

Learning and teaching in Business, Management and Accounting: the UK landscape

2001

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) is the primary information and advice resource on learning and teaching matters for all academic and related staff in UK higher education. It is funded by the four UK higher education funding bodies and consists of a network of 24 subject centres and a generic centre. The Business Education Support Team (BEST) is one of the subject centres, set up in 2000, which offers subject-specific expertise and information on learning and teaching.
- 1.2 The aims of the BEST are to:
- support lecturers in the discipline cluster of Business, Management and Accounting (BM&A) in maintaining and enhancing the quality and effectiveness of their teaching;
 - facilitate knowledge brokerage by identifying, collating, analysing and disseminating information on good practice in learning and teaching;
 - contribute to an understanding of the institutional, organisational and human issues relating to successful adoption of innovative learning and teaching issues, including communication and information technology (C&IT).
- 1.3 Among the key objectives which emerge from these aims are to:
- collate and maintain an information base on current practice in learning and teaching for the discipline cluster using qualitative and quantitative methods, including statistical data, case studies, etc.;
 - survey and provide monitoring tools to assist in the benchmarking of the discipline cluster;
 - provide information and support to all stakeholders: academics, institutions, students, employers, subject associations and professions;
 - disseminate information through the WWW, a journal and a newsletter, conferences, workshops, seminars and definitive subject reports.
- 1.4 This report is based on i) a national survey conducted by BEST (as an honest broker) and ii) on statistics provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) - see methodology in section 2 below. It describes the landscape and provides a baseline for learning and teaching in BM&A. It provokes questions and will help to define future work for BEST, such as a critical review of key issues and concerns. The HESA statistics contrast on occasion with the opinions of stakeholders raising tantalising challenges to commonly held beliefs. For example, the general consensus amongst academics is that there are fewer lecturers, more students and consequently greater workload, but does the evidence support this view or do we need to investigate this further?
- 1.5 Many of the issues discussed in this report, and others relating to learning and teaching in BM&A, are taken up in greater detail in BEST's Annual Report to be published shortly. The Annual Report is aimed at academic and related staff within the BM&A constituency and is based on interactions with institutions and individuals through visits, workshops and conferences, and surveys.

2 Methodology

- 2.1 The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) was set up by the UK universities in 1993 as their unified data collection agency. It publishes data annually, which are compiled from returns by each higher education institution. HESA's reports, while the best in print, do not represent well the BM&A discipline cluster, for reasons discussed below. BEST purchased from HESA detailed descriptive data specifically concerning BM&A in UK universities for the six academic years 1994-95 through to 1999-00. When available, similar data for 2000-01 will extend the analysis.
- 2.2 BEST conducted a national landscape survey in November 2000 of views about learning and teaching in BM&A. BEST sent to UK Deans and Heads of Department a letter asking them to answer a Web-based questionnaire, or to request the appropriate person to do so. The questionnaire was short and most questions were open-ended. Responses came

from 71 individuals at 49 universities and 5 institutions of higher education. They provide insight into opinions on current issues and concerns, an overview of newsworthy innovations in the field, a large set of 'elevator pitches' to important stakeholders and a valuable baseline for follow-up interviews and case studies, and for later surveys.

3 Business, Management and Accounting as a discipline cluster

- 3.1 Business, Management and Accounting together make up by far the largest discipline cluster in the country, much larger than Medicine and its allied disciplines. BM&A's boundaries are fuzzy, and HESA's statistics under-estimate its size for three reasons. First, courses in these subjects feature in other qualifications besides those that clearly belong to it. Second, students taking BM&A subjects within what are known as 'Combined Studies' are not included in the statistics for this cluster. Third, the teaching staff include a proportion of part-timers, many of whom do not get counted.

Numbers of students

- 3.2 HESA normally provides data sets for the category 'Business and Administrative Studies', a term that probably covers the majority of students in BM&A, but also Administrative students not within Business Schools. Regrettably, the published data exclude students taking BM&A within Combined Studies, among which are the Open University's UK students.

Table 1. Numbers of students taking Business, Management and Accounting in UK universities, 1994-95 to 1999-00

Academic Year	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Doctoral	2070	2413	2845	2807	2977	3159
Other HD	28690	30753	28803	29612	31611	33420
Other PG	16012	15940	15881	15614	14913	14498
Open University	12211	12364	12008	12242	12914	12556
First degree	74177	76398	78351	79831	82834	83054
HND/DipHE	14495	13515	12746	10590	10108	10171
Other UG	23399	23001	20593	18979	18321	16664
Totals	171054	174384	171227	169675	173678	173522

Sources: HESA (2000, 2001), OU Planning Office (2001)

- 3.3 There is no evidence in Table 1 of a large overall increase in undergraduate or postgraduate numbers over the six years. Only slight year-on-year variations appear in the totals. However, numbers of postgraduate students increase sharply in 1999-00, while numbers of 'other undergraduates' continue to fall.

Numbers of staff

- 3.4 HESA statistics probably under-estimate the numbers of teaching staff because they exclude those with less than a quarter-time post, most of whom are likely to be teaching. Part-time staff, for HESA, are those on regular salaries calculated as a proportion of the full-time rate; they include casual staff and those paid hourly. All OU associate lecturers (tutors) are excluded, therefore these are shown separately within Table 2. Some full-timers do additional part-time teaching or OU tutoring, but the extent of double-counting is very small.

Table 2. Numbers of Business, Management and Accounting teaching staff in UK universities, 1994-95 to 1999-00

Academic Year	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Full-time	6584	6884	6683	6642	6728	6868
Part-time	769	813	1000	1035	923	1272
OU tutors	729	679	699	799	875	839
Total	8082	8376	8382	8476	8526	8979

Sources: HESA (2000, 2001); OU Planning Office (2001).

- 3.5 Overall, there was a small increase in numbers of teaching staff in the period 1994-95 to 1999-00; the largest increase was among part-timers and to a lesser extent OU tutors.
- 3.6 Business, Management and Accounting is the largest discipline cluster in the country, with almost 9,000 teaching staff serving over 170,000 students in UK universities each year in the period 1994-95 to 1999-00. Bessant's (2000) survey of Deans' views shows that most expected postgraduate numbers to rise over the next five years, though students from abroad are more likely to account for the increase than those from home.

Staff:student ratios

- 3.7 The national data above probably conceal considerable regional and local variations for both students and staff. Unfortunately, it is impossible to calculate accurate UK staff:student ratios for two reasons: first, most teaching staff have some responsibility for research as well, but the statistics do not say how much, and second, there are no 'full-time equivalent' data (for staff or students) on which to base such ratios. It is even dangerous to surmise that, nationally, the ratio apparently remained quite stable at about 1:20.
- 3.8 Overall, the HESA statistics may under-estimate the size of the discipline cluster but they reveal a national landscape that changed slowly during the six years to 1999-00 in terms of total numbers of students and staff. More detailed analyses later may show up important regional and local differences.

4 BEST's Web-based landscape survey

Issues in learning and teaching

- 4.1 Respondents (71) wrote in 278 'big issues' about learning and teaching in the field of BM&A that were uppermost in their minds at the time. These issues can be grouped in various ways, such as in Table 3. Some respondents expressed their views very strongly.

Table 3. Groups of issues raised by respondents

A. Changing the curriculum, teaching and assessment	78
B. Using communication and information technology for learning	46
C. Assuring quality of provision	41
D. Obtaining funding	37
E. Staffing	34
F. Changing student attitudes and improving their skills	30
G. Dealing with competition and rivalry	12
Total	278

A. Changing the curriculum, teaching and assessment

Respondents frequently raised the issue of the curriculum's relevance to practice in the international business world, particularly in e-commerce, which some think is not being introduced fast enough into courses. Others raise the issue of the balance between vocational/professional and academic/theoretical, and about coping with the ever-widening curriculum.

Some want teaching to support students' educational self-development, through methods such as 'action learning'. Professional bodies' demands must be balanced against development of wider skills in students, enabling them to evaluate research literature and take responsibility for their own learning. Staff should introduce learning via discovery so that the students retain their enthusiasm.

Graduate apprenticeships bring the workplace into learning, as do undergraduate work placements. However, there are real difficulties in enabling students to learn experiential and enterprise skills systematically, with cost-effective support from staff, given the number of organisations available and of students to be placed. More and better work-based learning is needed, including part-time courses linked to related employment for students who cannot afford the fees without working.

The quality of teaching and opportunities for face-to-face contact are being damaged by large class sizes and heavy staff workloads. Students with jobs need courses that require less class attendance and flexible learning, but innovations in teaching require time and resources that are not generally available.

UK students from under-privileged backgrounds, and many foreign students, need learning support. Courses should take into account students' cultural standards and their lack of a literary tradition. Improved access leaves teachers to cope with a wider range of ability in classes than before.

On assessment, some think the load on students should be lightened, yet it is important to test students' acquisition of basic skills and 'process thinking'. Perhaps programmes should include work-based assessment. It is hard to compare standards of students taking multi-disciplinary courses in Business and Management with those on courses where the divergence of disciplines is less.

B. Using communication and information technology for learning

There is wide recognition of the need to integrate C&IT into learning, but how this can be done without additional funds, new models of e-learning and substantial training of staff and students is a concern. Respondents list potential applications and perceived efficiencies such as distribution of learning material (so requiring less class attendance) and introducing e-learning for greater flexibility. They want to use the Internet for purposes ranging from accessing financial data to using Blackboard (a Web-based teaching tool).

Staff require new competencies and robust electronic platforms if they are to introduce interactive learning and assessment alongside traditional teaching methods. Recruiting and retaining qualified C&IT staff is clearly a problem too.

Respondents express some uncertainty about whether C&IT will enable them to teach more students with fewer resources; about whether first-year students should be expected to learn at a distance; whether e-learning is more beneficial than distance learning with hard copy, and, more generally, whether C&IT will enhance their subjects and their teaching.

C. Staffing

There is considerable concern about obtaining and retaining qualified and experienced staff to teach BM&A at all levels in universities. The labour market is increasingly competitive, with university salaries falling further and further behind, so that recruiting teaching and research staff from business and industry is very difficult, particularly in Accounting.

For existing staff, respondents want better salaries but also more development, updating and support, particularly in rapidly changing fields such as Finance, and help in introducing C&IT into teaching. This support would raise morale, which is often low because many staff feel undervalued and overworked, with large classes to handle.

D. Assuring quality of provision

Local and national quality assurance procedures in Business Schools are seen as too time-consuming and of little value in maintaining or raising standards. Indeed, the procedures take away time from teaching and can stifle creativity and innovation. There is concern about the quality of awards offered under the new qualifications framework of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and about the current uncertainty created by the QAA. A big issue is how to meet threshold standards and respond to QAA requirements for benchmarking. However, a few respondents see benefits in benchmarking, perhaps among 'clubs' or groups of Business Schools. There is some ambivalence towards membership of the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) for individual staff.

E. Obtaining funding

Respondents feel strongly that Business Schools are at a disadvantage under current HE funding arrangements. Increased and more stable funding for teaching is essential for maintaining standards. Students' grants are too small, so that many have to work part-time (or even full-time), with negative impact on their studying. Salaries are too low to attract staff from business and industry. Sufficient additional resources cannot be found for work experience programmes and for developing learning materials and other innovations.

Some respondents say that the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is having a negative impact on teaching. New universities cannot use research funding as a cushion. Other universities seek a balance or trade-off between teaching and research. But how should teachers link research to teaching, given the conflict between a benchmarked curriculum and a research-based one?

F. Changing student attitudes and improving their skills

Respondents complain about students' lack of concentration in lectures, their lack of motivation, their unwillingness to be critical about techniques and practices, their instrumental approach to learning, and their readiness to lodge complaints and appeals. They suggest that students should be given more skills training, taught how to take notes in lectures, helped to master logical reasoning and discursive analytical criticism, and persuaded to acquire theoretical understanding even when they say they just want the facts! One respondent points out how difficult it is to implement more student-centred and self-directed study, given resource constraints and students' widely varying abilities and motivation.

Views differ on improving access while funding is constrained and student poverty is rising. Business Schools need to attract intelligent students. Access should be improved, in line with social inclusion policies, but some students' levels of numeracy and literacy must be raised in their first year of study.

G. Dealing with competition and rivalry

Competition for students and rivalry with other providers cause staff to focus on funding and marketing instead of on learning and teaching. International competitors and corporate universities are a threat, including on-line providers, some in league with major publishers. How can staff deal with the growth in e-teaching, virtual universities, tailor-made and niche programmes, plus globalisation? Collaboration between institutions may be the answer, but additional funds are required to introduce more internationally-oriented courses and e-learning.

Innovations in learning and teaching

- 4.2 Respondents wrote in 126 innovations that they considered newsworthy, and these are grouped in Table 4 under the same categories as the issues in Table 1.

Table 4. Groups of innovations listed by respondents

Group of innovations	
A. Changing the curriculum, teaching and assessment	59
B. Using communication and information technology for learning	41
C. Assuring quality of provision	2
D. Obtaining funding	0
E. Staffing	4
F. Changing student attitudes and improving their skills	24
G. Dealing with competition and rivalry	3
Total (a few responses fell into two categories)	133

A. Changing the curriculum, teaching and assessment

Many of the reported innovations in the curriculum are new programmes of study, mostly at the postgraduate level, some for doctorates. Entrepreneurship, strategic management and leadership are the most frequently mentioned topics, but there are also programmes aimed at niche markets in Creative Management, Leisure Management, Insurance Management and Management Accounting. Others seek to increase relevance by building strong links with companies and incorporating work experience of various kinds. A few claim to be grounded in research.

Among the innovations in teaching methods (other than those involving C&IT – see below), problem-based learning, action learning, portfolios, case studies and simulations are prominent, together with provision of learning materials. Innovations in assessment are seldom listed and almost all focus on peer assessment.

B. Using communication and information technology for learning

Respondents list 41 innovations that use C&IT for learning. Among them are instances of teaching materials being delivered to students on CD-ROM or the Web. Interactive Web-sites feature in many of these responses, although there is no indication of whether these sites achieve economies of scale; some require students to use commercial software such as Lotus Learning Space and Blackboard, or UK-developed software (e.g. Byzantium). A few instances of national or international video-conferencing are mentioned.

C. Assuring quality of provision

Although many of the innovations may well contribute to improved quality, only two specifically aim at quality assurance. One involves the use of focus groups to explore quality considerations within units. The second involves accreditation of an innovative Accounting course.

D. Obtaining funding

Nobody suggests an innovation aimed directly at obtaining funding or saving money, although it seems likely that improved efficiency was a motive behind many of those listed.

E. Staffing

Among the four innovations in this group, one involves recruiting appropriately qualified staff. The other three are aimed at staff development: the topics include improving lecture delivery, training tutors well and teaching e-learning competencies.

F. Changing student attitudes and improving their skills

Serious concern about student attitudes is reflected less in the 24 innovations listed than is the desire to improve students' skills. Many of the examples involve teaching relevant study and C&IT skills or providing support services for students. Others are aimed at enabling students to work in teams or groups. A few test students' abilities on admission.

G. Dealing with competition and rivalry

Only three innovations fall clearly into this group. One involves international taught doctorates, another is based on partnership with overseas companies, and the third gives students opportunities for consultancies in a multi-national company.

Departmental concerns

4.3 Respondents wrote in their main concerns about their own School or Department. In many cases, these concerns reflected the 'big issues' they had already stated earlier and a few respondents wrote nothing further. Prominent among the concerns relating to learning and teaching (in rank order of frequency of mention) were how to cope with:

- retaining qualified staff and recruiting qualified early career entrants to replace retirees (22 mentions);
- funding crises, the declining unit of resource and students' financial problems (21);
- using communication and information technology for learning and teaching (15);
- expanding student numbers and worsening staff:student ratios (12);
- quality audits (12).

Less frequently mentioned concerns were:

- supporting students' learning (7);
- balancing teaching and research (7);
- teaching students with a wide spectrum of abilities (7);
- marketing business education and competition for national and international students (4);
- provision of suitable materials (for campus and distance learning) (3);
- relevance of courses to demands of the world of work (3).

Elevator pitches to stakeholders

4.4 The Web-site invited respondents to make their top three 'elevator pitches' (alone in the lift with...) to each of two important stakeholders: first the Minister responsible for higher education, then the Chair of University Governors or Council. There were nearly 200 pitches made to each, demonstrating approaches ranging from the diplomatic to appeals to rationality to the downright rude.

Pitches to the Minister

- 4.4.1 In their first pitches, almost every one of the respondents told the Minister that he or she had better provide more resources to universities, Business Schools and their students. Most gave reasons and a few added hints about procedures, such as raising Business and Management courses by one funding band, allowing tax relief on all training and learning, or offering greater tax incentives to alumni. There was one caustic remark about the state of the lifts and capital funding!
- 4.4.2 In their second pitches, respondents mentioned quality assurance and audits, widening access, research, student numbers, education as an export and staffing problems, but again told the Minister frequently, in no uncertain terms, that stable adequate funding is essential. A few asked the Minister to get to know the universities better. One or two wanted student fees abolished.
- 4.4.3 In their third pitches, respondents mentioned support for students' learning as well as improving their financial support, collaboration with industry, shortages of suitable staff, damage done by quality audits ('recognise the professionalism of staff'), falling standards, national and international competition, cutting bureaucracy and increasing e-learning. About a third mentioned funding again in some form.

Pitches to the Chair of Governors or Council

- 4.4.4 Understandably, respondents did not tackle the Chair on university funding as such. In their first pitches, apart from some inviting a more active interest in the Business School, several respondents wanted the Chair to defend the university from time-wasting quality audits. Others wanted changes in how resources were distributed in their institutions, and requested support for partnerships and external collaboration. Only one set out to praise the Chair's work for university, and one thanked Council for its support. Another told the Chair to stop being a lap dog.
- 4.4.5 In their second pitches to the Chair, many respondents touched on resource allocation and internal structuring. Clearly there is resentment about Business Schools being treated as 'cash cows'. Some raised research and teaching accommodation issues. One mentioned the need for academics to learn more about e-learning and several touched on support for integrating C&IT into the curriculum.
- 4.4.6 In their final pitches, respondents often stressed serious staffing issues, including those not directly related to funding. Several invited the Chair to come to see for him/herself, and to support the staff. Others mentioned the need for new programmes of study and links with industry. But resource allocation cropped up yet again.

Priority listing for BEST

- 4.5 The 71 respondents ticked boxes against each of 11 potential tasks for BEST, and were invited to write in further tasks. Table 5 shows the rankings their responses gave to these tasks plus two others written in by individuals.

Table 5. Ranking of potential tasks for BEST

	Number	Rank
Use electronic resources for learning and teaching	56	1.5
Add, or switch to, e-learning and e-teaching	56	1.5
Improve student assessment strategies and methods	44	3
Forecast changes in learning and teaching in your environment	40	4
Set up local or regional benchmarking groups	35	5
Help students in learning to learn	33	6.5
Prepare for teaching quality audits	33	6.5
Collaborate across disciplines	30	8
Raise student completion rates	26	9
Review curriculum changes and introduce new courses	22	10
Introduce staff to quality assurance procedures	13	11
Promote good practice (written in)	3	12
Influence opinion formers and policy makers (written in)	1	13

- 4.6 The top priorities by far are the use of electronic resources for learning and teaching, and adding or switching to e-learning and e-teaching, followed by improving student assessment strategies and methods, and forecasting changes in learning and teaching in the respondents' environment. These four, at least, deserve serious consideration by BEST.

5 Interpretations and questions

- 5.1 The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) have identified 42 subject categories and the 24 LTSN centres map on to clusters of these subjects. The clusters bring together subjects that are commonly reviewed together and for which there are some shared approaches. However, BM&A cannot be called a discipline as it both multi-disciplined and applied. Further, those subjects that are firmly focussed on the vocational

market place have found themselves increasingly servicing or inter-working into other subject clusters through the development of vocational elements of programmes and qualifications. Inevitably this leads to confusion in the statistics about the subject grouping.

5.2 Given that HESA's statistics inevitably contain some confusion and classifications open to alternative interpretations, it is of concern that these statistics are the primary resource for policy makers and funding allocators. This is particularly alarming when it was reported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) that only 9% of research funds come to this discipline grouping; yet in student numbers (HESA) the subjects represent 50% of the social science community. Criticism of BM&A research could be incorrectly aligned if both the statistical bases are corrupted and the allocation so unbalanced.

5.3 If we treat the HESA data as reliable (or consistent) then there are some interesting observations to make for the 5-year trend to 1998-99 (as shown in Table 1):

- the total student population did not change dramatically (increase of 1.2%) and the variation has never been greater than 2%;
- the mix of undergraduate and postgraduate students has shifted towards postgraduate, rising from 41–44% (N.B. the Open University only offered professional and postgraduate qualifications in this period);
- in the undergraduate market the shift was away from DipHE/HND and Other UG studies to First Degrees. This seems to raise questions regarding the development of Foundation Degrees in this discipline cluster;
- the major postgraduate qualification is the MBA which represents 31% (MBA 15570 - 1998). This contrasts with the US market for MBAs at 420,000 (Digest of Education Statistics 1998) which represents 0.21% of the total adult population (the UK MBA is 0.027% of the adult population). This picture partially reflects the immaturity of the UK market (161 UK compared to 748 US institutions grant MBAs) but also the difference in positioning of the MBA in the US, which is increasingly an entry qualification for management rather than for middle and senior managers;
- HESA's staff data (as shown in Table 2) probably underestimate numbers of part-timers who have historically played a significant role in vocational education. The proportion of part-time staff appears to have increased slightly. The OU part-time tutors who represent about 10% of the BM&A teaching community highlight this. (Some of these OU tutors may well be included in other institutional returns);
- a measure of workload is the staff:student ratio. This cannot be calculated from HESA data, but opinion and anecdotal reports tell of increasing class sizes.

5.4 The survey elicited responses from about half the institutions teaching BM&A. We do not claim this to be a representative sample, although the spread of respondents across old and new universities is good. We relied heavily on the old CTI list of contacts and Association of Business Schools (ABS) delegates. Given our aim to support a network of BM&A academics, it is important that we establish reliable databases of our community. However, this is not an easy task given the level of 'churn' (staff turnover) not only between institutions but also among roles within institutions. This churn reflects the employment profile of our community where new entrants are limited by the high salary differentials and existing staff may be trading up under the stimulus of the RAE.

5.5 The big issues raised by respondents reflect those uppermost in their minds and current areas of concern. Changes in curriculum, teaching and assessment reflect not only the impact of QAA but also the nearness of the market place and the employability of graduates. Another way to cluster these issues could be by resources and capabilities. For example, the market place is more competitive and perhaps could be described as de-regulated. The shift in power towards the customer or stakeholders has made the management of these relations explicit and more inter-dependent.

The perceived importance of the curriculum, teaching and assessment reflects not only the need to meet employer's requirements but also students' needs, while ensuring equivalence with alternate suppliers. This approach is compatible with measures to deal with competition and rivalry. The frequency of innovations cited in this area reflects the market potential. The management of the market place is a growing task for Business Schools as they are increasingly run as businesses generating surpluses for their institutions.

At the same time QAA has required legitimisation of the curriculum, teaching and assessment - familiar territory for the new universities under the old regime of the former Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), but a challenge for some established universities.

- 5.6 The impact of the QAA and the Teaching Quality Assessment process has heightened the need for management of quality. At the same time, the link between quality and resources has energised management intervention in the process of teaching (and research through RAE) and created positive feedback, giving lifts for performers and spirals of decline for under-performers. This has led to questioning of the benefits of these heavy overheads.
- 5.7 The importance of funding in an increasingly competitive market place further emphasises the managerialism on the need to win resources and minimise usage of limited resources, be they finance or staff.
- 5.8 The use of C&IT can be seen as a 'gee whiz' factor in the market place but also as a substitute for other resources such as staff time. However, it is costly in time and funding and creates a dependence on a limited staff resource (sought elsewhere in the labour market). Despite the linkages of the LTSN centre to the old CTI centre it was a salutary message that respondents are still not certain of the benefits of C&IT in learning and teaching. Despite the lack of benefits there remains significant innovation in this area reflecting the heritage of CTI and the funding bodies' Teaching and Learning Technology Programme (TLTP).
- 5.9 The contrast of the response on staffing, which suggests serious problems of recruitment and retention, with the HESA statistics, which suggest stability, is a warning to policy makers. It is interesting to observe that in the USA BM&A suffered similar problems some ten years ago, but the intervention to generate new staff through PhDs, etc., essentially failed and that the market resolved the staff shortage by salary escalation. This reduced the differential between academic and other employment roles. Perhaps this trend, if repeated here, may benefit the younger members of the network?
- 5.10 The desire to change attitudes of students and improve their skills reminds BEST of the need for some well-rehearsed learning and teaching topics, generic across the subjects, to be enhanced. These easy wins, alongside ensuring that new entrants have the basic numeracy and literacy, are in line with the UK's social inclusion policy and the national curriculum in schools. Innovations in these areas were frequently identified, reflecting a common need and perhaps shared actions.
- 5.11 Departmental concerns were generally consistent with the big issues. The 'elevator pitches' reinforced the message of impact of market place deregulation and need for funding against the overhead of quality assessments and a shrinking staff base. Here there were further references to both national and international competition.
- 5.12 The image of the Business School as the 'cash cow' was not far from many respondents minds and this is perhaps a deeply symbolic image for many as they also face a reducing staff base and a challenge to their career choice in comparison to the wider employment opportunities. These issues dominated the minds of the respondents. They contrast with the apparent stability projected by the HESA statistics up to 1998-99 but they ring true with the rhetoric of the community. The commitment to improving learning and teaching and the level of innovations cited suggested that despite these problems there is a desire for quality improvement perhaps even heightened by the problems.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The intention of the national landscape survey was to characterise the state of BM&A at the start of BEST's work for the LTSN. Having gathered both qualitative and quantitative data we can characterise BM&A as a subject cluster which serves a strong vocational market place through multi- and inter-disciplinary studies. It has been treated as a 'cash cow' and in a period of increased deregulation and competition is under greater pressure from all quarters. It appears to be in reasonable health at this stage, apart from dangerous pressure on staffing. It is burdened by the overheads of quality assurance but has a positive desire to match its curriculum, teaching and assessment to the needs of the market and stakeholders.

- 6.2 Given this state of BM&A, BEST has interested and critical audiences who want information and knowledge to improve their performance and who welcome good practice and advice.

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