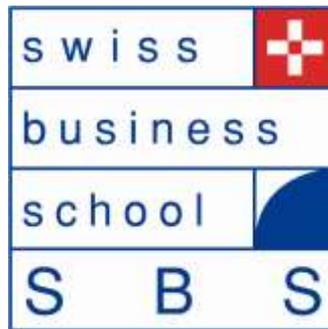


SBS JOURNAL OF APPLIED BUSINESS

RESEARCH (SBS-JABR)



jabr.sbs.edu

ISSN: 2235-7750

VOLUME 1, SEPTEMBER 2012.

**The DBA in German Speaking European Countries
New Perspectives in the Old Continent**

Authors: Dr. Bert Wolfs, Vladimir Ermakov

SBS Swiss Business School

Abstract

This article investigates the current of the DBA program in German speaking European countries, such as Germany and the German speaking part of Switzerland. It analyzes the current offers in terms of programs delivered, costs and new perspective of an emerging new trend in the graduate academic education.

Key words: DBA in Germany and Switzerland, doctoral degrees, business administration, management education, business school, higher education..

1. Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this article is to analyze the nature of the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree delivered today in German speaking European countries. Our analysis is restricted to Germany and the German part of Switzerland as at the time of publication there are no DBA programs offered in Austria.

The DBA differs from a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) mainly because of its more practice oriented focus, the research focus of professional doctorates like the DBA is “concerned with researching the real business and managerial issues via the critical review and systematic application of appropriate theories and research to professional practice” (ABS, 1997:2).

Both the DBA and the PhD involve the development of substantial original work. However, a professional doctorate such as the DBA requires a slightly different type of research approach from the PhD one. For a PhD, research needs to make a significant contribution to an area of knowledge.

For the DBA, research needs to make a significant contribution to practice, policy or strategy in the field of business administration. For business administration we intend the administration and management of enterprises operating in wide range of environments including companies in the private and public sectors, no profit organizations, hospitals and schools.

O’Neill and McMullen (2007: 78) assert that the DBA “aims to develop researching professionals” while the PhD is principally intended to develop academic researchers”. The research involved in a DBA is applicable to a business issue (or issues) and is carried out in the context of a professional practice. Research by Naumann and Goldstein (2002:34) identifies the DBA as a rapidly growing alternative graduate degree to the traditional PhD. The DBA has a focus relevant to the needs of both practitioners and academics.

The DBA degree is a relatively newcomer in the world of doctorate educations and it is rapidly growing as an alternative graduate qualification to the more traditional PhD (Chapman, 1991). In the last years the wide spread propagation of MBA programs has in several cases degraded the quality and therefore the value of an MBA degree. For this reason a DBA degree represent today a further qualitative step in the business administration graduated education.

Moreover, students awarded with a DBA degree hold a doctorate level qualification that adds a concrete added value towards their further careers steps. The field of the DBA programs is evolving constantly in Europe; this article aims at giving an indicative overview on the current offer and new possible perspectives at the time of publication in Germany and the German speaking part of Switzerland, as well as opportunities of joint DBA programs between Russian and German speaking institutions.

2. The Doctor of Business Administration Program: an Overview

2.1 The origin, role and place of the DBA program in the system of business education

The DBA was originally developed by Harvard University in 1968 to recognize the research and knowledge needs of business management practitioners.

The Doctor of Business Administration appears firstly in the US graduate education followed by the UK at the beginning of the 1990. In 1999 there were 16 UK offering a DBA program (Bourner, Ruggeru-Stevens & Bareham 2000). More recently two German speaking countries in Europe have started offering this type of graduate degree: Germany and the German part of Switzerland.

The DBA program appeared originally in the Anglo-Saxon system of business education, first in the United States of America, followed by the UK, Australia and some English speaking Asian countries.

On the other hand, the appearance of the DBA in continental Europe is more recent and at the time of publication this program is in an “evolving phase” and changing dramatically. Indeed, in Germany the number of universities and business schools offering this program is still relatively small, while in Switzerland it is more and more perceived as a kick-start to acquire more entrepreneurial and business skills.

Hence, this specific field of business education is in a constant state of flux and evolution in continental Europe; therefore further investigations will be required in the near future to analyze how the DBA program has been perceived and implemented in continental Europe, with a specific focus on German speaking countries. As in other parts of the world, the need to offer such a program comes from the intention of business faculties and schools to distinguish them and offer a graduate degree alternative to traditional PhD.

Like a PhD degree in academia, Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) is the terminal post-graduate degree in the business education system that is awarded to the students who have already received a Master’s degree. In most cases they are graduates of various MBA or EMBA programs, however, some other Master’s degrees are also recognizable.

Therefore, if a practicing manager, who has already gained the MBA degree through either full-time program or part-time extensive sessions (EMBA program), pursues a senior managerial position and wants to gain the skills of doing a business research, then the next step in terms of further education is doing a DBA study.

Today, the Doctorate of Business Administration tends to gain importance as it has a clear relevance for both the academic and business world. However, the DBA is still subject to criticisms related to the new nature of the degree itself. Many see in the DBA a negative development of the “massive” knowledge production, resulting in a hybrid form which is not pure academic or pure business oriented (McWilliam, 2002).

In reality, the purpose of the DBA is similar to the PhD one: make a significant contribution to the development of the knowledge around the concept of business administration. This contribution should be made through application and development of theoretical frameworks. Nevertheless the DBA is more linked to real, concrete daily business matters analyzed through the perspective of relevant theories.

Indeed the Doctor of Business Administration is more industry-related and implies a strong relationship between higher educational institutions and companies.

Moreover, it is important to note that there is a great diversity of designs for the DBA given its nascent stage of development compared with well-established and traditional PhD. This diversity will emerge clearly in the analysis of the current DBA offer in Germany and the German part of Switzerland. The actual DBA panorama worldwide is therefore fluid with lot of potential growth and development.

2.2 The process of business research

Sekaran (2003:5) defines business research as an “organized, systematic, data-based, critical, objective, scientific inquiry or investigation into a specific problem, undertaken with the purpose of finding answers or solutions to it.” Business research can be either applied or basic (it is also known as a fundamental or pure). The former is to solve a current or specific organizational issue, while the latter aims at producing a body of knowledge for a broad and deep understanding of various problems in particular areas.

Choosing a suitable methodology for conducting a DBA research to a great extent depends on the type of a problem a certain company faces with. In general, Collis and Hussey (2003) states that the key research methodologies originate from the two research paradigms or philosophies: positivistic (empirical) and phenomenological.

Therefore, taking into account a given organizational setting, business researcher is free to choose a suitable methodology or a mix of them in order to solve a particular company’s problem.

The technology of conducting a business research is similar to the PhD one. Researcher does a preliminary observation of a problem under study in order to identify a broad research area. It is followed by the preliminary data collection (e.g. interview and extensive literature review) that results in definition of more specific research topic or set of questions.

The next step is developing of a theoretical framework that presents all key variables and their interrelations. Having identified and labeled variables, researcher develops testable hypotheses and performs a scientific research design that describes the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The final step is to conclude whether a research question has been answered. Last but not least is to write and present a research report that will serve as a basis for a managerial decision (Sekaran, 2003).

Research topics for DBA research vary significantly. It could be a study of reasons of company’s absenteeism or analysis of the effects of downsizing on the long-terms financial performance of a regional automaker.

3. The DBA in the German speaking Europe

At the time of this publication DBA programs are registered in Switzerland and Germany but not in Austria.

3.1 The DBA in Germany

The DBA in Germany is relatively new and not yet widely diffused considering the size of the country (almost 82 million inhabitants) and number of Universities and higher educational institutions. At the time of the research for this article, only one University, the University of Gloucestershire German Agency, located in Munich, offers a DBA degree. There are two private Business Schools and two state higher education institutions offering a DBA.

Tias Nimbas Business Schools offers a DBA that takes place in the German city of Bonn, the Netherland and UK.

Indeed the cost of the program might have a perception impact on further expansion of the DBA in Germany: in a country where culturally and historically education is extremely affordable, tuition between 20,000 € and 45,000 € can play a deterrent role.

3.2 Admission criteria

To apply for the DBA program potential students need to hold a Master of Business Administration or an equivalent degree. Those not holding a Business degree might be asked to complete additional modules. All institutions require a good knowledge of English certified.

Moreover, applicants need to have several years of working experience in a managerial position (usually minimum 4 or 5 year of working experience) in order to be eligible for the program.

To enter the DBA, a potential student needs to submit a research proposal able to make a significant contribution to the enhancement of professional practice in business administration.

3.3 Structure of the DBA

With no exception, every DBA program in Germany is structured with a major research phase completed by part-time courses that can be followed on-line or on campus.

As an example the DBA at the International Business Schools Lippstad has five modules:

- Induction and Philosophical Aspects of Research
- Quantitative Research Methodology
- Qualitative Research Methodology
- Critical Evaluation of Published Research
- Research Planning and Proposal Writing

The DBA at TiasNimbas Business School is structured in three parts; each phase needs to be completed before moving to the next one. The first is characterized by four modules and lasts one academic year.

Modules are organized on a residential form. During the second year students follow three modules and they have to present and defend their research proposal. The third year/phase is dedicated to the thesis.

Table 1 – Higher education institutions offering a DBA in Germany

Name	Location	Duration	Costs	Accreditation
TiasNimbas Business School	Bonn/NL/GB	8 terms	38000 €	No info
International Business School Lippstadt	Lippstadt	4 years	56000 CHF	CERTQUA
University of Gloucestershire German Agency	München	Min. 3 years	Min. 22,200 €	EduQua, QAA
FHM Fachhochschule des Mittelstands	Bielefeld/Detmold, Köln, Berlin	3 years	9,850 € per year	FIBAA and state accreditation
University of Applied Science Deggendorf	Deggendorf	4 years	28000 €	No info

4. The DBA in Switzerland

At the time of publication (2012) seven higher educational institutions offer a Doctor of Business Administration degree in Switzerland. This is indeed a significant data considering the size of Switzerland and its population (less than 8 million inhabitants). However, Switzerland is one of the wealthiest countries in the world and with its favorable low-taxation system has been attracting several multinationals that have today their European Middle-East Africa (EMEA) headquarter into the country.

This has brought a population of well-educated top managers in the country. Many of them decide to pursue their academic education through an MBA. As we have seen previously the MBA value of its degree has been devaluating, following of the proliferation of MBAs offered, therefore business schools and institutions have started looking for alternative forms of qualification.

4.1 Admission criteria

A Master's degree or an MBA is generally required to apply for a DBA program. Some institutions require specifically an MBA, in case the applicant holds another Master's degree he/she might be required to follow additional courses.

Moreover, admission criteria include a good knowledge of English certified and several years of working experience in a management position (normally minimum 4).

For instance, the Hochschule für Wirtschaft in Zurich (HWZ) requires a Master obtained at the HWZ itself or an MBA from the partner institution, the University of Southern Queensland. For perspective students holding different Master additional courses may be necessary.

Table 2 – Swiss education institutions offering a Doctor of Business Administration

Name	Location	Duration	Costs	Accreditation
SBS Swiss Business School	Zurich	2,5 years	40,500 CHF	EduQua, IACBE
HWZ – Hochschule für Wirtschaft Zürich	Zurich	3 years	45,000 CHF	
Kalaidos Fachhochschule	Zurich and UK	3 years	65,000 CHF	
Swiss Management Center	Lausanne, Zürich and Zug	4 years	19,300 €	ECBE, ACBSP
PHW Bern	Bern	3 years	39,000 CHF	
Business School Lausanne	Lausanne	3 years	38,000 CHF	ACBSP, CHEA, EFMD, SQS,
European University of Geneva	Geneva	2 years	No info	ACBSP, IACBE, EFMD, Swiss-made, euruni,

5. Problems and Prospects

This analysis shows clearly that there is a great variety in the DBA offer within the German speaking European countries. Indeed there are still too many types of DBA degree therefore some DBA degrees are better than others. Standard and requirements for the thesis completion vary as well.

On the basis of these differences, it is clear that common criteria should be established in the next future, as well as the expected outcomes at the DBA level. Only by going through a harmonization process criticisms regarding the integrity of DBA will be neutralized.

On the other hand, it is true that the flexibility and broad-based curriculum offerings of DBA programs help candidates to conduct research in areas most relevant to their business needs. Barihman et al (2000:401) affirm that “the DBA represents the coming of age of work-based learning at the highest level of higher education”.

Hence, we can affirm that the DBA is a growing alternative way to the PhD to obtain a doctoral qualification in the German speaking part of Europe. The panorama provides a variety of different programs and more research is needed to examine the outcomes in detail.

5.1 Mutual interest in developing joint DBA programs in Russia and German speaking countries

Despite the DBA degree is a newcomer, it is gaining popularity throughout the world, because business problems are constantly becoming complex and require more rigorous approaches. The key value of DBA education comes from a synergy between scientific methods derived from academia and rich experience of business practitioners who contribute to developing new management knowledge, practices and policies. Russian business schools have been also running DBA programs, and the number of institutions that offer such kind of business education is growing.

Business schools in German speaking European countries have gained a valuable experience of teaching DBA students. On the other hand, Russian business practitioners that could join DBA program have also acquired indispensable hands-on experience that could be useful for foreign business partners who are planning to enter Russian market.

Basing on above mentioned, it is worth to accelerate cooperation between western and Russian business institutions in order to develop joint DBA programs involving students from both sides.

Firstly, it will create and excellent learning environment for knowledge sharing among diverse people of different nationalities and cultures. Secondly, it will serve as a base for networking that would lead to new business partnerships and perhaps joint ventures between DBA students.

Therefore, DBA as an applied management doctoral degree is a vital, perhaps inevitable, element for a successful manager in our globalized world.

6. Summary – Key points of the DBA in German speaking Europe

This article has examined the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree in European German speaking countries today, with a special focus on Germany and the German speaking part of Switzerland.

- The DBA is a newcomer in the graduate academic business administration education. It is a growing field with lot of potential. Its growth is related to the proliferation of the MBA degree and the need of alternative graduate degree.
- Admission criteria normally require a Master degree, preferably an MBA, proficiency in English and few years of working experience, usually in a management position.
- The cost and the duration of the DBA vary according to the education institution.
- The DBA is still in the early stage of its development especially in Germany.
- In Switzerland the DBA degree is broadly present with 7 institutions offering this degree at the time of publication (2012). On the other hand in Germany only 4 institutions offer a DBA. This might be related to the tuition costs and the cultural education background of German students.

- In Austria there are not DBA programs offered at the time of publication.
- Russian and German speaking European institutions could benefit from developing joint DBA programs.

References

Association of Business Schools (1997) Guidelines on the DBA, available at www.the-abs.org.uk

A joint study of the Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce and The Boston Consulting Group "Multinationals Companies on the Move: How Switzerland will win the battle!" Zurich, 2007

Bareham J., Bourner T. and Ruggeri-Stevens, G. (2000) "The DBA: what is it for?" *Career Development International*, 5(7), 394-403

Bourner, T, Ruggeri-Stevens, G& Bareham, J (2000) "The DBA: Form and Function" *Education and Training*, 42 (9), pp. 481-495

Bourner, T. Bowden, R&Laing, S (2001) "Professional doctorates in England", *Studies in Higher Education*, 26 (1), 65-83

Chapman, J (1991) "Innovation and change in higher education: The introduction for the professional doctorate in education", in I Mc Kay & B Caldwell (eds), *Researching educational administration: Theory and practice*, Australian Council for Educational Administration, Hawthorn, Victoria 140-147

Collis, Jill and Hussey, Roger (2003) *Business Research: A Practical Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students*, 2nd edition, New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Joint Costing and Pricing Steering Group (1999) "Costing and pricing for decision makers in higher education". Joint Costing and Pricing Steering Group, London UK 1-24

Maxwell. T.W. and Shanahan, P.J. (1996) "Professional and professions perception concerning professional doctorates". In T.W. Maxwell and P.J. Shanahan (eds) *Which way for professional doctorates? Contexts and cases* Proceedings of the "Which way for professional doctorates?" Conference, Coffs Harbour, 16-18 October, 79-103

McWilliam, E.Taylor, P.Green, B.Holland. S.Maxwell, T&Thompson, P 2001, "Improving Doctoral Education in Australian Universities: Learning from Professional Doctorate Programs", Evaluation and Investigation Program Project, 2002

Neumann, R. and Goldstein, M (2002) "Issues in the ongoing development of professional doctorates: the DBA example". *Journal of Institutional research*, 11 (19) 23-37

Sekaran, Uma. (2003) *Research Methods For Business. A Skill-Building Approach*, Fourth edition, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.