

BRITISH MANAGEMENT OPEN LEARNING PROGRAMMES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL LEAVERS AND EMPLOYMENT IN CAMEROON

by:

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT

The College of Professional Management (CPM), is a British Institution which provides Training at a tertiary Level of education. The College provides very high quality yet low cost British Management Training Programs, and has been doing so for many years; in fact in 1998 was celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Principal in this field. CPM has its headquarters in Jersey, Britain, with offices, affiliates and representative offices in many countries around the world.

The College was established well over four decades ago to meet the demand for modern, professional management training from ambitious men and women in countries all over the world.

For every one person who can attend full-time training, at home or abroad, there are many hundreds who can afford neither the time nor the money to do so. CPM concentrates on the second category, and provides excellent modern training programs which its trainees follow in their home countries, at home or at the work place.

Training programs end with a Diploma examination, normally invigilated by the local Campus. Successful trainees gain the prestigious British College of professional Management Diploma and become College Graduates at International Baccalaureate and Associate of Science Degree or Specialisation Level. A large majority of CPM graduates then go on to gain new or better jobs gain promotion and responsibility at work, command new and higher salaries and benefits or start and effectively run their own businesses.

CPM has developed a unique and modern method of training professional administrators, business people, business and governmental managers and supervisors, in remarkably short periods and at a cost within the reach of most who aspire to those positions. The extremely well produced and substantial training materials were designed and written by experts with wide experience of training managers.

Furthermore, the College is a FULL MEMBER of BAOL, the most prestigious British organisation for open and distance learning providers.

The British Association for Open Learning was formed in 1990, and is today recognised as a major force and focus for the development and dissemination of good practice in its fields. BAOL members are specialists in open and flexible learning drawn from the leading publishers and providers. Collectively, they form the largest pool of expertise in open and distance learning in United Kingdom.

BAOL membership is a guarantee of quality and practice. BAOL members adhere to national guidelines set for quality standards adopted as the Association's own Code of Practice. If open/distance learning materials carry the British Association for Open Learning Logo, you can be assured of their quality and integrity.

WHY DISTANCE LEARNING ?

A number of factors make distance learning an attractive option for professional development. First of all, it contributes to broadening and updating professional development. In fact, there is a growing appreciation among qualified professionals that they need to be aware of new ideas in their own and other disciplines in order to carry out their responsibilities in a more effective manner. Therefore, an increasing need in the domain of approach analysis, planning and problem solving is noticed, thus requiring people with multi-disciplinary abilities.

Second, distance learning provides in-service and in-country training education. Because some potential candidates cannot afford the time to attend full-time training at home or abroad because the employer cannot bear the cost of training or do not want to release them, CPM offers through its external offices, affiliates and campuses around the world, the opportunity to study while at home, at the job site and continuing full time employment. Through this method, the cost of replacing staff is reduced. In addition, studying while in-service allows first hand implementation of new skills and ideas acquired.

Third, certain responsibilities and commitments, such as domestic or family engagements, often prevent people from continuing their studies. Distance learning is here a means of overcoming these common constraints because one can study in his/her own home and at his/her own pace.

Fourth, it is extremely costly to undertake full-time study with residence abroad and all what that entails such as feeding, clothing, insurance, living expenses, etc....., especially for students from developing countries where there are very few scholarships available. With distance learning, not only the cost of studies is greatly reduced, but also is the cost of living reduced by more than five. The money that could have been spent in one year for full time study abroad can be enough for the whole training in-country

Fifth, the number of places on full time courses is often limited, whereas with Distance learning such restrictions are not encountered.

The above-mentioned five factors are not exhaustive, but give an insight to the importance and usefulness of Distance Learning in today's world.

BENEFITS OF THE DISTANCE LEARNING TO CAMEROONIANS

The CPM Distance Learning scheme of studies offers innovative professional undergraduate study programmes related to Management, and Business Administration. All programmes are a direct response to a need for high quality continuing professional development in these key areas.

The College now operates in Cameroon, a country where English is an official language, and thanks to its Acceptance to the Commonwealth, people of low income are now proud to receive prestigious British Diplomas.

Cameroon is a developing country making all possible efforts to boot away the economic crisis mining its development. And to any suitably qualified and willing candidate, CPM offers the opportunity to study and become a highly efficient and specialised professional. The conjugated efforts of all graduates, well invested in such a country, could act as a new breath in professionalism, management, and business administration, all key areas not properly performed.

Cameroon is a country with immense resources and potentials that need only be well exploited to the benefits of all its population. If these are well managed, Cameroon will be in Africa in particular and in the whole world in general, a partner worth estimated for the high quality of its professionals.

To achieve this noble objective, CPM is open to everyone in search of quality training and who fullfils the entrance requirements without any distinction of origine, race, sex, religion.

In Cameroon, CPM has recently established two campuses situated in Douala and Bamenda towns. Already, many Cameroonians have taken the initiative to get ahead of others and succeed by contacting the College and enrolling for one (or more) of CPM 's professional training programmes.

These two campuses are run by hardworking and dynamic teams, themselves living examples of former students trained in the Distance learning scheme of studies offered by CPM.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF TRAINED MANAGERS

As we know, management is the art of managing the activities of others; and the measure of a manager's success is often determined mainly by his or her skill in dealing effectively with other people. Good management ensures that a group of people work together in the most effective and efficient manner, to achieve in the best and most economical way. Management is a professional job; but a difficult job, because it involves dealing not just with inanimate objects, services theories - but with unpredictable men and women, each with a different and complex character.

Management involves providing leadership for the group of people and much more: It requires training advice and guidance, supervision and control; and if the stated goal or objective is to be achieved, their work must be so organised and co-ordinated that they work together as a team. And it is only the trained manager who can "weld" his or her subordinates into an efficient, co-ordinated team.

Few people are born with "natural" management flair. Most successful modern managers have had to be trained to deal effectively with the people whom they supervise or manage in the course of their work. Most modern managers must learn to provide effective leadership, how to organise, how to motivate and how to control subordinates for the best results- and how to do all that without arousing dissatisfaction or

causing disputes. Many of the problems which beset those involved in supervision and management can be avoided with the right training.

And that is what CPM provides: **THE RIGHT TRAINING - FOR MODERN MANAGERS.**

METHODS OF STUDIES

There are three basic methods of study at the British College. But it must be noted that each academic year is divided into three entrances, namely September, January and April. The study calendar of the British College of Professional Management starts at the beginning of each entrance and runs for 18 months, including a period to revise and prepare for the final examination.

Examinations are held at the end of each term, after completion of a full programme. A programme requires an average study time of twelve to thirteen weeks, each module being taught within a minimum of seven and a maximum of ten hours.

The three methods of studies are explained as under:

Self-study training method

Under this method of study, Trainees follow the programs they have enrolled for, at home and/or at their work place. This is the most popular method of training around the world. The detailed Training Guide and Instructions Self Assessment Tests with recommended Answers, Stationery and Progress Chart are specially designed so that Trainees can follow Programs without the need for lectures or outside help, and can quickly and easily achieve success in the Diploma Examination(s). Trainees are allowed up to 12 months from their enrolment date in which to complete one Training Program (15 months for two programs studied together or 18 months for three Programs studied together) without additional Fee - provided he/she has completed payment of the agreed Training fee. However, Trainees are permitted to complete Training in a shorter period of time if sufficient time is devoted to studies before attempting the Final Diploma Examination.

Regular campus-study

Under this method of study, in addition to everything supplied under the Self-Study Training Method, Trainees attend full day time lectures for the topics covered in their Program(s), at the local Campus. In addition, local staff can arrange placements/internships for Trainees. Lectures, placements and all related administrative matters are organised entirely by the local Campus staff, and not by the College in Britain.

Intensive campus-study

Under this method of study, everything supplied under the Self-Study Training Method is still provided, and like Regular Campus Study, Trainees attend lectures/seminars for the topics covered in their Program(s), at the local Campus. The lectures are more intensive, and may be held in the evenings as well as during the daytime. Programs might thus be completed in as little as three months. There are no placements arranged under this Training method. Lectures, and all related administrative matters are organised entirely by the local Campus staff, and not by the College in Britain.

COURSE MATERIALS & TRAINING PROGRAMMES AVAILABLE

Course materials

Each enrolled trainee receives a comprehensive package of study materials for each course which meets all study requirements. The package includes;

- a quality produced substantial and illustrated Training Manual/ core textbook in two volumes of readings drawn from a wide range of sources, including Self-Assessment Tests after each chapter which will lead the trainee through the programme of self supported study, and Recommended answers.
- a substantial course file which is a detailed Training Guide. This guide includes instructions and advice leading to success, and a progress chart.
- stationery for answers to self assessments tests.
- supplementary study and reading materials depending on the programme, and including audiotapes and/or video software

Each set of course materials is a complete and planned scheme of training, developed and designed by subject experts drawn from universities and research institutes, with great experience of training managers and others in countries world-wide. All are prepared under close academic guidance and supervision of a appreciative board.

Prospective students are always made to understand that distance education of this kind demands a high degree of commitment, determination and self-discipline in the typically isolated conditions of study they experience, especially independent students, who do not attend any lecture.

Training programs available.

BCPM is available to all with ambitions to succeed as professional business people, administrators, managers and supervisors of excellent quality. The programmes now available are:

- Principles of Modern Management
- Office Management/Administration
- Business Management/Administration
- Business Economics and Commerce
- Personnel Management & Industrial Relations
- Selling & Salesmanship
- Sales Management & Marketing
- Advertising and Public Relations
- Tourism & Travel Agency Management
- Hotel Operations & Management
- Stores Management & Stock (Inventory) Control
- Computers in Modern Management
- Essential Business Bookkeeping
- Business Bookkeeping and Accounts
- Accounting in Business & Management
- Administrative Assistant - Private Assistant - Secretarial Duties
- Everyday English for Everyone
- Communication in Business & Management

From the titles of these programmes, it is easily understandable that they are all interactive key areas in the effective running of a business.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS, EXAMINATIONS, AND DIPLOMAS.

General entrance requirements

- be at least 17 years old.
- satisfy the general entrance requirements of the University (that is, GCE 'A' levels in two subjects + at least three further subjects at GCE 'O' level at no less than grade C or its equivalent) for the "Associate of Science" Degree Programme.
- satisfy to the general entrance requirements of High School (that is, GCE 'O' level in at least five subjects at less than grade C or its equivalent) for the "International Baccalaureate" Degree Program.
- satisfy to the requirements of the general test of proficiency in English or Entrance Test.

Examinations

On completion of the training, assessment for each individual course is by final written examination exclusively. These examinations are held in students' countries of residence, under close invigilation by examination authorities of the local ministry of education. The standard of examination is the same everywhere CPM operates. All exams are prepared in Jersey - Britain where scripts are sent back for marking and results issued.

The Diplomas are issued from Britain for Trainees in each country, and are exactly the same as those issued to all CPM Trainees all over the world.

Students are examined at the local Campus where the Examination date is arranged for Regular and Intensive Trainees. Self studying Trainees must apply to the local Campus staff to arrange invigilation of their Examination(s) when they feel ready for it within the limits of time of their method of study. There is no extra "examination fee", only a small charge to re-sit failed Examinations.

Lecturers

Lecturers of CPM are specialists that come from every where around the world with the minimum academic requirement of a Masters Degree with teaching experience in the CPM domains of interest.

Diplomas

It must be noted that diplomas are of two types. On completion of the training, the students sit a Final Diploma Examination. For each of the programmes successfully completed in whatever Training method, a Read-Seal Diploma is awarded free of charge. To achieve a Gold-Seal Honours Diploma (for which a small charge is made), three or more Programmes must be completed.

Red-Seal Diplomas and Gold-Seal Group Diplomas achieved are equivalent to a BCPM International Baccalaureate and Associate of Science respectively. The Mention "International Baccalaureate" is made particularly on diplomas issued to students enrolled with "O" level only.

The Diplomas issued from Jersey are the same as those issued to any CPM Trainee around the world and bear the same value. Moreover, there are seven different gold-Seal Group Diplomas:

- Group Diploma on Management Studies
- Group Diploma on Business Studies
- Group Diploma on Sales Promotion Studies
- Group Diploma on Office Management Studies
- Group Diploma on Business Accounting Studies
- Groups Diploma on Executive Assistance
- Group Diploma on Hospitality Studies

STRATEGY FOR EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION

At the end of the training, all regular students are requested to spend at least three months in enterprises as internships, which help them discover and strengthen all the theoretical, yet specialised training already acquired. Those internship/placements are arranged by the local campus at the national as well as the international level. The National Fund for Employment in Cameroon also appears to be a great partner in the placement of new graduates, by registering them and finding opportunities for them, considering that they are immediately operational after training.

It has also been noticed that even if Trainees are not maintained in enterprises after internships, they are always ready to create small size enterprises with the practical, and directly applicable and professional skills acquired at the British College. Considering that all the programs taught at the British College, if put together, constitute a complete enterprise, we find that each and every branch here constitutes an essential part in the good functioning of a company.

CO-OPERATION FOR TRAINEESHIPS

Considering the wide span of the programmes offered and the great emphasis laid on the exchange of experience and variety of teaching methods at the British College, a programme has been established in Cameroon, whereby the institution receives, on a regular basis, qualified graduates and postgraduates from every where in the world, ready to teach and share their knowledge with young generations, open to the modern community.

CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVES

At the end of this presentation, we can say that something valuable and promising has been initiated, but a lot is still to be done in Africa in general and in Cameroon in particular as far as vulgarisation and practice of Distance learning. This way of studying, from the experience of the British College of Professional Management, appears not only to be innovative, but what has been long awaited. The gain in time spent on studies only can now be well invested, since the knowledge acquired is more than ever practical in today's world of advanced professionalism.

Notwithstanding, this great contribution of the British College, it has encountered a number of problems. These can be summarised under four points:

First is the cost. As compared to public institutions that charge less than the British College because they are sponsored by the State, it appears sometimes that some parents are not ready to bear even the reduced charges, though really interested. This comes from the fact that the purchasing power of the population is quite low.

Second, what the British College offers is an innovation in the domain of education of the country. This gives way to many queries, and most of all, people are not yet used to such flexibility in education as compared to the very rigid system in place locally. Therefore they wonder about the value of the diplomas issued in comparison to those issued by the traditional and rather old-fashioned system of education still in place.

Third, the transfer of students from the Distance Learning method to the one in public institutions. In general, external students can study anywhere in the world. With the rigid system here implemented, it is not always easy to be admitted to complete a degree programme after studying at the British College, due to the sequencing of courses which is not always the same. Due to certain local restrictions, few institutions require an additional examination set to assess the level of the candidate.

Four, going abroad for studies still appears as a proof of great ability in peoples' minds. By so doing, many people fail to understand that the diplomas awarded in a Distance Learning program are the same issued to internal students attending full time residential courses abroad. Upon their return, those trained in-country are more favoured for jobs, since these are more aware of the local realities and easier to introduce into the job market.

PERSPECTIVES

On the one hand, from the British College experience, many perspectives are open to us. In the minds of many people in Africa, there is still a strong worship of big diplomas. For this reason, Degree Programmes in Management and in Business Administration are in preparation. Many "Associate of Science" holders will be pleased to complete the cycle, and many more "A" level holders will enrol for a complete course.

As for further diplomas such as M.Sc., and Ph.D., a partnership is in its implementation process with well-established institutions such as the Universities of Surrey, London, and Pacific Western University. Once such agreements are arrived at, a boost in highly qualified and professional training will be experienced by thousands of interested people, students, as well as workers whose career path will not need to be interrupted.

Another improvement in the quality of the training offered could be to launch students exchanges with other sister institutions, and why not with institutions here represented, in terms of activities. Groups of students may involve in exchanges with others in other countries, to share different experiences, discover more than the little environment many are usually confined to, and keep an update quality of the training.

Such an opportunity at the Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is not only an occasion to talk about the British College of Professional Management, but also to bring a testimony of the great importance and efficiency of such an innovative means of study, successfully applicable in Africa, still in its building process. Distance Learning can provide, I am confident, the strongest ground for development in that part of the world.