial role in the process of corporate change. However, management fashion which hinges on the availability of transformational leaders suffers from the self-evident problem that regardless of the image which executives may have of themselves - especially after reading an inspirational book - there may not be enough transformational leaders to go around.

More significantly, scholarly research has revealed that the task of creating a new corporate culture is more problematic than a few selected anecdotes might suggest. Research in university business schools largely depends on surveys, careful case studies and longitudinal observations, and tries to take a wide range of variables into account. It is more painstaking and analytical, and dare I say it less media friendly, than anecdotes of enterprises brought back from the brink of corporate death, but it is essential if we are to develop a better understanding of management which can be applied widely, and can be taught in business schools. That kind of research, even though there has been far too little of it, suggests that in large organisations, particularly those with an entrenched culture (i.e. most of them), the momentum for change can meet resistance on the part of workers and middle managers who have no wish to become entrepreneurs. In other words, it is too early to disregard the work done by Max Weber (Andreski, 1983) and others in the early part of this century, and later by Edwards (1979), which finds that large organisations inevitably tend to operate within a bureaucratic framework.

Reengineering

A couple of other recent fads are worth noting because of the extensive attention which they have received in the business media. The first is 'reengineering'. To an extent, this fad is another form of Taylorism which aims to re-structure bureaucracies.

Hammer and Champy (1991), the popularisers of the reengineering concept, compared their book in importance to Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, a somewhat immodest claim which I suspect they have lived to regret because it almost demanded a robust response. Some of the critics of reengineering have suggested that the term itself is so imprecise that it is virtually meaningless, a criticism which has also been made also of the whole notion of 'high performance work systems' (Varma *et al*, 1999:26). Although an enthusiasm for 'flatter' management structures preceded the invention of reengineering, Hammer and Champy's work is credited with converting 'delayering' into another fad. Yet we can question both the theoretical justification for flatter structures and the extent to which they actually save costs (Donaldson and Hilmer, 1998).

Reengineering focusses on analysing an enterprise's operations to eliminate unnecessary tasks and procedures. It emphasises the importance of identifying those parts of the operation which add value, and of ensuring that information flows directly to those who need it without being controlled or filtered by redundant internal processes. It has come to be closely associated with downsizing, especially of middle managers, so much so that it in its wake we may hear concern expressed about 'the anorexic corporation' (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 1997: 35). As has been acidly observed, '[i]n the hands of a manager without imagination (that is, most of them), [reengineering] becomes mindless downsizing, a meat-ax [*sic*] to cut away not only the fat but the flesh and bone of the enterprise' (Malone, 1997:72). This can mean that an enterprise loses many informal contacts and much tacit knowledge; these can be among the more important ingredients of innovation.

Hence an important criticism is that reengineering is more concerned:

> 'with shoring up today's businesses than creating tomorrow's industries. Any company that succeeds at restructuring and

> reengineering, but fails to create the markets of the future will find itself on a treadmill, trying to keep one step ahead of the steadily declining margins and profits of yesterday's businesses.'
> (Hamel and Prahalad 1994:5)

In the USA - it never achieved such significant credibility in other countries – business leaders' enthusiasm for reengineering (although not for downsizing) blossomed and then died remarkably quickly, even for a management fad. The way in which reengineering often upset existing power relationships amongst managers themselves has been advanced as a reason for its swift demise, perhaps reflecting the fact that 'political obstacles [to change] may be more severe at the higher levels of the organization than among employees at the bottom' (Hill & Wilkinson, 1995:16). The tendency for fads to trivialise management can perhaps be illustrated by the report that Dun & Bradstreet Software brought out a 'do-it-yourself re-engineering programme for those who [couldn't] afford a consultant' (Thackray, 1993:41). Among the first victims of reengineering are often the research and development, corporate strategy and human resources departments.

Human Resources Management Fads

The last fads which I will discuss address the tendency of 'engineering solutions' to ignore entrenched patterns of behaviour at the workplace and to ignore broader economic, social and cultural issues. These fads have tried to build on the work of the early human relations school and to make the attitudes and behaviour of employees conform to the perceived demands of new work systems. However, I am not aware of any of these fads which were preceded by such intensive research as that which marked the Hawthorne experiments.

Some fads rely on assumptions about human relationships and human behaviour for which the evidence is problematic at best, and nonexistent at worst. Some also tend to grossly underestimate the complexity of defining the behavioural characteristics that are associated with high levels of organisational performance. Certain employee selection procedures rely on, for instance: graphology (spurious handwriting analysis, which is especially popular in France), unreliable or invalid psychological tests or artificial work simulations. Some performance appraisal techniques are related to arbitrary and ill-defined criteria. The evidence about these fads suggests not only that they fail to achieve their objectives, but that they can have unintended consequences and be positively detrimental to an enterprise's performance.

Other fads attempt to present the relationships between employers and workers in a new light, as if longstanding assumptions and beliefs can be changed simply by constructing a plausible 'brave new world'. One such assumption has long been that capital buys labour in a market; the nature of the transaction between an employer and a worker is contractual, and the employer agrees to pay certain economic rewards in return for a worker's efforts. Many new techniques tend to downplay the contractual nature and conflicting interests inherent in most employment relationships and rather present the enterprise as an organism in which the interests of all its members - that is, its employees - depend on the ability of the enterprise to compete in the marketplace which may be local and/or global. Reward systems increasingly neglect the idea of 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay' in favour of performance-related pay and gainsharing. It is too early to predict the direction which these techniques will take in future, but obviously they run counter to many of the values which have influenced workplace relations in Australia for more than a hundred years.

Our knowledge of how people perform at work and of the factors which affect that performance is inadequate. Most scholars acknowledge that and recognise the benefits to be gained by further research. Little such modesty is apparent in what might be called the 'popular management' media, in which quick-fixes and simple cure-alls are abundant. Even more than in other aspects of management, perhaps it is in the field of organisational change, human resource management and industrial relations that business schools are challenged to educate practitioners about making and implementing well-informed decisions.

In a broader context, there is an increasing demand for 'cultural change' in enterprises, an amorphous concept, which at its heart is a call to embrace ideologically the changes which accompany new work systems. A word frequently encountered is 'empowerment', yet its proponents often use it without any apparent recognition of what power really means and of how problematic is the task of redistributing power. The Karpin Report (*Enterprising Nation*, 1995) recommended that all levels of education in Australia inculcate 'enterprise values' into students, and the most casual perusal of the positions vacant advertisements will reveal the importance which employers place on 'team players'. One wonders how many recruiters actually understand what they mean by these terms, and how many have analysed whether 'team players' and 'entrepreneurial values' are really what their enterprises need. As for 'empowerment', it has been observed that often it does not lead to a redistribution of power at all, but 'all that happens is that employees assume higher levels of accountability and responsibility' (Marchington, 1995:61).

The Problem with Fads

How should we regard the proliferation of management fads in recent years? Let us try to answer that question at two levels: first, in the context of management fashion, or what we might call 'good' management. Then I want to suggest that fads have different implications for the study of management, and that one of the principal roles of a university business school is to identify clearly how its role should differ from that of the management gurus.

Management fads may serve a valuable purpose for practising managers. They can provide an impetus for managers to reexamine the way they do things, and thereby prevent complacency and stagnation. Most fads are not fabrications: they usually reflect real concerns and are founded on a certain amount of evidence. They can alert managers to the challenge of change and to the need to prepare for it; they can motivate managers to reconsider their strategies and to investigate alternatives. However, the rhetoric which accompanies fads can create a self-reinforcing trend, leading managers to concentrate on particular aspects of their performance which may not really deserve the priority they end up receiving (Abrahamson, 1996:263-64). Managers' resources of time, commitment and enthusiasm are finite, and if a disproportionate share is devoted to one particular fad then there may be a significant 'opportunity cost': other important elements of organisational performance may be neglected. Once they realise this, in their efforts to attend to the tasks they have been neglecting, managers risk losing the worthwhile elements of the fad with which they became temporarily infatuated.

Fads can also have a detrimental effect if they feed a management fantasy. This fantasy is that 'the answer is out there somewhere' and that it can be purchased off the shelf if only a manager knows where to look. Managers may sometimes be inclined to regard management as a black art, to which the gurus hold the key. They risk abandoning to consultants the vital task of diagnosing their own organisational ills and prescribing solutions, leaving the managers to perform merely as administrators.

The likelihood of this occurring will increase if managers are subjected to pressure from other sources, be they colleagues or professional associations or boards of directors, to embrace whatever fads happen to then be in vogue. This pressure can amount to a form of 'managerial correctness', which, like political correctness, imports almost a moral flavour to prevailing ideas of what constitutes good management. It has been called a 'bias to orthodoxy, not empiricism' (Ashkenas, 1994:33). Yet conformity with 'managerial correctness' overlooks the fact that many enterprises succeed precisely because of their preparedness to innovate, to think outside the box, by creating their own unique style and culture in a diverse marketplace (Shelley, 1996:12).

This subordination to the vagaries of fashion is most likely to occur amongst managers who do not have a firm intellectual and moral grasp of the role which they undertake in society, and who therefore mistake fads for fashion. Studies have found that many business leaders turn to new techniques when they experience crisis or fear a loss of competitiveness (Osterman, 1994; Varma *et al* 1999:29). Recourse to fads might then be interpreted in many instances as a cry for help on the part of managers, regardless of the warning that 'many of the current trends propagated in the popular business press undermine the status and relevance of managerial work critical to the success of large, complex, global corporations' (Donaldson & Hilmer, 1998:7). By espousing a rejection of the past and proposing restructuring, many fads risk leading an enterprise to a potentially catastrophic dead end, if they do not achieve worthwhile outcomes. At its worst, the recent implementation of management fads can lead to the situation shown in Figure 1.

Management by fad tends to assume that enterprises can move from old management approaches to new and better ones, but they are generally silent on what should happen thereafter. Presumably the management gurus want business leaders to believe, at least initially, that after they have implemented a fad they will have attained Nirvana and no further change in strategy will be required, which is self-evidently an unsustainable proposition. Alternatively, managers are being seduced into a state of guru-dependency, in which they anxiously await the arrival of the next fad in the market so it can guide their future course of action.

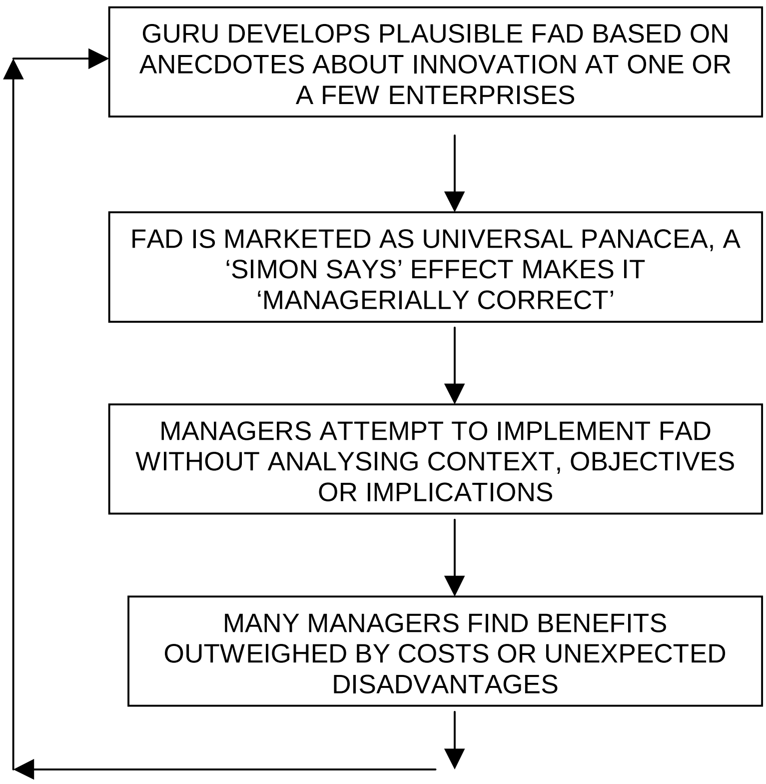

Figure 1 : An Apparent Process of Fad Implementation

One practising manager has eloquently described how his enterprise has forsaken management fashion for the quackery of faddism:

> There is a sort of disease here. And it could be the death of us. We set out to do some really good things. DOC was brilliant. It really worked at building the sort of culture a business like this needs. BIP was completely necessary. It is common sense. TQM seems to me the only reasonable way to manage a high-tech operation. Team briefing's a good idea, problem solving teams are a good idea. But look at what we do with all these things. We give them a fancy name, we hype them up. We over-egg the pudding with launches and posters and pamphlets and glossy brochures and pocket-cards. People expect the world. It is as if the company grabs at every good idea that comes along and treats it as if it were a magic fad, a new cure-all. (Watson, 1994:902)

The Role of a Business School

An important role for a university business school is to provide current and future managers with a solid core of skills and knowledge, based on thorough analyses of empirical evidence. This should in turn underpin the principles and techniques that constitute contemporary management fashion at any given time. Business school staff should endorse the philosophy that 'the essence of management is the disciplined and dedicated application of a range of ideas to specific situations' (Donaldson & Hilmer, 1998:17). Some such scholars would go further, arguing that 'management should be seen as a profession - like law, medicine, or architecture - where learning and skill are applied with care and ethics' (Donaldson & Hilmer, 1998:18). If managers have sufficient confidence in their own professional abilities they will be able to evaluate fads on their merits without becoming victims of managerial correctness.

Yet even if we can achieve this, business schools face a dilemma in the face of management fads. If we ignore them, we risk presenting a public image of being behind the times (Abrahamson, 1996:255). If we embrace them uncritically, we will implicitly endorse the notion that management is not a profession but only a collection of currently popular techniques. Surely the appropriate response is to adopt neither of these approaches, but to investigate fads with an open mind to see whether they really are based on new evidence or present fresh insights. Fads may originate in management experiments, which may occur in enterprises as a result of competitive pressures. As a result of those competitive pressures, successful experiments are seldom promulgated beyond their place of origin unless fostered by an external agency. However, in general there is no patent or copyright in ideas, and business schools fulfill one of their social purposes by evaluating and explaining the benefits and limitations of such ideas to work organisations more generally.

For example, the failure of strategic planning to deliver the full benefits promised by its enthusiasts does not mean that it was a worthless concept. Indeed, the current unfashionability of 'planning, processes, structure, hierarchy and analysis' has recently been deplored (Donaldson & Hilmer, 1998:10). Let us not throw out all of the babies with the bathwater. Strategic planning and MBO were innovative techniques for meeting some of the challenges which confront most managers. It is one of the tasks of management scholars to undertake 'validation research', a task involving an examination of the application of new techniques and principles to a range of circumstances, with the objective of establishing how their effectiveness is influenced by different variables. This is not a task for a management guru no matter how eminent, but it is necessary if the experience of the many is to be substituted for the anecdotes of the few, the process by which management fashion is developed and reinforced. A virtuous cycle of good management practice can be created as shown in Figure 2.

The study of management, then, like most academic fields, holds knowledge contingently. It should always be open to reformulation if new evidence falsifies the hypotheses upon which we base our teaching. None the less, because of the complexity of our subject, the development of our body of knowledge proceeds much more cautiously than the popularising of management fads. To the extent that fads add to our core understanding, they should influence our teaching. It is more likely, however, that most new fads will signal no more than the potential value of new directions for research, and the challenges posed by such research are well recognised (cf. Farias & Varma, 1998:51). A selection of lively anecdotes may be sufficient for a guru to write a book and go on a lecture tour propounding a new management paradigm, but for business scholars the anecdotes should invite consideration of whether our understanding of management generally might be advanced by pursuing such a new avenue of inquiry. If that involves occasional accusations that we are behind the times, then we must have the courage to stand our ground and defend our position and role. Perhaps we will be vindicated by history in due course.

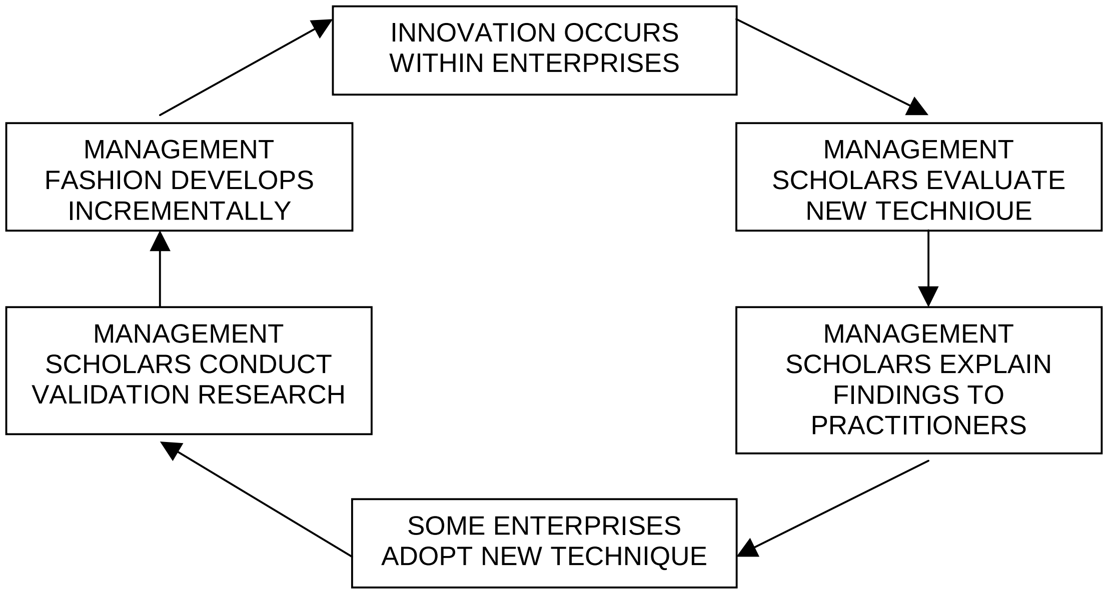

Figure 2 : A Virtuous Cycle of Good Management Practice

Business schools also have a valuable role to play in studying management within a broad, inter-disciplinary context. Many fads were flawed because they failed to take relevant social, economic, political, historical, legal and industrial contexts into account. In a university, business schools can call on the resources of other streams of scholarly inquiry in their search for theoretical insights. Business scholars can also undertake research as members of a network drawn from universities around the world. At Griffith many of our academic staff are engaged in just that kind of inter-disciplinary, international research. Further, one of the strengths of our undergraduate degree is the inter-disciplinary first year which helps students to learn to cross-fertilise from various approaches to business.

We should, nevertheless, do more to participate in the debate about management fads. Our field of study is the community of working managers (and those they manage), so we should make sure we communicate with that community, not just with each other. One study in the USA disclosed that very few managers read academic journals (Gopinath & Hoffman, 1995:587), and there is no reason to think that their Australian counterparts are any different. We should recast our published findings for the popular management journals and even for the mainstream media, stripped of the exhaustive referencing and detailed descriptions of methodology which deter so many practising managers, even those with MBAs and other degrees from Griffith University. While some of us may privately share the view that the gurus are no more than ‘court jesters to the corporate world’ (Carter, 1998:134), we cannot afford to ignore ‘the disquieting possibility that the popular-management press tends to lead the dissemination of progressive-management rhetorics, whereas the academic-management press tends to lag’ (Abrahamson, 1996:264). Some scholars, of course, already engage with the gurus on their own terrain - indeed some of the gurus are academics or quasi-academics - but more of us should make the effort to engage. Otherwise we risk creating the impression that ‘an occasional trickle of concepts [from management scholars to practitioners] hardly seems a sufficient rationale to sustain the social legitimacy and financial support of all the faculty, Ph.D. programs and research projects in our field' (Beyer, 1992:471).

Conclusion

Why do so many managers look to gurus? Why do they take such an uncritical approach to fads and fashions? There are many reasons, but a central one is a fundamental doubt on the part of many managers that business is really a discrete discipline supported by a coherent body of knowledge. It reflects, in other words, a lack of confidence in what I have called management fashion. Many managers have come from professional backgrounds like accounting, law or engineering, which in some cases can trace their intellectual bases back to classical Greece. They can see no such tradition in management. Who can blame them if they succumb to a plausible theory, or fall back on adherence to 'managerial correctness'?

Yet many managers themselves understand the shortsightedness of relying on fads. To quote one manager:

> We do all the right things ... total quality management, a winning culture, customer focus, continuous improvement, business improvement plans, decentralisation, business action teams, harmonization, blah blah blah. Every bloody consultant in the world has given us advice ... We ought to be one of these so-called 'excellent' companies. But I don't think we are. (Watson, 1994:905)

This mention of so-called 'excellent' companies illustrates how fads may come to undermine managers' self-confidence. The term suggests that the worth of a manager's work is measured by how many of the most recent fads he or she has adopted, rather than by more traditional measures such as: profitability, return on stakeholders' funds, productivity, service quality or employee job satisfaction.

A challenge for university business schools is to persuade managers that their work does constitute a profession, and that it is supported by a body of knowledge, which is increasing. We will do that best not by feeding managers' fantasies and competing with the gurus, but by being advocates of the most appropriate management practices, founded upon the results of careful inquiry.

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Before moving to Australia in 1988, he was at Durham University Business School (UK); he also was an independent mediator/arbitrator for the British Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. He had worked earlier for a management association and for governmental commissions. He has been associated with management education and research for more than 25 years, in the UK and Australia. He also has experience in the Asia-Pacific region, in continental Europe and North America. He has been a chief investigator on several large research projects in the management field funded by competitive grants awarded, for example, by the: Australian Research Council; Economic and Social Research Council (UK) and other agencies.

His publications include numerous journal articles and books (many of them published jointly with collaborators), for example: *Militant Managers?* (Gower); *Managing Managers* (Blackwell); *Organisational Change Strategies* (Longman); *New Technology: International Perspectives on Human Resources and Industrial Relations* (Routledge/Allen & Unwin) and *International and Comparative Employment Relations* (Sage/Allen & Unwin) - the latter two were both jointly with Russell Lansbury. His publications have been translated into several languages including: French, German, Spanish, Indonesian, Italian, Russian, Chinese, Korean and Japanese. He is on the editorial board of a dozen international refereed journals. He researches, advises and consults with international organisations, governments, employers and unions.

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