

# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

This book has been written to answer legitimate questions asked by managers wishing to engage in a DBA (*Doctorate in Business Administration*) -type doctoral process: What is the point of preparing a Doctoral for a manager? What is a Doctoral thesis? What is the difference between a *Doctorate in Business Administration* (DBA) and a PhD? How to choose a DBA program, a thesis supervisor, a theme? How to manage a doctoral project? etc. This book aims to answer all these questions and many more.

## THE BOOK'S TARGET

This book is intended for managers who, at a certain point in their career, whether in the middle of it or at their retirement, wish to use their acquired skills and gained experience to produce and transfer knowledge. Thus we identified two professional segments likely to be interested in the DBA: on the one hand, active managers who wish to give new impetus to their career through a DBA; on the other hand, managers with a long professional practice who wish to gain perspective and transfer the results of their managerial experience to other managers or young students. In both cases, there might be an underlying motive such as teaching Management part-time in a Business School or a University. However, this book is not intended for young PhD students who

How to successfully complete your DBA?

wish to prepare a PhD after their Master's and seek mostly to pursue a full-time academic career after their thesis.

## INCREASED INTEREST FOR THE DBA

Why such a current interest for the DBA? Why does the number of DBA programs increase? It seems to us that several factors account for the increasing popularity of these programs as evidenced by their development for several years.

The first factor is related to the past development of MBA programs which allowed to educate tens of thousands of managers throughout the world. Indeed, the two last decades have been characterized by the explosion of the general and specialized MBA market which is now entering a stage of maturity. Among managers who hold an MBA or an equivalent degree, some have developed an interest for reading and reflecting and wish to complement their studies with doctoral work. However, conventional PhDs, generally intended for young PhD students with no experience, are largely unsuitable for active managers. This unsuitability shows up very clearly both in seminar schedules which are incompatible with professional activity and the theoretical and methodological approach used in these seminars which can be completely out of touch with managers' culture and concerns. The DBA allows to meet managers' increasing interest for conceptualization, perspective gaining, writing, publishing and knowledge transfer.

The second factor relates to questioning the historical distinction between research and managerial practice, academic and business worlds, management theories and practices. It is the result of faculty's increasing interest for managerial practices and is reflected in the development of various trends such as the "*practice turn*", "*strategy as practice*", "*pragmatic turn*"<sup>1</sup> which all rely on concepts grounded in managerial practices. Alain-Charles Martinet suggests a pragmatic epistemological approach<sup>2</sup> in the context of management research. And who better than the manager, who stands at the heart of the organization, can contribute

1. *Pragmatic strategy*, I. Nonaka, Z. Zhu, Cambridge, pp. 10.

2. *La création de connaissance par les managers*, chapter 1. Ed. P. Beaulieu, M. Kalika.

to this reflection when s/he is supported by professors? This management research development paves the way for the development of DBAs. In the same spirit, the idea that management research should not only help understand, explain but also and, above all, act is highlighted by the development of action-research which is ideally suited for the DBA thesis project.

The third more contextual factor is the pressure from accreditation bodies which urge Business Schools to hire professors holding a PhD or a DBA. However, for practitioners who decide to teach in a School or University after having worked in a company, the DBA is obviously more adapted than the PhD both in terms of schedules and the place of experience in the thesis project.

These various reasons<sup>3</sup> led to growing interest for DBAs and they obviously offer a way to bring management research closer to business, to prove its usefulness and develop its impact.

### THE BOOK'S AUTHOR

As a Full Professor<sup>4</sup>, the author has a long experience in educating managers in *Executive Education*. He created and directed many MBA programs throughout the world.

In order to meet the demands of executives holding an MBA who wished to prepare a thesis, he created the first Executive DBA program in a French University in 2008. To meet the demand of international managers seeking a DBA program based on their managerial experience, he established in 2012, the Business Science Institute<sup>5</sup> which today includes a hundred international faculty and over one hundred manager-DBA students (June 2017). He created in partnership with SKEMA Business School (AACSB, EQUIS, AMBA accredited) the Digital online DBA. He supervised around sixty conventional doctorates, many of which received thesis awards. He is the co-author of the book *How to*

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3. A last more contextual factor concerns institutions having noticed a decrease in their financial resources which consider the DBA as a growth opportunity for their cash-flow.

4. <http://michelkalika.com>

5. [www.business-science-institute.com](http://www.business-science-institute.com)

*write a successful thesis*, 3rd edition, Dunod, 2016 and *Knowledge Creation by Managers*, EMS editions, 2015.

### THE BOOK'S TONE

This book is deliberately a book of practical advice relying on the experience shared by many manager-DBA students and professors involved in knowledge creation by managers. It clearly aims to help managers make an important decision for themselves, *i.e.* choose a DBA program. Indeed, applying for a doctoral program entails a double investment, the second one taking precedence over the first: a financial investment in terms of registration fees and possible travel costs, if any; and a constant and long-term time investment.

### THE PLAN

The plan of the book aims to answer global questions asked first by a manager before engaging in a DBA program, then questions about the thesis theme s/he wishes to work on after s/he has engaged in a program and finally questions s/he may have regarding his/her management of the DBA. Thus, we will follow the chronology of questions a manager asks him/herself:

- I. The choice of a DBA
- II. The choice of a DBA thesis theme
- III. The DBA management