

former chief operating officer of CASS Business School in London. She has seen dozens of women with families complete not just MBAs but many other master's programmes. In an interview with *The Independent* newspaper in the UK in April 2011, Henrietta expressed what many of us know (a view that the paper described as 'pragmatic'): 'If you want to do it, you'll get organized. There's no reason that you can't do it because of children, especially when the trade-offs can be so great in later life.'

Business schools are sympathetic to mothers studying for MBAs. My own experience was that when it all became too much for me after the birth of my first son, they let me drop a year before carrying on. It meant starting again with a new study group, but that was so much better than giving up altogether – or never starting in the first place.

More than two decades later, things have really moved on. The University of Indianapolis, for example, offers a Saturday-only option, and offers expectant mothers the option to take a semester off for maternity leave.

Rachel Killian, a mother of two who was recently studying on the Warwick Business School Executive MBA programme (a two-year part-time course), while continuing to work in the school's marketing department, explains how she managed.

It's all about balance. People need to choose a programme and a school that fits their life. I'll go home, spend a few hours with the kids, then when they've gone to bed I'll get my books out instead of sitting in front of the TV. Everyone's different. But the rewards will be much greater than the compromises.

It is about priorities more than about balance. If you are an ambitious woman who feels that an MBA is for her, you will make the time – even if you are expecting a family. Something else will be removed – TV watching, in Rachel's case – to make room for it. Do you really need to watch *Footballers' Wives*, or another episode of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*? Surely you can record them? Dust on the shelves won't kill you. You don't need to iron everything; you don't have to buy and read *Hello!* magazine; that novel you like the idea of will wait a few more months.

In fact, it is hard to think of any reason at all why you couldn't find time to do an MBA – if you really want to.

Using qualifications to forge important links to others

If you have decided to do an MBA – and got rid of the excuse that you are too busy because you have, or are expecting to have, a family – where should you apply?

Apply to an accredited school. Apply to one that is well up – or rising fast – in the league tables. Remember why you are going – the teaching is only part of it. The reputation benefits and the networking opportunities that come with an MBA (or, indeed, any qualification) from a good school mean that you should attend the most prestigious school you can get into or reasonably attend. I would argue that it is almost better to have no MBA than one from a standard school – especially when you consider the time and money that you will have to invest.