

PERFECTING PROFESSIONALISM

A new book, co-authored by **Michel Kalika** and **Stephen Platt**, entitled *The Doctor of Business Administration: Taking your professional practice to the next level*, aims to explain how the DBA qualification can help managers handle increasingly complex and uncertain work scenarios and why a growing number of executives are deciding to pursue what is a unique doctoral programme



As business environments become ever-more challenging, where can frontline senior managers find solutions to help make increasingly difficult leadership decisions in the face of rampant volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity?

The answer lies in their existing expertise and experience, but the opportunities to unlock and make sense of this invaluable know-how are few and far between in fast-moving environments that rarely offer the time and space needed to take a step back from one's work and 'unthink'.

Growing numbers of senior leaders are, therefore, turning towards the DBA programme, and the opportunities it affords, to supplement their many years of business practice with the academic expertise of experienced professors, who are often leading management thinkers themselves in their own countries.

This book has been written specifically for those who are already contemplating the journey to becoming 'managers/researchers'; a journey during which they will gradually learn to master the research and critical thinking skills that will take their professional practice to the next level, helping them not only to become better managers, but also to stand out in a crowded career market where the MBA will no longer be seen as the only required qualification for senior responsibilities.

The authors of this book, which features contributions from business schools including Henley, Cranfield and IEDC-Bled, represent AMBA-accredited DBA programmes run by leading higher education institutions in eight countries and on three continents. Kalika and Platt guide the future DBA candidate through the corridors of this so far little-known doctoral programme for professionals, exploring, in part one, the reasons for the DBA, how it answers a need in the executive education market, and clearly outlining the differences between a DBA and a PhD.

This is followed in part two by an explanation of the kind of learning experience to be expected, opening up 'the black box' of the programme, clarifying key points such as participant profiles and motivations and programme design as well as the crucial partnership between student and thesis supervisor.

Part three of the book concludes with the all-important question of the impact generated by professional theses – whether this might be for the personal benefit of the manager/researcher, for their organisation or for society at large.

INDUSTRY VOICES



“The DBA degree takes as its point of departure that scholars are also practitioners. I am always surprised when encountering a management scholar who looks down on business people who pursue their doctorate while working. Are the people who are grappling with the practical problems of business on a daily basis not particularly well-suited to theorise them?”

In guiding the doctoral programmes at GIBS, I constantly see the value of having practitioners interrogate business scholarship; after all, ours is an applied field. Our advanced-stage students and graduates have shared with us the many benefits of their doctoral studies in the context of their professional practice, including more rigorous thinking, writing more clearly and improved business practices in general.”

Helena Barnard, *academic head of doctoral programmes, Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, South Africa*



“Graduate studies in Latin America are fairly recent. The first master’s- level programmes were created in 1941 at the Central University in Venezuela, and in 1946 at the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Sciences (known today as CATIE). Doctoral programmes are much more recent and they are offered in specific fields, not as an umbrella degree as with the Doctor of Philosophy qualification.

Today, dozens of universities throughout the region offer both master’s and doctoral degrees. However, the DBA is still rare. Fewer than 15 universities offer it in Latin America, and most of these programmes are not accredited internationally. This book will undoubtedly contribute to raising awareness about the relevance of the DBA, and hopefully will also lead to an increase in demand for this type of qualification in the region.”

Ruben Guevara, *professor of strategy & leadership, PUCP Business School, Centrum Catolica University, Peru*



“The brand of the DBA is not just owned by business schools, but by students and alumni themselves. It is they who drive impact on their organisation, industry

and communities. As such, the DBA is growing in value as these senior managers, consultants and academics use their research for real-world applications.

Schools have a duty to both nurture and promote that brand by providing an excellent experience and equipping graduates with skills that will stand them in good stead through rigorous research standards and high-quality training and supervision, as well as via accreditations and collaborations.

It is through our marketing and communications activities that schools provide stakeholders with access to students’ scholarly and highly relevant research work. In this way, students may best demonstrate the value of their DBA and expand their networks. At the same time, prospective students see the evidence of how a DBA can transform their career by gaining recognition as an expert in their field.”

Jinnie Hinderscheit, *marketing manager, Grenoble Ecole de Management, France*

“The DBA offers professional managers a unique and valuable opportunity to leverage their extensive experience by equipping themselves with research techniques, thereby enhancing their effectiveness in obtaining rational business solutions. When experience is combined with research capability it acts as a force multiplier that immensely benefits managers, as well as the industry in which they work.

This informative book provides a balanced perspective to prospective DBA students by answering a number of crucial questions, including what a DBA study programme entails; what commitment level is required; how the qualification helps augment managerial effectiveness, and how it differs from a PhD.

Featuring contributing authors from world-class faculties, I am sure it will be

particularly useful for prospective students, as well as for those industry leaders who are thinking of encouraging their senior managers to enrol in the DBA programme.”

Geetha Ravishankar, *interim DBA programme director, College of Business and Social Sciences, Aston University, UK*



“For decades, I mulled over the idea of joining a doctoral programme. ‘But look here’, I said to myself. ‘With my MBA, I’m in my comfort zone, so is this just an ego trip? Or might it be something that benefits me and my company?’

I wondered how I could achieve the right balance between, on the one hand, three or more years concocting a thesis, and on the other, playing hide-and-seek with my grandchildren.

My age also gave me pause for thought: maybe I was simply too old to commit to all that studying. ‘What is the difference between a PhD and a DBA, and which one is better’, I pondered. ‘And what is the purpose of a DBA? Is it just a passing fad, or is it here to stay – could it even become a game changer?’

I also thought about whether, given the various ups and downs in my career, there were any hard lessons that could somehow ‘morph’ into knowledge in order to create a positive impact for others.

I agonised over these and many other questions for quite a while. Today, with at least another year to go for my thesis, I agree with Ulysses, that the risk of plunging on to the rocks is indeed daunting, but it is a challenge that simply had to be taken up. If only Michel and Stephen had edited their book before 2020; that would have made arriving at the right decision so much easier.”

Robert Stoll, *CEO, Stoll Group*



Professor Michel Kalika

is the president of the Business Science Institute in Luxembourg and emeritus professor at the University Jean Moulin, laelyon School of Management in Lyon



Stephen Platt

is the quality and accreditation manager for the Business Science Institute and an associate expert at Headway People recruitment consultancy

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