Emerging Options in Doctoral Study in Management for International Executives

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University business schools are facing intense criticism that their traditional MBA and other graduate management curriculum fail to teach change management skills, employee development skills, employee recruiting skills, team-building skills, and the importance of ethical behaviour. Due to increasing technology, competition, and workforce diversity, today’s leadership decisions are more complex than they were five years ago. The need for today’s middle managers, senior managers, vice presidents, COOs, and CEOs to have more advanced leadership education has become critical, but the traditional Ph.D. and even the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) have not become a recognized and acceptable viable solution.

In contrast to the traditional Ph.D. and DBA which is geared towards the engagement of theory and research, the advanced leadership knowledge involved in the Doctor of Management (DM) encompasses advanced leadership training that is practical and focused on leadership’s complex impact on improving organizational culture and human resources development. While MBA programmes or the traditional business Ph.D. programmes are focused on finance, accounting, marketing, operations strategy, and quantitative research, DM goes a step further by also considering the importance of developing employees, organizational culture, and teams as a major aspect of strategy execution success. DM looks at management almost in an interdisciplinary way by blending leadership courses that touch on psychology, human resources management, communications, human relations, employee development, organizational behaviour, and traditional management science.

While traditional business Ph.D. and DBA programmes focus on skill development in order to effectively manage organizational operations and organizational process, DM focuses on people because without a properly developed and appropriately constituted staff, success will only be limited.

For many years, it was assumed that a doctorate degree was not applicable in the international business world. DM is a major departure of tradition by enabling executives to use a combination of pure leadership theory and applied research methods to define, implement, and evaluate the strategies necessary for organizational growth and survival in a 3-4 year programme without having to leave their full-time jobs. DM addresses the question: If the definition of management is getting work done through people, then why are traditional Ph.D. programmes so heavily focused on business and so little on employees and organizational development?
As today’s leading organizations become more global, diverse, and complex, there is considerable discussion in the literature and in other forums on the importance of leadership skills and its critical place in improving the way that all companies are managed in a diverse and global society. Unfortunately, the demands placed on today’s managers leave little time for traditional advanced education in the traditional fashion at the doctoral level. For many professionals, leadership knowledge enhancement is pursued through week-long professional development courses and reading professional periodicals. These educational exercises, though very valuable, are fragmented segments and are often not reinforced through application.

With increased corporate globalization, expansion of an internationally diverse workforce, growth of international concerns about the ethical and moral practices of today’s corporate managers, the academic training and skills needed for today’s organizational managers, directors, vice presidents, and CEOs have become more complex. Market forces, economic forces, and political forces from all sectors have combined to produce unprecedented organizational volatility and increased future uncertainty. New corporate developing paradigms are a result of the dynamic changes in our global society.

There is also a leadership crisis in corporate America. A lot of leadership malpractice is being reported about corporate middle and senior leadership many of whom gained their training in a Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme and the recent dot.com failures and corporate accounting scandals have raised concerns of ethical leadership.

University business schools are facing intense criticism that their traditional MBA and other graduate management curriculum have failed to teach change management skills, employee development skills, employee recruiting skills, team-building skills, and the importance of ethical behaviour. Due to increasing technology, competition, and workforce diversity, today’s leadership decisions are more complex than they were five years ago. The need for today’s middle managers, senior managers, vice presidents, COOs, and CEOs to have more advanced leadership education has become critical but the traditional Ph.D. and even the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) does not provide a recognized and acceptable viable solution.

**THE DOCTOR OF MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

In contrast to the traditional Ph.D., the DBA in most universities in the US is geared towards the engagement of theory and research. The leadership knowledge and curriculum which is a part of the Doctor of Management (DM) programmes is practical and focused on leadership’s complex impact on improving organizational culture, employee development, team development, and human resources management. While the MBA programmes, traditional business Ph.D. programmes, and even the DBA programmes in the US are focused on finance, accounting, management, and quantitative research, the DM programme goes a step further by also considering the importance of developing employees, organizational culture, and teams as a major aspect of leadership today. In other words, the DM programme looks at management almost in an interdisciplinary way by blending leadership courses that touch on psychology, human resources management, communications, human relations, employee development, organizational behaviour, and traditional management science.

While traditional business Ph.D. and DBA programmes focus on skill development for managing organizational operations and organizational processes, the DM programme focuses on people. This is due to the fact that a leader can have enormous resources and the greatest strategy in the world but, without the right human resources in the right roles, success of any strategy will only be limited.

For many years, it was assumed that a doctorate degree was not applicable in the business world. The DM programme which is a 3-4 year programme is a major departure of tradition by enabling executives to use a combination of pure leadership theory and applied research methods to define, implement, and evaluate the strategies necessary for organizational growth and survival without having to leave their full-time jobs. It asks the question, if the definition of management is getting work done through people, then why are traditional Ph.D. and DBA programmes so heavily focused on business and so little on employees and organizational development?

Successful long-term organizational leadership in the future will be attributed in large part to a highly skilled, adaptive, and strategic leadership. In an interview with the scholar and organizational consultant,
Dr. Joe Mitchell, Professor of Business at National-Louis University, it was discussed how critical leadership is to organizational success. According to him, “The leaders of the future must not only manage the day-to-day operational decisions but also have the ability to stay focused and connected to the big picture. These individuals are responsible for breathing life and energy into the employees and stakeholders of an organization. They must keep the teams in the organization focused. They must be adaptive, responsive, flexible, and a driving force in helping the company respond to changes.”

Management associations and business schools around the world continually identify a set of core competencies that define the knowledge, skills, and values that international managers must acquire to be successful practitioners in solving today’s complex leadership problems.

Organizational managers, directors, vice presidents, and CEOs, through their collective influence, have a fundamental impact on international corporate leadership and, therefore, their education and re-education must be a part of any ongoing effort to improve corporate ethics, celebrate employee diversity, improve corporate community citizenship, and develop organization longevity through the development of their employees.

The past premise has been that the typical MBA, masters in management (MSM), and masters in administration (MSA) serve very well as a solid foundation for mid-level managers. However, over time and the period of career advancement, these individuals must renew their knowledge perhaps in a more formal educational experience than week-long executive development courses offered by universities and international management associations.

Practitioners who lead organizations have called for reforms in the ways the traditional universities prepare students to solve complex problems in the business world. Organizations no longer want graduates who just know how to explain textbook management theories; they want executives who can absorb the knowledge, apply it, and solve problems constructively and effectively. Business world executives do not want to learn from individuals who have only been researchers and can only impart book knowledge. They want to learn from doctoral instructors who would have a significant amount of real-world management experience because the DM programme offers a curriculum that has the right blend of theory and practice and is facilitated by instructors who have extensive real-world management experience.

The MBA programmes from Harvard University, John’s Hopkins University, University of Maryland at College Park, University of Phoenix, and others have responded to the needs and the interest of students from corporations who want practical applications of the theory. These universities use real-life case studies and faculty with extensive real-life work experience to teach in the programmes geared towards executives. The best analogy to explain this premise is to consider learning to play the piano. Would you like to learn how to play the piano by just hearing lectures and reading books about how to play or would you rather learn the theory and then sit with a real piano and practice? The use of case studies allows the middle manager to practice solving real-life corporate problems in a controlled environment where students can grow while learning from the instructor and from each other but this kind of classroom instruction is usually not offered in the traditional Ph.D. and DBA programmes.

THE EXECUTIVE DOCTORATE

More important is the consideration that managers who acquired their MBA degrees years ago have felt the need for more advanced education in the area of leadership but are often bewildered by the arduous process of trying to take a purely theoretical traditional business Ph.D. programme and make it applicable for their need to gain more practical and advanced knowledge. Until recently, there have not been many options for executives charged with the leadership of complex organizations to pursue doctoral education that was relevant in the areas of leadership and management without career interruption. In the past, there have not been a variety of options for doctoral study that was rooted in theory, theory application, and case studies. In recent years, a few universities\(^1\) in the US have developed applied doctoral programmes for working executives.

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\(^1\)The University of Phoenix’s Doctor of Management (DM): http://online.phoenix.edu/CampusProgramList.asp, The University of Maryland University College’s Doctor of management (DM) http://www.umuc.edu/grad/dm, Case Western Reserve’s weekend executive Doctor of Management (EDM), http://www.weatherhead.cwru.edu/edm/overview.shtml, and Lawrence Technological University’s Doctor of Management in Information Technology (DMIT) http://www.ltu.edu/management/doctorate/index.asp, represent the development of applied doctoral programmes for working executives.
These programmes provide a rigorous academic experience — one that builds bridges between the development of high level intellectual thinking skills and the kind of practical leadership and complex leadership skills that are vital for managing today’s volatile international and diverse business climate. These programmes have attracted a diverse pool of student applicants because they are offered in flexible formats that allow completion while working full-time. Forty per cent of the doctoral students in the University of Phoenix programme, for instance, are members of US minority groups. There are also growing numbers of international applicants keen on studying leadership in the US but do not want to take the traditional seven-year time-frame that most traditional business doctorates take to complete.

The executive doctorate programmes were developed to accommodate the corporate manager who is not interested in quitting his/her full-time job to complete a doctorate, as most traditional Ph.D. programmes in management require, apart from an average time of completion of seven years. The admissions committees of these executive programmes value the students’ full-time employment and attempt to use the course work to create a synergy and partnership between knowledge that is gained in the classroom and skills that are developed at work. In such programmes, organizational learning and classroom learning build on each other. Most applicants who are not employed full-time though having significant management experience would not be accepted into these programmes.

The DM is offered in a cohort format where 25-35 students proceed through the programme in one course at a time format all year around. The result of the use of cohorts is that close relationships are formed between students which often result in higher retention and degree completion rates as compared to the traditional Ph.D. and DBA programmes. These programmes also offer the benefit of a prescribed programme schedule that makes it possible for the student to complete the course work and the dissertation in 3-4 years while still working full-time. Applied doctorate programmes like the DM also offer the option of completing an applied dissertation where a doctoral student can use advanced research skills and a review of scholarly literature to develop a research project that solves a real-life corporate problem. The option of an applied dissertation also allows the executive to provide value and contribute to the employing organization by doing a timely and valuable study that is relevant for the company. This enables the organization to justify the funding for the executives to pursue the programme and allowing time off from work to complete programme-related projects.

There are also studies that suggest that the attrition rate for traditional Ph.D. programmes is 50 per cent. However, given the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on graduate education by universities and the government, not to mention the years of student lives, why should academia or students be satisfied or content with an academic programme where only one person out of two will succeed (Smallwood, 2001)?

While some academics will argue that business programmes like the DM have little value, there is clearly a market and serious interest from international corporate executives. The University of Phoenix and the University of Maryland are starting 2-3 cohort groups of 30 students. Further, many of the graduates of these programmes are even being offered teaching opportunities in executive degree programmes because they bring rich value to working adult students and extensive corporate management experience.

There is a long history for the academic and professional value of non-Ph.D. doctorates. Other universities around the world have already offered professional doctorates in a variety of fields for many years. A few examples in the US are given in the Box.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

DM is a result of a partnership between industry and academia. The university administrators and faculty members offering DM did not arbitrarily decide on what type of doctoral programme was needed. In fact, they went to actual companies and organizational leaders and asked what kind of programmes did they want and then created a degree programme with academic rigour and a real-world teaching approach that would greatly

Box: Examples of Professional Doctorate Programmes in the US

Doctor of Arts (DA): George Mason University
Doctor of Education (EdD): The George Washington University
Doctor of Science (ScD): Tulane University
Doctor of Public Health (DrPH): John’s Hopkins University
Doctor of Communications Design (DCD): The University of Baltimore
Doctor of Public Administration (DPA): University of Southern California
Doctor of Health Science (DHSc): Nova Southeastern University
serve the public interest. As challenges of leadership in this global society become more complex, it will be critical for leaders in all levels of management to upgrade their knowledge tool-kit and these programmes will play a vital role in that process.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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People are like stained glass windows: they sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light within.

—Elizabeth Kubler-Ross