

FOREWORD

Michel Kalika

This book, *Research Methods for the DBA*, edited by Françoise Chevalier, L. Martin Cloutier and Nathalie Mitev, all of whom are faculty members at the Business Science Institute, is part of the collection produced by Éditions EMS. The Business Science Institute collection has the mission of publishing hard copy and electronic versions of works written by professors active in DBA programs or based on DBA theses. Today the collection has three series: the “DBA Fundamentals” series, which includes reference books by professors; the “DBA Research” series, which comprises books based on DBA theses; and the “Managerial Practices” series, which presents publications grounded in fieldwork and managers’ real-world experiences.

The first book, *La creation des connaissances par les managers* (2015) (*The Creation of Knowledge by Managers*, in English), edited by Paul Beaulieu and myself, brought together 27 professors and 5 doctoral candidates, who explained how the creation of knowledge by managers was possible and, in fact, desirable. The second book, *Le projet de thèse de DBA* (*The DBA Thesis Project*, in English) (2017), also jointly edited with Paul Beaulieu, contained 19 contributions by professors on the question of how to define a thesis project. This work complements the French version of its two predecessors in the “DBA Fundamentals” series and brings together 38 authors who determine and recommend which methods a practitioner DBA candidate could consider using as part of their thesis work. This compilation by professors of the

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Business Science Institute is also intended to create a communal culture that will harmonize thesis guidance while respecting candidates' freedom.

As of September 2019, the Business Science Institute collection includes some 24 books, including four in English and one in German.

To the best of our knowledge, the Business Science Institute's Executive DBA program is the only such program that has invested in creating a collection of books focusing on the DBA. We hope practitioner DBA candidates find them useful!

Michel Kalika,
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PREFACE

The Importance and Relevance of Methods of Knowing for Efficient Management Practices

Paul Beaulieu

The emergence of doctoral programs dedicated to the field of practice in management, commonly referred to as DBAs, is part of the global context in which the complexity of business dynamics and processes of all types is increasing. The number of organizations, institutions, critical business systems, processes and contexts to be taken into account has grown significantly in recent decades.

The DBA¹ represents a new function and status in the practice of management in that it institutionalizes this type of training and derives its *raison d'être* from the increasing complexity of the management world². These newly emergent DBA programs differ from earlier training programs such as MBAs that sought to train managers as, clinicians of organizations, but which did not clarify the roles assigned to this new type of 'medical practitioner' in management. This new wave of DBA programs focuses specifically on the development of manager-researchers'

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1. We use the term DBA for *Doctorate in Business Administration* as the usual denomination or designation for various titles such as *Doctorate of Practice in Administration*, *Executive Doctorate*, *Doctorate of Management*.
 2. 'Management world' is meant here in the general sense and includes all categories of organizations and practices of management.

scientific knowledge in relation to their practical experiences so they can then combine their newly acquired scientific knowledge to their existing competences to ensure the greater validity and effectiveness of management practice.

The potential contribution of the DBA lies particularly in its ability to develop and ensure a greater scientific value to the practical knowledge mobilized in management practice. Consequently, the methods involved in the production of scientific facts becomes a matter of high priority. DBA graduates' methodological competences are therefore of crucial importance to support and ensure the effectiveness of knowledge claims and to bring a distinctive contribution within the various situations of their management practices.

Hence, the doctor of management practice fills a void clearly evident and forcefully expressed by key actors in the world of management. It concerns the need for increasing the accuracy and the validity of the knowledge and processes used in management practice.

There is a sort of crisis in the field of management. On the one hand, research professors in the field of management sciences are experiencing a situation affecting the fundamental assumptions related to the relevance and effectiveness of their research and training in the face of growing expectations from various actors involved in the practice of management. The most common criticisms directed at the scientific production in management research are the excessive abstraction and distance from efficiency concerns inherent to the field of practice. Practitioners perceive the 'truth value' of academic knowledge claims as weak in relation to their efficiency concerns, and it is also increasingly perceived as a major issue by many leading scholars³ in the scientific field of management itself.

3. Key contributions to the relevance debate include the following: Sandberg, J. & Tsoukas, H. (2011). Grasping the logic of practice: Theorizing through practical rationality. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2), 338-360; Van De Ven, A. H., & Johnson, P. E. (2006). Knowledge for theory and practice. *Academy of Management Review*, 31(4), 802-821; Bartunek, J. M., & McKenzie, J. (Eds.) (2018). *Academic-Practitioner Relationships*. London, UK: Routledge; see also the *CEEMAN Manifesto: Changing the Course of Management Development. Combining Excellence with Relevance*, 26th CEEMAN Annual Conference, Prague, 19-21 September 2018. Bled (Slovenia): The International Association for Management Development in

On the other hand, too many business processes and strategies are based on common beliefs that have not been subjected to the rigor and rules of scientific knowledge production. Management practices are too often not based on scientific evidence and result in nominal efficiency. Developing an epistemology specific to the field of practice and research methods congruent with this new knowledge endeavor is still at an early stage⁴. A very important characteristic of for-profit business management resides in the requirements and effects of rules inherent to the capitalistic regime that frame management processes. These rules are subject to the economic operating surplus and to its capitalization in order to sustain and expand a firm's operations and capabilities. The application of capitalistic rules has the advantage of facilitating the periodical and quasi-mechanical elimination of inefficient management practices.

Instead, the logic of scientific knowledge production based on empirical evidence means that a pragmatist epistemology⁵ is much more appropriate to DBA managers. The evidence-based management⁶ approach belongs to this practice-based perspective in management science, and is strongly grounded in the real-world of management practice. Indeed, these developments reflect the importance and relevance of effective and valid methodological capabilities and competences for DBA managers as 'doctors of practice' to support their knowledge activities in management situations where they can then apply and develop scientific contributions. To nurture methodological competences in doctors of practice, it is important to provide

Dynamic Societies, <http://www.ceeman.org/docs/default-source/publications/ceeman-manifesto.pdf?sfvrsn=0>.

4. Building on the development path initiated by Donald Schön in 1995 in a quasi-testament paper (Knowing-in-action: the new scholarship requires a new epistemology, *Change*, Nov-Dec 1995: 27-34) there are two streams of contributions: (a) The practice-turn (see for example Nicolini, D. (2013). *Practice Theory, Work, & Organization. An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press); (b) The new stream of research aimed at the development of a practice-based approach to doctoral education (see for example Costly, C., & Fulton, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Methodologies for Practice Research. Approaches for Professional Doctorates*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage).
5. Rescher, N. (2012). *Pragmatism. The Restoration of its Scientific Roots*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
6. Evidence Based Management is promoted and demonstrated by the international community of the *Center for Evidence-Based Management*. See, Barends, E., & Rousseau, D. M. (2018). *Evidence-Based Management. How to Use Evidence to Make Better Organizational Decisions*. London (UK): Kogan Page.

high quality method handbooks tailored to the methodological requirements of the practice-based approach to management research. This book is the result of an international collaboration between management scholars engaged in field research and practice-oriented approaches; it will certainly contribute to the promotion of sound methodological research practices dedicated to addressing *in situ* management problems.

We hope this handbook will support scientifically rooted management practices and help grasp the full complexity of today's hypermodern world without falling back into the naive and reductionist biases of so many of the knowledge claims and theoretical contributions that were based on the rationalist managerial ideology of the second half of the twentieth century. We live in a world in which our conceptions of individual and collective effective action must be revised and reflect the shifts that take place in increasingly dynamic situations. The demands of the present time call for rethinking the division of labor and scientific accountability in order to meet the needs of the management world. We must reconsider practitioners' knowledge needs and scientific production in terms of effective collective actions and practices based on congruent scientific knowledge. The methodological competences taught in DBA programs must become a key lever for doctors of practice in management.

Research methods include defining the management problem, formulating a research question, gathering empirical data, and analyzing findings to address the question and suggesting innovative solutions to the problem. This is achieved jointly by managers in practice and researchers who seek to establish valid knowledge claims from and based on practice. The manager engages with research methods to develop effective solutions and the manager-researcher proceeds in the same direction in pursuit of a goal of theorization in and for action. The manager-researcher engages in theorization and reflexivity about practices and experiences acquired in a practice situation. Thus, the practitioner in his or her management practice and the theoretical researcher in the field of management sciences maintain a close relationship through the research methods and the knowledge production processes. Their respective goals vary, but methods of knowing share many similarities in

quality and process. As the social anthropologist, Bruno Latour rightly pointed out, knowledge is fundamentally a “know-how” that is accompanied by a “make-know”⁷. In short, managers and manager-researchers are all knowledge practitioners, but they differ in their relationship to empirical evidence; the former are concerned with its application for effective and efficient practice; the latter with producing evidence that will be recognized as scientifically valid.

The DBA researcher also has a role in the field of management research. This is radically different from an MBA graduate whose training concentrates on mastering and implementing the control of processes and strategic decision-making. Scientific knowledge, activities and aims are at the center of DBA candidates' preoccupations when their specific competences in relation to knowledge production are put to use.

Thus, a thorough understanding and use of research methods are essential to acquiring methodological competences for manager-researchers DBA candidates. They must develop scientifically reliable methodological competences in order to fulfill specific purposes attached to their role within the knowledge field of management practice. This covers the following requirements: to understand the wide range of research methods in terms of their purpose, characteristics, processes, strengths and limitations, quality and efficiency criteria ; to be able to plan efficient methodological designs; to be able to propose and implement methodological designs effectively; and to critically and rigorously evaluate the methods proposed and/or implemented.

Methodological knowledge is crucial to DBA manager-researchers for their future management practices. It represents a large and fundamental part of DBA programs and it must remain a lifelong continuous learning process with the aim of cultivating openness, innovation and critical distance. In short, what is required for producing valid scientific knowledge are fundamental

7. Latour, B. (2010). *Cogitamus. Six lettres sur les humanités scientifiques*. Paris: La Découverte; Latour, B. (1999). *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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methods of knowing for efficient practices in the world of management for DBA manager-researchers.

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INTRODUCTION

Research Methods for the DBA: Research Fieldwork, for the Field and Through the Field

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A Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) presents its own specificities and challenges. While a doctoral candidate starting a Ph.D. (traditional doctorate) has to find a research setting, a DBA candidate usually has access to the field already, is in the field, has deep knowledge of it and is very familiar with it. Therefore, one important issue is how to establish a healthy distance from the field in order to come back to it with appropriate research questions and perspectives to make sense of it.

These fields are often 'goldmines' but DBA candidates need to know and to figure out how to approach them from a research standpoint. All research students must move beyond commonsense understandings and explore new analytical frames. However, this is even more challenging for DBA candidates given they are immersed in their fields. They are so familiar with them that it can be difficult to conceptualize above and beyond them. Research practice entails taking reality with a "pinch of salt" (Bourdieu, 1995) and developing a familiar distance. A researcher's stance implies reflecting upon one's own practices and experiences. This disjuncting is by no means obvious.

Research Methods for the DBA

Another feature of the DBA doctoral work is that students generally have to do it at the same time as they carry out their normal professional activities. They learn about research concepts, principles, methods and instruments during methodology and subject matter seminars, but time is limited. Unlike Ph.D. candidates, they do not have the luxury of being able to experiment with a range of research approaches during practical exercises designed to learn and manipulate various research methods and techniques. Not only do they have to learn while actually doing fieldwork, of course, with support from their professors and supervisors, but their time availability is restrained.

Finally, compared to Ph.D. candidates, DBA candidates usually do not consider becoming full-time academic researchers or faculty members. They seek to acquire or enhance a specific domain of expertise and ground their reflections and analyses into well-established theoretical and methodological scientific frameworks. DBA candidates are practitioners who, once they complete their thesis, will become consultants or experts in their professional domain, even though some of them may also teach part-time to share their experiences and practices enriched by their reflexive doctoral journeys.

This book is aimed at helping them in this journey. Our objective is to help familiarize DBA candidates with a collection of research methods and techniques with which they can approach their fieldwork. There are very many handbooks on research methods in management studies, but this one is different. Its orientation is fundamentally pragmatic. It does not intend to provide a detailed comprehensive guidebook to all possible research methods. We deliberately chose to walk a fine line in between a limited and yet a diverse set of methods. The limited range corresponds to what, in our experience, is the most useful for DBA candidates and their concerns, starting from the field, and coming back to the field; they conduct research *for the field and through the field*. The diversity of methods we selected enables them to be free and creative in building their own path, while ensuring they adopt a rigorous scientific approach. This is the delicate and unique balance this book invites them to develop.

The writing of the chapters in the collection is kept as easy to read as possible to make readers appropriate and use their contents effectively. The chapters try to avoid too much jargon while respecting scientific terminology and criteria. Our contributors addressed the challenge of not sacrificing scientific rigor while at the same time making this rigor accessible. This is the rationale for this book and the principle followed by contributors to this collective work.

Embarking on a DBA means orchestrating individual talents of DBA candidates 'manager-researchers,' and collective talents of academic professor-researchers. The pragmatic and didactic approach adopted in this book aims to support this orchestration and adds a building block to the volumes produced by the Business Science Institute (Kalika, 2017; Walsh, 2017).

The book is divided into four parts. The first part addresses the issue regarding the choice of the research method(s). The second part focuses on data-gathering methods, the third part on data analysis techniques and the fourth part illustrates the contextual use of research methods, in different countries and cultures, or about different research themes and topics. Of course, in actual research practice it is difficult to separate and distinguish the stages of method choice, data gathering, data analysis, and context. For instance, gathering data and analyzing data often overlap and benefit from each other. Iteration and improvisation are an integral part of research practice (Weick, 1995). Nevertheless, this overall structure was chosen for didactic (and certainly not normative) purposes.

We hope our audience will enjoy reading these chapters as much as our contributors enjoyed writing them.

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