

PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES AND DBAS—DEBATES AND CHALLENGES

Guest Editor's Introduction: Professor Ronel Erwee

This special edition focuses on issues and controversies regarding professional doctorate programs and their supervision in the USA and Australia (Executive PhDs and DBAs). While there is general consensus regarding the potential benefits of professional doctorates, most notably in relation to their explicit focus on professionally relevant actionable knowledge, there is significant diversity of opinion on what constitutes effective program design and delivery. There is a diversity of perception among candidates, supervisors, and program directors regarding universities' approaches to professional doctorate programs and how they differentiate them from traditional PhD programs. Highly refined research skills, and extensive disciplinary knowledge, are requirements of PhDs and professional doctorates, but the latter's stronger focus on professional practice and application makes somewhat different demands of students and supervisors.

In this edition, the article by **Morley** argues that professional doctorates should be primarily concerned with advancing professional practice and that the research component of a professional doctorate program should be orientated towards making a contribution in the professional practice arena.

Hay presents an outline a framework of theory-practice linkages of different types of scholar practitioners involved in American executive PhDs and DBAs. Executive doctoral scholar-practitioners of Organization Development and Change (ODC) promise to be boundary-spanners who move between the worlds of academia and business in order to generate two outcomes—new theoretical knowledge and organizational results. The framework consists of a matrix of linkages that covers the possible dimensions of theory-practice linkage across the context (people and place), content (input and output), and activity (task) of the executive doctoral scholar-practitioner of ODC. Another purpose of this paper is to discuss the face validity of this framework based on interviews with executive doctoral scholar-practitioners of ODC and three contrasting populations.

Erwee provides a summary of discussions during previous workshops in ANZAM, Australia and the Academy of Management, USA about the focus, aims, structure and examination criteria of the Doctor of Business Education (DBA) programs in Australian universities. Information is provided on dilemmas in terms of program delivery when instituting and managing such programs and opportunities to collaborate between Australian and American universities. An updated version of the paper containing information on further developments during 2003 and 2004 has been accepted for presentation at the Fourth International Conference on Knowledge, Culture and Change in organisations.

Kemp states that the professional doctorate candidate is motivated to improve professional practice and organisational performance, and thus personal job enhancement and satisfaction. Those candidates undertaking a professional doctorate are in the workforce and wish to enhance their work life, not pursue an academic career. However, universities have not adequately taken the needs of professional doctorate candidates, professional bodies and

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industry into account. This could result in apathy and reluctance of industry and professional bodies to more fully support professional doctorates and their staff who undertake them. Universities' failure to fully understand that a professional doctorate should be addressing a different, but related, market niche than that of the PhD is also a contributing factor to a lack of understanding of professional doctorates in the marketplace and poor completion rates.

Perry and Cavaye consented to an adapted version of their research paper on the principles that Australian universities use when they develop examination criteria for a DBA dissertation being included in this edition. The authors note the major difference between PhD and DBA dissertations is that the research domain of the DBA focus on management practice, rather than contribution to academic theory. Their argument is that the DBA is a professional doctorate for managers, and the PhD is a professional doctorate for academics. They include an overview of the examination criteria for DBA dissertations and for PhD theses at Australian universities. Finally, the authors present core examination criteria for DBA dissertations.

A further article about the challenges of offshore supervision in cultures that are dramatically different to the supervisor's home culture is in preparation and will be presented at a later stage.

The question that the readers of this edition may formulate is to what extent could Australian universities adapt and standardize their DBA structure, delivery and examination criteria so that doctoral candidates, supervisors and examiners can have a common frame of reference.