

WHITE PAPER

DOCTORATE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (DBA)

Bridging management research and business practice

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**White Paper submitted to the Minister of
Education, Higher Education and Research
And to the Minister of Labour,
Health, Solidarity and Families**

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Foreword by Marie-Christine CHALUS SAUVANNET, President of the IAE network

As President of the IAE Network¹ in France and Managing Director of IAE Lyon, which hosts the DBA degree, as well as a DBA supervisor myself, I have witnessed the significant added value that this qualification brings, creating a real positive feedback loop. The DBA equips experienced managers with scientific skills that enable them to leverage their years of professional experience to produce actionable results with tangible impacts on managerial practices. This often serves as a catalyst for already promising careers, while also advancing scientific research by providing access to rich yet otherwise difficult-to-reach fields of study. Additionally, it fosters synergies in collaborations with faculty researchers, leading to academic outputs such as articles and books.

As stated above, *“the DBA is part of the opportunity for a practitioner to carry out in-depth, conceptual reflection grounded in the reality of the company.”* It goes without saying that this reflection must lead to concrete outcomes - offering answers, recommendations, and insights into the questions raised. That is the essence of the DBA: identifying, reflecting, observing, and proposing.

The link with IAEs is therefore both strong and natural. These university-based management schools, founded by Gaston Berger in 1955, were designed to bridge management studies and research with the socio-economic world. Our network of 38 schools includes one of France's largest academic communities in management sciences. In an environment where companies must innovate continuously while integrating sustainable development and social responsibility into their practices, DBAs - led by senior executives or industry experts - serve as a powerful lever for competitiveness and strategic renewal. This approach ensures that academic concepts are directly applied to real business challenges, generating knowledge that is immediately actionable.

Through these accounts and analyses, you will discover how management research can drive real change for the benefit of businesses, thanks to the passion and professionalism of those who have chosen this path.

Through our unique strengths and synergies, we are collectively contributing to the development of manager-researchers capable of transforming organisations in an informed and sustainable way.

¹ <https://www.iae-france.fr/>

Foreword by Vincenzo VINZI, President of the Federation of French Business School Deans

Hand in hand

In his poem *Mauvais sang (Bad Blood)*, Arthur Rimbaud declares that “*The hand that holds the pen is as good as the one that holds the plough.*” Does this mean that thought is as valuable as action? And that knowledge holds the same worth as know-how?

This White Paper is based on another premise: the complementary nature of theoretical thinking and thinking *in action*. While the purpose of an academic doctorate is to train researchers and produce scientific knowledge, a professional doctorate aims to clarify tacit knowledge and formulate recommendations that can be applied in business. There is, therefore, an essential difference between the two. However, there are also similarities, particularly in terms of method - such as defining the research problem and field, conducting a literature review, analysing results, and publishing in academic journals.

This complementarity between fundamental and applied research is already a reality in many French business schools, always to the benefit of management sciences. Our institutions are committed to advancing academic knowledge through the work of their faculty, doctoral students, research laboratories, and chairs. At the same time, they enhance managerial practices through executive education, drawing on academic knowledge and applied research based on real-world business experience.

The value of a *Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)* lies precisely in its ability to harness managerial experience and transform business challenges into generalisable knowledge and operational improvements. The DBA embodies a dynamic process that, building on established academic theories, generates new knowledge and creates dual value: translating practical experience into academic contributions while enriching managerial practices with tested and validated scientific methods.

In this way, managers undertaking a DBA - whether as doctoral candidates or graduates - produce knowledge that complements academic research, particularly through their cross-disciplinary approach and practical insights. This *breeding ground* serves as a source of inspiration and capitalisation for management schools, influencing how they generate knowledge and develop methodologies aligned with business complexity and management challenges.

Naturally, the methodological rigour and reliability of the results of this applied research remain the pillars that uphold the quality of DBA work.

Through their contributions to scientific research, managerial practices, and the broader field of economic knowledge, both academic and professional doctorates play a crucial role in driving collective progress - within schools and businesses, among faculty and managers. Hand in hand.

Foreword by Jérôme CABY, General Delegate of the FNEGE

Management sciences are certainly not like other sciences. Stating it this way might raise the question: is this a criticism or a compliment? At a time when international academic standards are largely structured around three levels of education - bachelor's, master's, and doctorate - why introduce a new category within the doctoral framework, the **Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA)**? And why should it apply exclusively to one scientific field: management? The answer is simple - it meets well-established needs.

First and foremost, there is a need among professionals who, after gaining extensive managerial experience, wish to adopt a reflective approach to their practice without necessarily enrolling in a traditional doctoral programme with more academically oriented expectations. This does not mean they wish to avoid traditional research, but rather that they seek a more applied approach. This is not in opposition to fundamental research; rather, it is the other side of the same coin, with both perspectives enriching one another.

There is also a need among companies and, more broadly, public and private organisations, which must constantly reinvent themselves to address the complex challenges of contemporary management. The research conducted by DBA candidates provides tools for renewing managerial methods, drawing on the latest developments in traditional academic research. In this sense, the DBA serves as a valuable bridge between research and business practice.

Finally, there is a societal need. At a time of profound transitions - digital, social, and ecological - the DBA plays a role in accelerating change by disseminating new ideas and managerial practices. The impact of research on practice is crucial if we are to meet these challenges and move beyond the unproven theories of self-proclaimed gurus.

The FNEGE has therefore naturally aligned itself with the White Paper initiative led by its proponents. Given the significant growth of DBAs in France - where, in the absence of formal state recognition, the landscape can sometimes seem unstructured, making it difficult to distinguish between high-quality programmes and lesser offerings - we could not remain indifferent to this development. In recent years, the FNEGE has progressively incorporated DBAs into its annual thesis observatory and has established a prize for the best DBA thesis in collaboration with the academic bodies in its scientific college. It is also prepared to go further in helping candidates and companies better understand the DBA and in promoting its quality, working alongside the member institutions of its network.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my warmest and most sincere thanks to the institutions that provided case illustrations, to the DBA graduates who agreed to participate, and to Professors Jean-Pierre HELFER and Michel KALIKA, who designed and coordinated this White Paper with their customary efficiency and diligence.

1. Why this White Paper?

In a context marked by multiple crises, where the business environment is unstable, evolving, and unpredictable, companies need to strengthen their capacity for critical reflection and strategic perspective.

The mission of management research is to advance knowledge by developing managerial tools best suited to changing contexts. Doctoral research, a key stage in this process, plays an essential role in generating new insights. This is particularly true when a thesis is undertaken by a practitioner, as it enables companies to address contemporary challenges more effectively. The collaboration between a company, a manager-researcher, and an academic supervisor forms a powerful framework for success.

This is the foundation of the DBA, which enables managers to develop a thesis on a specific managerial problem under the supervision of an experienced professor.

The DBA was first established in 1953 by Harvard University in response to demand from practitioners who did not necessarily wish to pursue an academic career but who aspired to engage in in-depth, conceptual reflection on a managerial challenge encountered in their professional practice. These managers benefit from academic guidance to develop a thesis grounded in their business experience.

As explained by *EQUAL*², an international organisation that brings together the three main management accreditation agencies (AACSB, AMBA, EFMD) along with around twenty academic associations, the DBA is a doctoral programme that differs from the PhD (known in France as the *Doctorat en Sciences de Gestion*), primarily in its purpose.

While the PhD in Management Sciences is designed mainly to train researchers for academic positions in universities and business schools, the DBA offers practitioners the opportunity to engage in in-depth, conceptual reflection grounded in the realities of practice. This work leads to concrete recommendations aimed at improving a sector, a method, a tool, or an organisation.

The DBA first developed in Anglo-Saxon countries and has only more recently expanded in the French academic landscape³. Today, there are approximately fifteen DBA programmes in France, delivered by both business schools and universities, particularly within IAEs.

In universities, the DBA is awarded as a university degree and is therefore not recognised as a national qualification. While business schools' bachelor's and master's degrees can be aligned with equivalent state diplomas following assessment by the CEFDG, the DBA does not benefit from this recognition.

² https://www.equal.network/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/161110-EQUAL_Guidelines_Doctoral.

³ The first DBA programme in France was established by GEM in 1993, while the first university-based DBA programme was launched by Université Paris-Dauphine in 2008 by one of the coordinators of this White Paper. The vast majority of DBA programmes featured in this White Paper were created after 2010.

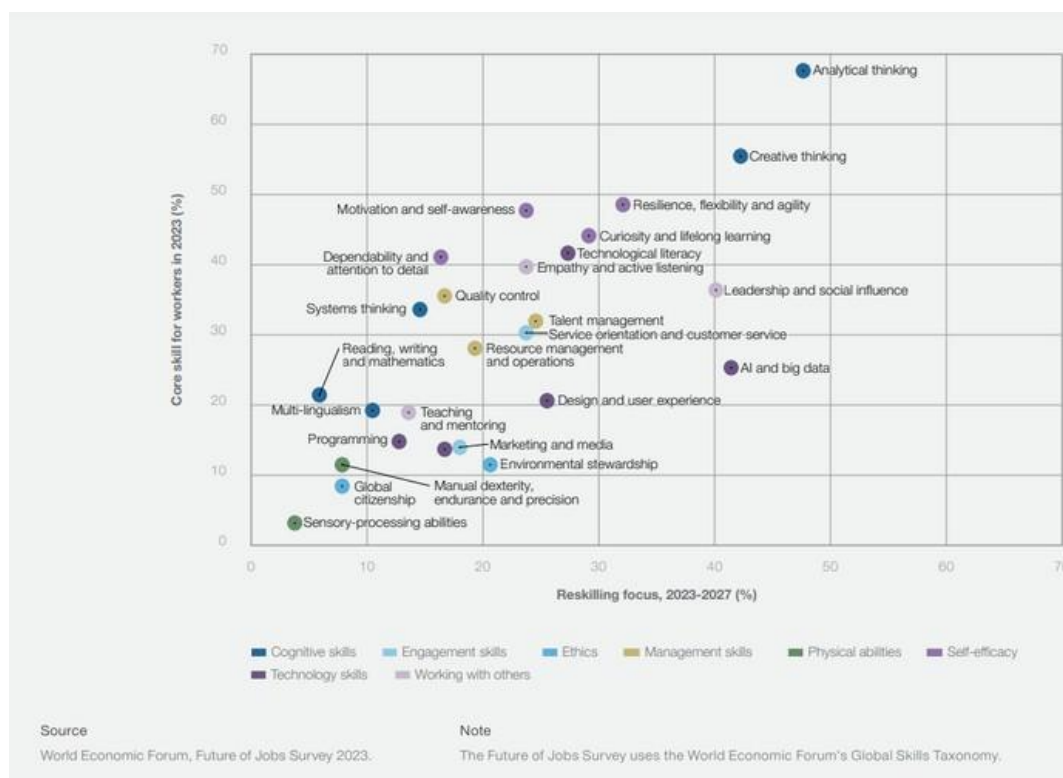
The motivation behind this White Paper stems from a regrettable lack of awareness of the DBA among French companies and a lack of recognition from public authorities.

When it comes to doctoral qualifications, businesses are generally only familiar with the Doctorate of Business Administration, while public authorities officially recognise only bachelor's, master's, and national doctoral degrees.

This situation is particularly detrimental to companies and public organisations⁴, which miss out on the valuable contributions that DBA candidates could offer. These professionals provide insights that, while different from those of MBA graduates and PhDs in Management Sciences, are equally valuable. Unlike MBAs, which are not always embedded in a cycle of reflection and recommendation, and PhDs, which often do not incorporate practical considerations, DBAs offer a unique blend of academic research and managerial application.

This lack of recognition also disadvantages higher education institutions, as it creates an uneven playing field compared to Anglo-Saxon DBA programmes, which benefit from formal recognition in their respective countries.

A recent study by the World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs*⁵, is based on a unique survey of 803 companies, representing 11.3 million employees across 27 industrial sectors and 45 economies. This research provides a global and cross-sector perspective on the evolving skills landscape. The study highlights that analytical and creative thinking will be the most sought-after skills for future managers. The ability to solve complex problems is becoming increasingly critical, particularly in disruptive environments.



⁴ Noguera, F. (2021). Hybridation dans les organisations publiques. Enjeux et perspectives, Preface by Muriel Pénicaud. Collection Profession cadre Service Public. Presses Universitaires de France.

⁵ <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023/> - reference provided by Stéphane Thion, TBS.

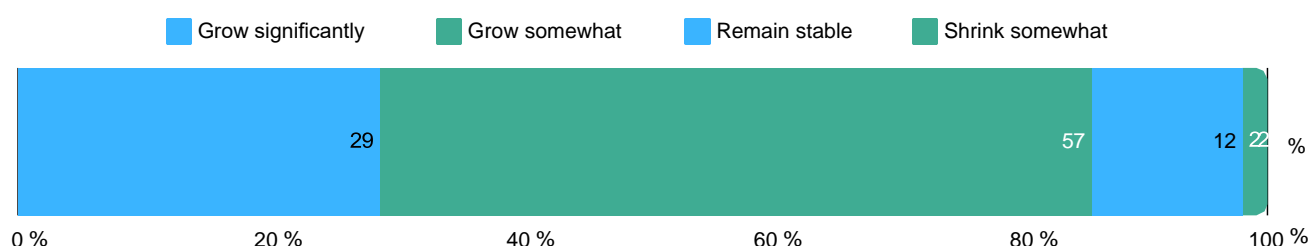
By combining conceptual thinking, business experience, and the analysis of managerial data, the DBA programme fosters the development of analytical thinking skills. The formulation of managerial recommendations - an essential feature of a DBA thesis - also stimulates the doctoral candidate's creative thinking. This ability enables graduates to design innovative managerial practices and management tools tailored to the specific context of their organisation.

A survey of 80 graduates⁶ from one of the DBA programmes featured in this White Paper highlights a key impact of the DBA: enhancing candidates' ability to tackle complex problems.

For business schools and universities, the DBA presents a strategic opportunity to strengthen corporate research partnerships and expand executive education.

A survey⁷ conducted by EFMD and the Executive DBA Council (EDBAC) among approximately 100 university deans, directors, and presidents confirms the optimism of academic institutions regarding the future development of the DBA.

In your opinion, in the coming years, the DBA market will :



Source: <https://www.efmdglobal.org/knowledge/report-the-future-of-dba-market-perceptions-of-business-schools/>

More than 80% of respondents expect the DBA market to expand, with almost 30% forecasting significant growth. There are three main reasons for this outlook: on the one hand, the desire for professional development in a context where Master's degrees and MBAs have become commonplace in companies; the other, the growing desire of many practitioners to obtain the title of doctor; and finally, the increased need to produce research that has both a managerial and a societal impact.

Recognition and certification by the public authorities in France would bring immediate value to companies and establishments. It would also benefit the network of doctoral students in training, as well as DBA doctors, provided that the diploma is awarded by recognised institutions.

⁶ Kalika, M., Platt, S., Branger, F., & Closse, A. 80 tales of DBA impact/80 récits d'impacts du DBA. EMS.403p.

⁷ <https://www.efmdglobal.org/knowledge/report-the-future-of-dba-market-perceptions-of-business-schools/>

As a result, the FNEGE was invited to support the White Paper initiative. Given its role as the *House of Management* and its commitment to promoting initiatives that enhance the quality of programmes offered by its members, FNEGE agreed to support this effort. It has also incorporated DBA theses into its *Observatory for Theses in Management Science and Management*⁸ and plans to establish a prize for outstanding DBA theses.

The coordinators and contributors extend their gratitude to FNEGE for its support of this initiative, which seeks to strengthen the link between the worlds of business and academia.

Several institutions quickly joined the initiative, contributing to the development of the manifesto presented in this White Paper.

The institutions that provided case illustrations of the impact of DBAs are, in alphabetical order:

- **Business Science Institute**
- **CNAM**
- **École des Ponts Business School**
- **Emlyon Business School**
- **Grenoble École de Management (GEM)**
- **Grenoble IAE-INP, Université Grenoble Alpes**
- **iaelyon School of Management, Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3⁹**
- **IAE Nice, Université Côte d'Azur**
- **ICN Business School¹⁰**
- **International University of Monaco (IUM)**
- **TBS Education (formerly Toulouse Business School)**
- **Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier**

Only institutions offering DBA programmes were involved in this initiative¹¹. For reasons of coordination and timing, it was not possible to contact all DBA providers. However, the 10 participating DBAs represent a significant and representative sample.

Collectively, these programmes have produced 1,329 graduates and currently have 1,004 doctoral candidates. Of these, 17% are from France, 17% from other European countries (excluding France), and 66% from the rest of the world. The cohort is composed of 68% men and 32% women, with an average age of 43 (see institution profiles starting on page 68).

Faced with the current landscape and convinced that the DBA is a programme of the future that serves both businesses and society, this White Paper sets out three main objectives:

- **Raising awareness of the DBA:** Presenting its structure, originality, and impact on companies, while informing the public about the doctoral nature of the programme and the influence of DBA research on organisations. The goal is to increase recognition of the DBA among businesses.
- **Securing official recognition for the DBA:** Seeking formal recognition of the programme by the relevant public authorities as a fully recognised doctoral qualification.
- **Formulating recommendations:** Proposing concrete measures to achieve the two objectives above.

⁸ <https://fnege.org/publications/observatoire-des-theses-2023-parution-2024/>

⁹ In partnership with the Business Science Institute

¹⁰ In partnership with the Business Science Institute

¹¹ Institutions offering Executive PhDs were not approached because of the ambiguity of the positioning.

These ambitions underscore the strategic importance of the DBA in strengthening the connection between research and managerial practice, as well as its potential to address contemporary challenges.

Following this introduction, the White Paper presents a section defining the DBA and outlining its key characteristics. It also provides concrete examples of the impact of DBA programmes, drawn from theses defended at the ten institutions that contributed to its development. Finally, a series of recommendations, formulated by the contributors, is proposed to support the growth and recognition of the DBA. The final sections of the White Paper detail the contributors and the participating DBA programmes.

2. What is the DBA?

DBA programmes can vary across academic institutions. However, high-quality programmes share a set of fundamental characteristics that establish the DBA as a true doctoral programme, generating academic, managerial, and societal impact.

2.1. DBA Definitions

DBA programmes possess specific features that are recognised internationally, as demonstrated by definitions provided by organisations such as the *Executive DBA Council (EDBAC)*¹² and the *EQUAL Guidelines for Doctoral Programmes in Business and Management*¹³. These references highlight the unique and complementary nature of the DBA compared to the academic doctorate (PhD).

EDBAC defines the DBA as a "terminal doctoral degree designed for working professionals. Research in an executive doctoral programme is based on the engaged research model, focusing on topics at the intersection of theory and contemporary business issues."

EQUAL distinguishes between academic doctorates (PhDs) and professional doctorates (DBAs) within business and management doctoral programmes based on their objectives. It states that "the main function of an academic doctorate is to provide a qualification enabling entry into the research community in the field of business and management studies." In short, the primary purpose of the PhD is to train future academic researchers.

In contrast, "the professional doctorate aims more explicitly to make a contribution to the practice of management in industry and society. It offers managers and executives, as doctoral candidates or reflective practitioners, the opportunity to follow a rigorous and relevant programme of research training at the highest level of academic qualification, with a view to personal and professional development, while respecting the Salzburg Principles¹⁴."

These definitions do not preclude PhD graduates in Management Sciences from pursuing careers in industry, nor do they prevent DBA graduates from transitioning into full-time academic positions. However, for now, such career shifts remain relatively uncommon and do not challenge the fundamental distinctions between the DBA and the PhD in terms of their intended purpose.

This duality reflects the richness and complementarity of doctoral programmes, which cater to a wide range of needs—serving individuals, organisations, and society as a whole.

Several academic associations (*AIMS, AGRH, ATLAS-AFMI, AFFI*, etc.), along with FNEGE, have established a DBA prize to recognise theses that exemplify the culmination of a doctoral training programme *in and through* research. While these prize-winning theses are grounded in a solid literature review and conceptual framework, they stand out for the quality of their empirical material, their depth of reflection, the relevance of their managerial recommendations, and their ability to assess the conditions for effective implementation.

¹² <https://edbac.org/news/what-are-executive-doctoral-degrees>

¹³ https://www.equal.network/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/161110-EQUAL_Guidelines_Doctoral.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.eua.eu/publications/positions/salzburg-ii-recommendations.html>

2.2. Characteristics of DBA programmes

DBA programmes are distinguished by the following features, which reflect their specificity and unique focus on applied research and professional development:

- **Post-master's or post-MBA programme:** Access to the DBA programme requires a five-year degree qualification.
- **For professionals:** Doctoral candidates undertake their thesis while continuing to work in their respective business sectors.
- **Targeting practitioners with significant professional experience:** EDBAC recommends a minimum of 10 years' experience, with the average age of DBA candidates being around 45.
- **Thesis defence requirement:** The DBA thesis is an individually written document, often several hundred pages long, and is defended before a jury of professors and researchers with expertise in the relevant field.
- **Research-active faculty:** Supervisors and lecturers regularly publish in their specialist areas, ensuring high academic standards.
- **Part-time programme:** Designed for professionals, DBA programmes offer doctoral seminars scheduled at weekends, in intensive blocks, or via remote learning.
- **Three- to four-year duration:** While doctoral studies typically last three years under the LMD framework, part-time DBA programmes can extend to four years or more, depending on participants' availability. AMBA accreditation requires a minimum duration of four years. However, the ease of access to research fields, inherent in practitioner-led research, may shorten the length of DBA theses.
- **Knowledge creation:** Unlike master's degrees or MBAs, which focus on the transmission of knowledge, the DBA enables practitioners to generate new knowledge grounded in their experience, industry, and professional practice. The programme includes seminars on research methodology, literature review, data collection and analysis, as well as specialised sessions tailored to different disciplines (e.g. marketing, finance, human resources management, information systems, decision-making, logistics, CSR, management control, strategy, and entrepreneurship). Writing workshops may also be offered to support doctoral candidates in structuring their thesis.
- **Candidate-driven research topics:** Unlike a PhD in Management Sciences, where topics are often suggested by the supervisor, DBA candidates propose their own research subjects, directly linked to their professional practice.
- **Doctoral thesis structure and content:** Like PhDs in Management Sciences, DBA theses include a research problem, literature review, hypotheses, methodology, data collection and analysis, and results. However, two key differences set DBA theses apart:
 - i. The structure of DBA theses is more flexible than that of PhDs in Management Sciences.
 - ii. Managerial recommendations derived from the findings are a central feature, ensuring a direct link between research and professional practice.

This emphasis on applied research and solving real-world managerial challenges makes the DBA particularly relevant for managers and executives seeking advanced professional and intellectual development.

2.3. The Impact of DBA programmes

The following illustrations of impact demonstrate that the DBA is not merely an academic research exercise, but also a powerful lever for impact and, consequently, for change..

2.3.1. The Four Types of DBA Impact

The examples presented below highlight four key types of impact: on the doctoral candidates themselves, on organisations, on society, and on the academic field.

Impact on doctoral students and managers

The DBA is, above all, a process of individual transformation for managers. It fosters profound cognitive development, expanding their capacity to analyse, innovate, and act as enlightened leaders within their organisations. This personal growth is reflected in the testimonies of numerous DBA candidates, who describe the lasting impact of the programme on their careers and strategic vision.

Managerial impact

The impact of the DBA extends to the public and private organisations in which DBA candidates work. Thesis topics, grounded in real-world challenges, contribute directly to improving managerial and organisational practices. The recommendations derived from DBA research - whether managerial or societal - are translated into concrete, measurable changes. In this way, the DBA serves as a powerful catalyst for transformation within organisations.

Impact on society

DBA thesis topics frequently address issues of societal importance, such as sustainable development, energy transition, inclusion, and digital transformation. This research generates positive outcomes not only for the sectors concerned but also for society as a whole. Furthermore, DBA graduates often hold influential positions in public and private organisations, amplifying the reach and impact of the solutions they propose.

Academic impact

Finally, the DBA contributes significantly to academic research. The publications resulting from DBA theses, often co-authored with thesis supervisors, enrich knowledge across various disciplines. Additionally, under certain conditions, DBA graduates may take on teaching roles in higher education institutions, helping to bridge the gap between academia and management practice.

One additional positive effect is worth highlighting: the increasing awareness among DBA professors and programme directors that every thesis - whether a DBA or a PhD in Management Sciences - must generate impact, both for businesses and for society.

2.3.2. Illustrations of the impact of DBA programmes¹⁵

The 20 case illustrations from the 10 participating institutions highlight the richness and diversity of the impacts generated by DBA programmes. These impacts - on doctoral candidates, their organisations, and society - underscore the DBA's unique role as a driver of transformation and change. In addition to these three areas of impact, DBA theses also contribute to academic advancements. Each thesis generates influence across multiple categories. Below are a few illustrative examples.

¹⁵ The coordinators would like to thank Stephen Platt (Business Science Institute) for writing this summary.

2.3.2.1. Personal impact: transformation and individual development

DBA programmes enable doctoral candidates to develop in-depth critical thinking and analytical skills, directly influencing their professional and personal careers. Many describe their DBA experience as profoundly transformative:

- **Marjorie Cousyn (CNAM)** describes her DBA journey as one of "*great intellectual stimulation*." Through her research, she was able to redesign the training framework for young recruits in the *Gendarmerie Nationale*. By translating her findings into concrete action, she has strengthened her impact on training policies while gaining greater legitimacy within her organisation.
- **Ashish Kakar (Emlyon Business School)** refers to his DBA as a "*transformative journey*," which has boosted his personal confidence and enhanced his ability to bridge theory and practice. This development played a key role in reshaping his career in the financial sector.
- **Hongye Hui (Grenoble IAE-INP)** refined her transformational leadership skills, contributing to increased employee loyalty at a Chinese semiconductor start-up.
- **Marie-Christine Watel (Université Paul Valéry Montpellier)** gained an enhanced managerial perspective, enabling her to optimise organisational processes in the healthcare sector.

2.3.2.2. Managerial impact: innovation and organisational transformation

DBA research drives significant changes within the organisations of doctoral candidates, integrating research findings to enhance company performance and competitiveness.

- **Pierre-Jean Blazewicz (Université Paul Valéry Montpellier)** applied his research on decarbonisation to develop actionable managerial strategies, embedding environmental considerations into the strategic decisions of a family-owned business.
- **Huaqiang Cai (Grenoble IAE-INP)** demonstrated how specific cultural traits enhance the performance of Chinese managers in international markets, influencing the expansion strategies of SMEs in the medical sector.
- **Thierry Ruaud (TBS Education)** implemented his research findings to strengthen the local entrepreneurial ecosystem in *Guyana*, fostering collaborations between ArianeGroup, local start-ups, and academic institutions.
- **Claire Souvigne (International University of Monaco)** played a key role in transforming her organisation's culture, introducing practices that promote autonomy and well-being while maintaining performance targets.
- **Xenthe Bang (Grenoble École de Management)** provided concrete insights for managers seeking to improve customer engagement through effective customer relationship management strategies.
- **Mischa Zielke (École des Ponts Business School)** conducted research on workplace well-being, leading his former employer, McKinsey Global (Dubai), to invite him to establish *The McKinsey Health Institute* and develop a workplace well-being programme for McKinsey and its clients.

2.3.2.3. Societal impact: alignment with global issues

DBA theses address major societal challenges, such as sustainable development and inclusion. Candidates engage with large-scale issues, making tangible and meaningful contributions to these global challenges.

- **Hassan Haidar (IAE Nice – Université Côte d'Azur)** explored battery models for electric vehicles, contributing to policies that support global sustainability in the automotive industry.
- **Ahmed Shawky Mohammed (Emlyon Business School)** developed AI-based solutions to enhance the credibility of ESG reports, helping to reduce greenwashing and promote genuinely sustainable business practices.
- **Barbara Ofstad (Business Science Institute)** contributed to initiatives aimed at training young people in *NEET* (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) situations and refugees, strengthening the social impact of Siemens Professional Education programmes.
- **Kamahunda Mulamba (CNAM)** advocated for the creation of a *National Innovation System (SNI)* in the Democratic Republic of Congo, connecting government agencies, businesses, and universities to promote local innovation.
- **Giorgos Dimitriou (Ecole des Ponts Business School)** defended his thesis on the intersection of technology and the circular economy. He demonstrated how the convergence of emerging technologies, innovative business models, and circular economy principles can create value for both businesses and society.

2.3.2.4. Academic impact: contribution to research and dissemination of knowledge

DBA candidates also make significant contributions to academic knowledge through research and dissemination:

- **Guy Ngayo Fotso (TBS Education)** has published several scientific articles and a book on leadership skills for the 21st century, influencing leadership training and consultancy practices.
- **Thomas Quartier (Grenoble École de Management)** expanded the application of complexity theory to public projects, demonstrating the importance of balanced stakeholder relationships for the success of IT initiatives.
- **Michelle Lagrave (IAE Nice – Université Côte d'Azur)** developed mentoring programmes for multicultural and virtual environments, aligning organisational values with strategic objectives.
- **Cyril Vidal (Business Science Institute)** published a book on the evolving role of notaries, contributing to significant changes within the profession.
- **Annalisa Tarquini (International University of Monaco)** has published several articles based on *Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)*, offering new insights into career development within the luxury craft sector.

In conclusion, these examples highlight the multidimensional impact of DBA programmes: personal transformation, innovation and enhanced organisational performance, significant societal contributions, and the enrichment of academic knowledge. By showcasing this work, the DBA reaffirms its essential role as a bridge between academia and the professional world, while also advocating for greater institutional recognition in France.

3. Recommendations for developing awareness and recognition of the DBA

For DBA programmes that meet the characteristics defined above (§ 2.2., page 14), it is essential that the DBA be recognised as a legitimate doctoral programme, in line with the distinction established by the *EQUAL Guidelines*. These guidelines clearly differentiate between two types of doctoral programmes, each with distinct objectives:

- **The doctorate in Management Sciences**, which is primarily designed to train academic researchers and contribute to the enrichment of scholarly communities.
- **The DBA**, which provides experienced managers with the opportunity to defend a thesis grounded in their professional experience, generating concrete and applicable contributions.

The following recommendations focus on two key priorities:

1. **Enhancing awareness and understanding of the DBA:** Promoting a better understanding of the DBA and its distinct characteristics within academic and professional communities.
2. **Strengthening the recognition of DBA programme quality:** Consolidating the legitimacy and positioning of DBA programmes within both academia and the professional world.

1. Raising awareness of the DBA among companies and public organisations

1.1. Dedicated DBA thesis prize:

At its annual awards ceremony, FNEGE could introduce a specific prize for DBA theses, recognising their impact on organisations and society, particularly in the field of sustainable development. Winners could also participate in the *"My Thesis in 3 Minutes"* competition, further raising the profile of DBA research.

1.2. Event showcasing DBA contributions:

With the support of volunteer companies, an event could be organised to highlight the contributions of DBAs to management, demonstrating their role in shaping and transforming professional practices.

1.3. Creation of an association for DBA development:

A dedicated association could be created to promote DBA programmes. Its activities could include organising an annual conference that brings together DBA candidates and graduates to foster exchanges and enhance recognition of the qualification.

2. Strengthening the recognition of DBA programmes

2.1. RNCP Level 8 qualification:

Given the doctoral nature of DBA programmes, their classification at Level 8 in the *Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles (RNCP)* would reinforce their official recognition.

2.2. Submission to the CEFDG :

DBA programmes could be evaluated by the *Commission d'Évaluation des Formations et Diplômes de Gestion (CEFDG)* for the purpose of obtaining official approval (*visa*), further consolidating their status within French higher education.

2.3. Certification by the FNEGE :

A certification issued by FNEGE would distinguish DBA programmes that meet the defined quality criteria. This certification would serve as a mark of credibility and academic rigour, facilitating broader acceptance of the DBA within both professional and academic communities.

These initiatives aim to enhance the visibility, legitimacy, and recognition of DBAs as high-quality doctoral programmes, designed to meet the needs of businesses, public organisations, and society.

4. The impact of the DBA: case illustrations

Perhaps the best way to understand the impact of DBA programmes is to explore the following concrete examples.

Each institution contributing to this White Paper has provided two illustrations of graduates' career paths, showcasing the impact of their research. For each case study, you will find:

- A presentation of the graduate
- The theme of their research
- The methodology used
- The results obtained
- Managerial recommendations
- And, most importantly, the impact generated, both professionally and socially

These illustrations, arranged in alphabetical order, provide a detailed and tangible insight into how DBAs are transforming professional practices and addressing contemporary organisational challenges.



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Xenthe BANG, **Why it is Risky for B2B Executives** **to Dismiss Customer Experience as a Buzz Word?**



Xenthe BANG, a 43-year-old Singaporean, has 21 years of professional working experience, mostly in business-to-business marketing. Based in Paris, she is currently the Global Head of Digital Marketing at one of five business divisions of S&P Global, a US\$12.5B financial services organization. Her research seeks to address the question: How do digital and interpersonal touchpoints contribute to total customer experience and customer engagement as a business outcome? Why should senior business executives pay attention to customer experience management?

Thesis supervisor: Fiona Schweitzer, Full Professor of Marketing, Grenoble Ecole de Management

Problem Statement:

Customer experience (CX) managers often struggle to demonstrate the connection between customer experience and business outcomes and obtain the support among senior management to pay attention to and invest in this critical area of sustainable competitive advantage. They need a comprehensive understanding of how digital versus interpersonal touchpoints impact the overall experience and tangible business outcomes. This issue affects resource allocation for customer experience management at a strategic level and the emphasis on digital and interpersonal experiences during execution. A recent practitioner study (Forrester, 2023) found that the majority of customer experience managers struggle to justify the focus on CX. The challenge is particularly pronounced in the knowledge-intensive B2B professional services sector which typically requires a high level of personal touch. As services are often complex with long sales cycles, the desired business outcomes for B2B professional services go beyond purchases and usage (lifetime value) to extend to future customer resources specifically on their influence value (positive word-of-mouth especially in large deal size contexts) and knowledge value (such as willingness to provide market sounding for new products).

Overview of the conceptual framework:

It is often assumed that customer experience is fundamentally made up of digital and human touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Bolton et al., 2018). Digital touchpoints are furthermore discussed as substitutes of personal touchpoints with the former harming or replacing the latter. For example, in the recent Deloitte's Digital report (2024), a key point of contention is whether "human touch" will be lost. Similarly, the AI job replacement theory (Huang & Rust, 2018) underscores how the difference in roles of digital and interpersonal touchpoints in customer experience management creates a climate of fear of losing jobs.

In highlighting CX as a distinct construct, Lemon & Verhoef (2016) noted that customer experience is associated with the younger concept of customer engagement and that there is a need for research to better understand the relationship between the two constructs. Customer engagement is defined as "a customer's behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers" (van Doorn et al., 2010, pp.254). "Customer experience is a multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey" (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, pp.71). Further, "customer experiences arise at the intersection of the digital, physical, and social realms for each customer" (Bolton et al., 2018, pp.777).

As the concept of customer engagement itself inherently includes interactivity between the customer and the company, the touchpoints and channels offered by the company, being natural conduits of how these interactions take place, become critical components of theory development between the two constructs. Building on prior conceptualisations of customer experience and customer engagement (e.g. Kumar V. et al., 2010, Brodie et al., 2011, Hollebeek 2011, De Keyser et al., 2020, Lemon & Verhoef 2016), this study aims to explore the connection between the two constructs with a specific focus on the distinction between digital versus human touchpoints. While earlier studies have provided a foundation, there remains an opportunity to provide a clear theoretical framework on the relationship between customer experience and customer engagement and clarify the roles of digital and personal touchpoints in the total customer experience through an empirical investigation.

Methodology:

The research design includes archival data from the customer relationship management (CRM) system of a global financial services firm and survey data collected from 171 employees of global customer accounts of the firm.

Findings and Managerial Recommendations:

The findings offer actionable insights for managers aiming to enhance customer engagement as a business outcome in the form of customer lifetime value (CLV), influence value (CIV), and knowledge value (CKV) through effective CX management. By demonstrating that digital touchpoints have a significant direct impact on engagement, this study provides a compelling case for investing in digital transformation initiatives, ensuring these channels are optimized to capture long-term customer value. At the same time, it emphasizes the critical but mediated role of interpersonal interactions, which are vital for relational and knowledge-driven engagement, underscoring their importance in industries relying on human expertise. In addition, the study highlights the role of low digital interactivity as a moderator, revealing that when digital activity levels are low, the quality of digital experiences becomes pivotal in driving future engagement.

Impact:

This insight enables firms to tailor their strategies to activate disengaged customers while ensuring consistently high-quality experiences across touchpoints. By aligning investments in digital and interpersonal channels with desired engagement outcomes, i.e. customer lifetime value, influence, and knowledge sharing, firms can create a balanced and sustainable CX strategy that supports business growth and competitive advantage.



Pierre-Jean BLAZEWICZ,
The DBA enables the development of managerial recommendations that business leaders can directly implement to address decarbonisation challenges while balancing profitability and long-term sustainability.



Introduction:

Pierre-Jean Blazewicz is the Managing Director of an SAS with 300 employees, specialising in industrial maintenance, which achieved a turnover of €33 million in 2023. It is the largest French subsidiary of an independent French family-owned group. An ECAM-trained engineer and holder of an MBA from Emlyon, Pierre-Jean is 50 years old and has 27 years of professional experience. He is currently preparing his DBA thesis under the supervision of Professor Florence Noguera within the CORHIS¹⁶ Research Unit at Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3. His thesis is titled: *"Business Leaders and the Challenge of Decarbonisation: The Case of an Independent French Family-Owned Group."*

DBA journey: The research focuses on an independent French family-owned group founded in 1921. With 6,000 employees, including 3,500 in France, the company provides industrial services, primarily to the oil and gas, energy, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and steel sectors. In 2023, it generated €1.24 billion in revenue. The company is 80% family-owned, with the remaining 20% held by its senior executives.

This thesis examines the strategies implemented by the company's directors to address the challenges of decarbonisation while ensuring continued profitability.

In a global context of growing environmental awareness, decarbonisation has become an inescapable priority for businesses. International agreements such as the Paris Agreement, along with national policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, are placing increasing pressure on companies to adopt more sustainable practices. This transition to a low-carbon economy presents not only a regulatory challenge but also a strategic opportunity for businesses to differentiate themselves and drive innovation.

In this context, the research question explored in this thesis is: How do the constraints of decarbonisation influence the managerial practices of executives? This study investigates the issue by analysing the strategies adopted by managers in response to these constraints. The conceptual framework is based on corporate governance, managerial practices, and organisational resilience. The epistemological stance adopted by the researcher aligns with pragmatic constructivism, which posits that knowledge is constructed by individuals through their interactions with the world and should be both useful and applicable in real-world situations. The methodology follows a qualitative research approach. The study is based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with 20 managers from the family-owned group under investigation, capturing authentic and insightful verbatim accounts. Given the depth of analysis, the approach can be described as intensive.

Additionally, the research incorporates document analysis, including internal company materials such as the group's annual report and management committee reports. The study also draws on field observations made by the researcher during management committee meetings, providing further contextual insights.

¹⁶ CORHIS: EA 7400, Communication, Human Resources and Social Intervention Research Unit

Findings and managerial recommendations:

The results of this research show that managers are changing their governance to decarbonise and are integrating decarbonisation into all their strategic decisions. They recognise the need to be exemplary in implementing a decarbonisation policy, but are faced with the dilemmas that this entails. They know that decarbonisation can give them a competitive edge, but it requires careful and energy-consuming communication. The executives interviewed are finding it difficult to reconcile short-term accounting imperatives with long-term decarbonisation objectives. Managers are trying to make sense of decarbonisation. Decarbonisation requires a complex assessment of the company's performance.

These results call for the following managerial recommendations: It is vital to involve young people and establish participative governance with a forward-looking committee that has a right of veto over the company's strategy. There are doubts about the sincerity of companies when it comes to CSR, but it is crucial to persevere, to set an example and to continually raise awareness of these issues in order to bring about gradual change. Transparency and quality of communication are essential to convince stakeholders of the importance of CSR objectives, over and above regulatory obligations, and to avoid greenwashing. Family businesses, with their vision, are able to manage both short-term financial accounting and long-term carbon accounting. Adopting sincere and transparent practices in terms of CSR and decarbonisation can become a differentiating factor for the company, strengthening its credibility with customers and stakeholders. Setting up environmental measurement and reporting systems is complex and requires considerable rigour to avoid approximations and greenwashing. Although these efforts are essential, it is necessary to reduce their complexity.

Impact of the DBA and dissemination of results:

These recommendations will help engage young people and establish participative governance with a foresight committee to enhance the company's capacity for innovation and adaptability. They will support perseverance in CSR efforts despite existing doubts and contribute to ongoing awareness-raising, thereby improving stakeholder credibility and commitment. They will also facilitate transparent communication to prevent greenwashing, reinforce the importance of CSR objectives, promote the model of independent family businesses, and encourage the adoption of sincere CSR and decarbonisation practices, ultimately differentiating companies and strengthening their credibility. Finally, these recommendations will simplify environmental measurement systems while maintaining their rigour to ensure continued effectiveness.

Personal testimonial:

The DBA enhances the skills of managers by enabling them to develop innovative solutions based on applied research. It strengthens their credibility and influence within their professional ecosystem.

DBA Dissemination:

Blazewicz, P. J. (2024). Comprendre l'influence des limites planétaires sur les prises de décisions : *Cas des dirigeants d'une ETI familiale française*. 24ème Colloque et séminaire doctoral international de l'ISEOR.

Blazewicz, P. J. (2023). Dirigeants et décisions : Comprendre les spécificités des dilemmes décisionnels au sein d'un groupe familial indépendant. 23ème Colloque et séminaire doctoral international de l'ISEOR.

Huaqiang CAI,
lighting the way of managers for global expansion efforts.



Introduction:

Dr. Huaqiang CAI, aged 47, is the Managing Chairman of Zhonghua Education and Technology Co, Ltd, a management training and consulting firm with operations in China and Singapore. He also serves as Executive Director of the Shanghai International Chamber of Commerce. His thesis supervisor was Pr. Marie-Laure Gavard-Perret, from Grenoble IAE-INP, UGA.

Theme of the thesis: 'Effects on Personal and Corporate Performance of Cross-Cultural Traits Inspired by the Lewis Culture Model: The Case of Chinese Small and Medium-Sized Private Manufacturers in Medical and Healthcare Sectors'.

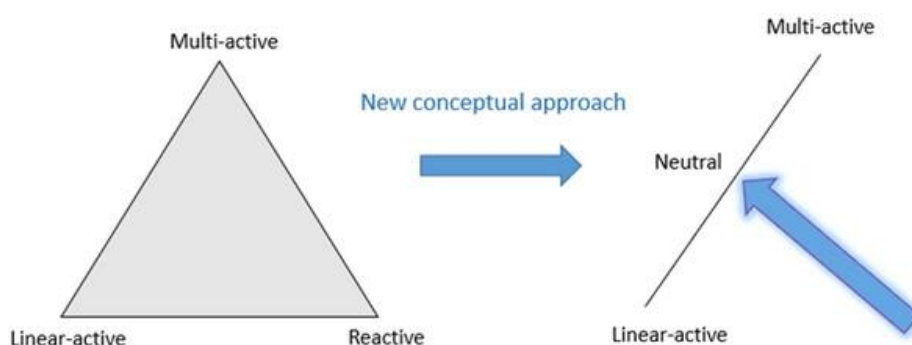
This thesis examines whether specific cultural orientations and traits can enhance the overseas business performance of executives from Chinese small and medium-sized private manufacturers in the medical and healthcare sectors. The study focuses on cultural profiles that align with those of business counterparts in major target markets, particularly the USA and Europe. The research findings aim to guide Chinese businesses and entrepreneurs in their global expansion efforts.

Conceptual framework:

The thesis employs the Lewis LMR (Linear-active, Multi-active, and Reactive) model rather than the Hofstede or GLOBE frameworks. The Lewis Culture Model offers a more comprehensive approach through 30 detailed traits applicable at both individual and group levels. These three cultural profiles (LMR) thoroughly describe the behavioural and psychological characteristics, offering a fundamentally pragmatic guideline for understanding a variety of cultural traits. Lewis stresses that the majority of individuals, although linear-active, multi-active or reactive as a dominant cultural profile, are mostly hybrid.

Methodology:

The thesis therefore proposes a transformation of Lewis's triangular model into a linear continuum. This new conceptualization flattens the three-dimensional model (linear-active, multi-active, and reactive) into a single straight line, with linear-active and multi-active traits representing opposite ends of the spectrum and a neutral position at the centre.



New conceptualization based on the 30 cultural traits from the Lewis Model

Findings:

Based on the analysis of over 100 validated questionnaires, the thesis confirms four key conclusions:

- Descriptive statistics reveal that Chinese business executives from private small and medium-sized medical and healthcare manufacturers typically occupy a middle position between linear-active and multi-active cultural poles.
- Linear regression analysis demonstrates that senior executives who display more linear-active traits achieve higher personal performance in overseas markets.
- Further regression analysis confirms that higher personal performance directly correlates with improved corporate performance in overseas markets.
- PROCESS Macro analysis establishes that personal performance serves as a mediator between executives' cultural traits and their companies' overseas market performance.

Contributions and recommendations:

This thesis advances theoretical understanding in several ways. First, it expands existing cross-cultural literature by examining cultural models within the Chinese context, specifically applying the Lewis Culture Model to Chinese business executives from small and medium-sized medical and healthcare manufacturers operating internationally. Second, it offers a novel conceptualization of Chinese cultural profiles, positioning them in a neutral position between linear-active and multi-active types, rather than in the traditionally assumed reactive category. This reconceptualization both eliminates overlapping traits and better reflects the compromise-oriented mindset characteristic of Chinese business culture.

Methodologically, this thesis offers several significant contributions. It provides valuable empirical data on business executives in the Chinese context, examining their cultural traits, target markets, sector-specific characteristics, and both personal and corporate performance metrics. Additionally, it develops a novel operationalization of the Lewis Culture Model specifically for Chinese business executives, transforming the traditional three-dimensional model into a simplified linear continuum. This adaptation, with its clearly defined opposing poles, enables more precise measurement and practical application in research settings.

This thesis demonstrates the successful adaptation of the Lewis Culture Model to the Chinese business context, revealing its utility in predicting both personal and corporate performance outcomes. The newly developed measurement tool provides organizations with a practical means to assess the cultural compatibility of candidates, employees, and managers with target markets and business partners. This streamlined assessment approach enables more effective cultural alignment in international business operations.

Implementation of recommendations:

From a practical standpoint, this thesis offers valuable insights for Chinese companies engaged in international business. Such organizations can apply these findings to optimize their recruitment strategies, selecting management candidates whose cultural traits align with those of overseas partners and target markets. Additionally, companies can develop targeted training programs, courses, and workshops to help managers cultivate cultural orientations that enhance business effectiveness in specific overseas markets, particularly fostering linear-active traits for success in U.S. and European markets.

Marjorie COUSYN,

The DBA as a means to broaden horizons, strengthen expertise, and gain recognition for one's role.

le cnam



Introduction:

Marjorie Cousyn, a French national with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, currently heads the National Training Centre for the National Gendarmerie's technical and administrative support corps. In the army, the military support corps (CMS) are the equivalent of corporate support functions (covering HR, logistics, finance, property affairs and catering). Specifically for the Gendarmerie, the CMS also include vehicle mechanics and the armoury.

The DBA was defended and obtained in 2019, at the CNAM, in Paris.

Previously, Marjorie Cousyn was head of the training support division, with the rank of commander, in charge of HR, budget and security, at the École de Gendarmerie in Fontainebleau, a school that trains volunteer deputy gendarmes. Her initial objectives in taking the DBA at the CNAM - which she chose rather than follow the curriculum at the École de Guerre, for which she had also been selected - were as follows: to familiarise herself with the rigour and richness of management sciences, to develop expertise and legitimacy in management, to gain a certain perspective on the positioning of the CMS and to establish an indisputable skills base to definitively establish the existence of the CMS within the Gendarmerie.

DBA journey:

"L'intendance suivra: une mission militaire singulière" is the title of the DBA thesis defended by Marjorie Cousyn under the supervision of Professor Alain Bauer at the CNAM. The research focuses on the evolution of the Corps Militaires de Soutien (CMS) within the Gendarmerie. The objective was both to take a historical perspective on the existing structure and, using a qualitative methodology based on semi-structured interviews and surveys, to examine the strategy and development of the CMS in order to establish it as a recognised, sustainable, and better-structured entity. The CMS must continuously justify its existence in an increasingly constrained budgetary environment. Moreover, at first glance, their support functions might seem more suited to civilian personnel rather than military staff. The research was conducted within the framework of organisational theory applied to organisational transformations. The originality of the study lies in its exploration of this issue within the unique context of the military. Marjorie Cousyn engaged in action research, both as an observer and as an active participant in the study. This epistemological stance was particularly relevant, given the nature of the research and her role as an OCTA (Operations Support Officer).

Managerial recommendations:

The recommendations for action are clearly articulated and structured. The first set focuses on developing a genuine employer brand to ensure that the CMS's image aligns with its identity and values. It proposes enhancing recruitment by increasing the visibility of available career opportunities and reviewing the associated remuneration packages. A second strand highlights the specific added value that CMS personnel provide as "project coaches" or even "business partners." It suggests a greater integration of CMS into operational manoeuvres, particularly by preparing them in advance through more specialised training tailored to their areas of expertise. Marjorie Cousyn's experience of the DBA programme has been one of great intellectual stimulation, opening doors to *new worlds*, new ways of perceiving and analysing organisational reality that she was previously unfamiliar with. It has allowed her to develop a new perspective that complements the traditional Gendarmerie culture. The real challenge has been time management, balancing operational and personal priorities with a demanding family life. This constraint had to be managed while maintaining the academic rigour required for deep reflection - an approach that contrasts with the often fast-paced and reactive nature of a Gendarmerie officer's role.

Impact of the DBA and dissemination of results:

On a personal level, undertaking the DBA at CNAM enabled Marjorie Cousyn to sharpen her critical analysis skills and broaden her intellectual horizons. Drawing on the ideas of leading authors and comparative case studies, she was able to stimulate her creative thinking and explore alternative approaches to the issues she was studying.

Her professional development has also benefited directly from her doctoral research. In her own words, the real conclusion of her work is that training is one of the main levers for preparing young recruits—around 600 per year—as they enter the institution. These young recruits have made the deliberate choice to join the military support corps and need to be retained. *"And that's what led me to my job, because I wanted to play a part in reaching this conclusion."*

As head of the National Training Centre for the National Gendarmerie's technical and administrative support corps, she is now gradually renovating the training systems that she oversees. For example, as part of efforts to enhance the CMS's legitimacy and identity, the Gendarmerie's highly practical vehicle training (Centaure) - which was previously outsourced - has been brought in-house, in line with the recommendations outlined in her DBA thesis.

The DBA has also strengthened her influence within the organisation. She has shared her research findings widely and, with the legitimacy conferred by the DBA, has played a leading role in a national working group for the Command of National Gendarmerie Schools (CEGN). She became the key reference figure within this working group, and the organisation officially entrusted her with the task of reflecting - beyond her current role as head of the centre - on concrete strategies for structuring, positioning, and legitimising the military support corps, particularly in the areas of training, recruitment, and communication.

Personal testimony:

"I was fascinated by access to the world of research and the cross-disciplinary nature of knowledge, and by the fact that I was immersed in an environment of transmission and teaching, while at the same time sharing this intellectual and personal adventure with the other CNAM DBA students. I had the opportunity to exchange ideas, particularly during the practical writing workshops, in a stimulating spirit of mutual support."

Following the CNAM DBA programme enabled Marjorie Cousyn to take the time to reflect widely and deeply on the challenges facing the Gendarmerie Nationale's support corps. This led her to examine the status and future of this specific category of Gendarmerie officers (OCTAs) and the sources of their legitimacy from a management science research perspective. Her research allowed her to develop recommendations for action aimed at strengthening their skills and enhancing their career prospects.

These are all areas that her current position allows her to address, benefiting from the expertise and openness to management sciences that her DBA at CNAM has provided.

Giorgos Dimitriou,
from deputy head of innovation
at the European Defense Agency
to Founder of the Circular Economy Research Centre.



Introduction:

Dr. Giorgos Dimitriou shares his time between Brussels and Cyprus as the Research, Technology and Innovation Coordinator for the European Defense Agency. When he joined the Ecole des Ponts Business School Executive DBA programme he was working as a Cabinet staff member for Commissioner Christos Stylianides of the Humanitarian Aid & Crisis Management at the European Commission. At that time, he was unsure of the next chapter in his career as his interests included negotiations, diplomacy, K-12 education in the area of entrepreneurship, as well as emerging technology and sustainable development.

He decided to join the first edition of the Ecole des Ponts Executive DBA programme in 2015 as a way to create and disseminate expertise that would help him write the next chapter of his career.

During the programme his research led him to focus increasingly on the emerging discipline of the circular economy and the convergence of new technologies, new business models and circular economy principles.

The EPBS Executive DBA journey:

At the start of the doctoral programme, Giorgos was put in a Braintrust of 3 other doctoral students who would act as peer-reviewers and joint travelers on his Executive DBA journey. Despite some false starts in terms of desired research focus, with the help and feedback of his peers, Giorgos ended up clear in his desired focus and enamored with the principles and promise of the circular economy. Beyond the philosophy, he saw the practical implications and how this could be a superior business model for companies, regions, governments, and societies.

His doctoral project consisted of three publications:

1. A teaching case with teaching note: The European Union Decision Making Process.
2. An integrative literature review: Literature Review on the Circular economy and the Internet of Things.
3. An embedded case study: Pairing the Circular Economy and the Internet of Things: An Embedded Case Study of IoT as Root to the Circular Economy.

He defended his research in March 2019 and graduated in December 2019.

Impact of the EPBS Executive DBA:

On the basis of his newly-acquired research skills, Giorgos moved to the European Defense Agency as deputy head of innovation and research, and helped to author the European Union's text on the application of circular economy principles to the defense industry across the EU. He has also chaired several high level working groups across the European Commission and European Union relative to the development and financing of Circular Economy initiatives across the EU. He has also been invited as a keynote speaker in the US (Harvard Business School), Japan, Greece, Cyprus, Finland and elsewhere to share his knowledge and expertise relative to the Circular Economy.

Dissemination of the findings:

In addition to the impact generated on the European Commission and Union, after completing his Executive DBA, Giorgos approached his alma mater, Ecole des Ponts Business School, with a project to create the Circular Economy Research Centre (CERC). Since its creation, the CERC has been awarded 8 EU-funded research grants as part of multi-party academic and industrial consortia, making it a leading voice in the circular economy in Europe and around the planet. Many of the school's doctoral students have since decided to adopt a circular economy focus and contribute to the CERC's research projects.

Since completing the EDBA at Ecole des Ponts, Giorgos has published 13 articles, co-authored 1 book, contributed to 4 book chapters, published 9 conference papers as well as 2 preprints.

On ResearchGate he now has a research interest score of 318.6, 344 citations and an h-index of 10 - all worthy of a seasoned researcher.

Conclusion:

Dr. Giorgos Demetriou's doctoral journey shows how finding a research focus that is both emerging and practice-related can quickly establish someone as a world-leading expert in their field of focus. The ripple effects of his research and the ensuing dedication to advancing the circular economy across the globe have had a positive impact already and can be expected to continue to do so.

Selected Publications:

Damianou, A., Vayona, A., Demetriou, G., & Katos, V. (2023). An actionable maturity planning model for smart, circular cities. *Cities*, 140, 104403.

Papamichael, I., Pappas, G., Siegel, J. E., & others. (2023). Metaverse and circular economy. *Waste Management & Research*, 41(9), 1393-1398. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734242X231180406>

Ruiz-Ocampo, H., Katusic, V., & Demetriou, G. (2023). Chapter 1 - Closing the loop in water management. In M. G. Zamparas & G. L. Kyriakopoulos (Eds.), *Water management and circular economy* (pp. 3-24). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-95280-4.00008-4>

Hassan HAIDAR,
Rethinking Battery Recycling of Electric Vehicles.



Introduction:

Hassan Haidar, a 47-year-old professional with dual Lebanese and German nationality, has 20 years of experience in the Automotive Engineering sector. He currently serves as Chief Technology Officer and Board Member at Panasonic Automotive Systems Europe. His educational background includes a Bachelor of Engineering in Communication & Electronics Engineering (Bac+5) from Beirut Arab University in Lebanon, a Master of Science in Telecommunication and Media Engineering from Hochschule Offenburg in Germany, an MBA in General Management from Hochschule Darmstadt in Germany, and an Executive Doctorate in Business Administration (EDBA) from IAE-Nice, Université Côte d'Azur in France.

Topic and Research Question:

Under the supervision of Professor Mantiaba Coulibaly, the study focuses on the application of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles to improve global electric battery recycling, with particular emphasis on the weaknesses of the European system, notably the export of second-hand vehicles to developing countries, which limits the effectiveness of incentive and regulatory models within the European Union (EU).

Managerial Question: How can companies and stakeholders collaborate effectively to develop a sustainable battery recycling model that aligns economic, environmental, and regulatory objectives in an international framework?

Research Problem: How could the application of CSR principles, combined with changes in the EU Electric Vehicle (EV) incentive model, promote global electric battery recycling while overcoming barriers related to governance, infrastructure, and economic incentives?

Theoretical Framework:

EU governments are pushing EV growth by offering various incentives. When cars reach their End of Life (EOL) in the EU, they are recycled properly under the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Scheme, but if the cars are exported outside the EU (mainly to developing countries) then the EPR scheme is no longer applicable. This is the case for around 36% of vehicles annually. The research focuses on such leakage, exploring what happens to vehicles when they reach their EOL in developing countries, and in what ways the application of CSR principles can guarantee proper recycling worldwide.

Methodology:

Hassan Haidar employed a qualitative research approach, using semi-structured interviews with an elite group of subject-matter experts as the primary data collection method. His research provides a comprehensive analysis of the current recycling landscape, highlighting both challenges and opportunities. This exploratory qualitative study was based on a thematic analysis of 21 semi-structured interviews conducted with experts representing a wide range of stakeholders, including government agencies and regulators, recyclers, OEMs, and environmental advocacy groups. These interviews offered a deep understanding of the topic, incorporating diverse perspectives from key players in the field.

Theoretical and practical implications:

This research provides both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for addressing the challenges of EV battery recycling and management.

On a practical level, the study proposes three key recommendations:

1. The adoption of a Battery Deposit Concept by the EU, where a deposit is attached to electric vehicle batteries (EVBs) and refunded when batteries are recycled, regardless of where in the world the recycling takes place.
2. The expansion of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) into a cross-border framework, ensuring that EPR obligations follow the product across borders.
3. The conversion of Plug-in Hybrid Vehicles (PHEVs) into Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles before exporting them to developing countries, thereby keeping the batteries within the EU for proper recycling and management.

On a theoretical level, the research offers invaluable contributions to several frameworks:

- It enhances Carroll's CSR Pyramid by advocating for the elevation of ethical responsibility from a voluntary expectation to a required obligation for incentive-driven products like EVs.
- It strengthens stakeholder theory by demonstrating the commitment of manufacturers, governments, and recyclers to the proper management of EV batteries, regardless of their geographical location, and by emphasising the necessity of robust governance, particularly in developing countries.
- It underscores the relevance of co-opetition theory, highlighting how competing businesses and stakeholders can collaborate to address global sustainability challenges effectively.

This study is a transformative addition to the field, bridging the gap between theory and practice while proposing actionable solutions for advancing sustainable EV battery management on a global scale.

Managerial Impacts:

This research presents two key managerial impacts, offering practical solutions to enhance battery recycling practices.

The first proposed solution is the Battery Deposit Concept, modelled after Germany's "Pfand" deposit system for beverage containers. This innovative approach involves attaching a refundable deposit to EV batteries, incentivizing both end-users and recyclers to return batteries for proper recycling. By making recycling financially rewarding, this concept encourages responsible behaviour and ensures that batteries are handled appropriately at the end of their lifecycle.

The second solution emphasises the need to expand Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) into a cross-border framework. A cross-border EPR system would hold manufacturers accountable for the entire lifecycle of their products, even when EVs are exported to developing countries with limited recycling infrastructure. This approach ensures global responsibility and supports the development of sustainable recycling systems worldwide.

These recommendations are set to be proposed to the European Economic and Social Committee of the European Union around March 2025, paving the way for actionable policy changes that could revolutionise EV battery recycling practices across borders.

Hongye HUI,
fostering engagement level and transformation leadership.



Introduction:

At the age of 49, Hongye Hui is now the founder-leader of RunPin electronics which was founded in 2021 specializing in Chemical Mechanical Planarization (CMP) materials and consumables for the semiconductor sector. Before engaging in this high-tech start-up, he had over 20 years of semiconductor related work experience at the managerial and executive level, covering technical applications, manufacturing, and sales & marketing. His thesis was supervised by Pr. Delphine Lacaze from Aix-Marseille Graduate School of Management (IAE Aix-en-Provence).

Thesis topic: “The impacts of founder's leadership style on employees' loyalty in Chinese high-tech start-ups”.

The central theme of this thesis delves into the interplay between leadership styles and employee loyalty, with a particular emphasis on the unique cultural and operational contexts of Chinese high-tech start-ups. The managerial issue at hand revolves around how varying leadership styles can instigate an environment conducive to trust, ultimately leading to enhanced employee loyalty and lower turnover rates. The research question lies in identifying effective leadership strategies that cater to diverse employee needs while navigating the complex socio-cultural landscape of China.

Conceptual framework:

The conceptual framework is grounded in two primary theories: Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and Social Exchange Theory (SET). LMX emphasizes the quality of relationships between leaders and employees, proposing that higher-quality exchanges foster greater loyalty. SET posits that employee loyalty emerges as a reciprocal response to organizational support, indicating that trust environments established through positive leadership behaviors are critical for promoting lasting employee loyalty.

Methodology:

This research employs a qualitative methodology, incorporating in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to explore the perceptions and experiences of employees in Chinese high-tech start-ups regarding leadership styles and their influence on loyalty. The qualitative framework enables a deeper understanding of the nuanced relationships and contextual situations shaping employee engagement.

Findings:

The findings from this study indicate a significant correlation between transformational leadership styles and enhanced employee loyalty. Employees reported that leaders who exhibited high emotional intelligence, fostered open communication, and prioritized team empowerment not only built trust but also cultivated a supportive and engaging work environment. Additionally, a clear pattern emerged showing that an organization's prevailing trust environment significantly mediated the relationship between leadership style and employee loyalty.

Contributions and recommendations:

1. **Promote Transformational Leadership:** Encourage leaders to adopt transformational styles that emphasize inspiration, empathy, and personal connections to foster trust and loyalty among employees.
2. **Foster a Trust-Based Environment:** Establish policies and practices that enhance transparency, communication, and collaboration, thereby cultivating a culture where employees feel safe to express their ideas and concerns.
3. **Implement Training Programs:** Provide leaders with training on emotional intelligence and conflict resolution to equip them with the necessary skills to manage diverse employee needs and foster collaboration.
4. **Encourage Employee Involvement:** Create opportunities for employees to contribute to decision-making processes, ensuring that their perspectives are valued and that they feel a sense of ownership in the organization.
5. **Evaluate Organizational Culture Regularly:** Conduct periodic assessments of organizational culture and employee sentiment regarding trust and loyalty, using feedback to make necessary adjustments.

Implementation of recommendations:

By adopting the outlined recommendations, organizations are likely to experience higher employee engagement levels, improved retention rates, and overall enhanced organizational performance. Establishing a trust-rich environment will position start-ups competitively in the market, as employees who feel valued and committed are more likely to contribute positively to organizational objectives. The practical implications of this study extend not only to human resources management strategies but also to the larger discourse on leadership effectiveness in culturally specific contexts, such as in China.

Ashish KAKAR,

from banking professional to financial researcher and consultant through the DBA journey.

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Introduction:

Dr. Ashish Kakar is a Singaporean citizen and resident. Currently, Ashish heads Financial Insights research for IDC Asia Pacific. IDC is a premier intelligence company focusing on technology research. Ashish owns the banking and insurance vertical, where he advises banks, CXO, and large technology vendors on financial services research trends and their banking applications. In this role, Ashish has been featured on Channel News Asia, a prominent Southeast News Channel, and has been featured in many newspaper articles. Before joining the Global DBA program, Ashish was a banker with 16 years of experience in regional roles at Citibank. After working for more than a decade as a practitioner, Ashish wanted to explore the confluence of theory and practice, which was one of the main motivations for joining the Global DBA program and exploring new possibilities of practical improvements through a research-based approach.

The DBA journey:

Thesis: Driving venture capital funding efficiencies through data-driven models. Why is this important, and what are its implications for the startup ecosystem?

Dr. Ashish Kakar's research (thesis defense: 25th January 2024) was driven by a passion for reducing financial sector inefficiencies. As a practitioner, he had witnessed these inefficiencies firsthand. The focus was narrowed to asset management for the following reasons.

1. Historically, innovation and nations' economic growth are correlated. Research has indicated that innovation requires startups.
2. Startups require risky capital that is best funded through venture capital.
3. Venture capital investments have often been compared to bets, with most investments not yielding results.
4. Funding startups is akin to buying illiquid options. The startups must survive through to their potential exit for investor returns.

In this context, the research questions were:

- Could the efficiency of the venture capital funding process be improved through machine learning models?
 - a. Can machine learning algorithms help define which startups to fund?
 - b. The thesis also discussed the illiquidity of VC investments until exit. Can machine learning help predict a startup's survival?
- Patents are often considered a leading indicator of innovation. Do patents help startups achieve long-term viability, funding attractiveness, and exit feasibility?
- Are there regional and sectoral variations requiring the algorithm to be tuned for different regions and industry segments?

The study was completed using mixed methods. As the intent was to build machine learning models, quantitative techniques were the predominant model. The samples were taken from industry and public sources:

- A sample of 420 artificial intelligence startups from Crunchbase across Europe, the US, and Asia was analyzed to understand the drivers for follow-up funding.
- A sample of 50 startups from an accelerator partner to help build an algorithm for first funding.
- The thesis collected a sample of 196 sustainability startups from Crunchbase to test an algorithmic approach for survivability.

The tests showed that machine learning algorithms could be effective as an evaluation tool.

Impact of the DBA:

The project was also successful due to its impact. For Ashish, the project led to new learning. Some of the key takeaways from this degree are as follows:

Personal impact:

Learning is a continuous journey. As a student pursuing a doctorate after much work experience, Ashish (i) underestimated the effort and (ii) overestimated the value of experience. DBA rigor provided a reality check and reinforced the value of constant learning. A lifelong focus on learning has been inculcated. The programme instills a newfound confidence, and that is visible in Ashish. As career professionals, we have multiple priorities to juggle. A DBA requires focus, but so does the job. That is what makes this degree even more valuable. It is earned through grit and tenacity. A DBA aspirant lacks the luxury of time that a full-time student has. Regular effort is required, and that must be carefully planned to be effective. As a result, completion of this degree instilled a new confidence in him. Another significant learning for Ashish during his DBA journey was gaining a deep appreciation for the extensive body of academic work. He realized that practical business applications often stem from academic theories. In the business world, managers frequently rely on their own ideas, often informed by limited personal experiences, to address problems. In contrast, academic research is built on scientifically studying patterns and deriving insights. Ashish came to value the ideal balance between the two: practical applications firmly grounded in academic theory—an understanding that became clear to him through his DBA experience.

Ashish also engaged in corporate interactions during the process.

Professional impact:

Ashish socialized the idea and found industry acceptance. Some of the industry/ecosystem wins included.

Active industry participation. Many of the data models mentioned in the thesis were built in partnerships with venture capital/accelerators and tested with real-life investment decisions. Strong ecosystem support, including:

- a. A government grant for the startup based on this context.
- b. The startup was featured as a challenger in a country's fintech festival.
- c. A poster on the approach was accepted as a part of the 4th Sophia AI summit.

A sovereign investor has recently indicated that they want to consider a partnership to pursue the idea further.

While there is a corporate interest, the key objective is societal change. The process is at an early stage.

Societal change:

Democratizing startup funding was, and continues to be, a central objective of Ashish's thesis. By employing an algorithmic approach, his work aims to level the playing field to some extent, contributing to greater fairness and accessibility in the startup funding landscape—a key goal of his corporate interactions. This approach also holds potential for application in other areas, such as inclusion and microfinance, two critical sectors for global development. Beyond his research, Ashish is actively working on the dissemination of his findings, ensuring that his insights and learnings reach a broader audience to maximize their societal impact.

Dissemination of the findings:

For Ashish, dissemination involves both the corporate and academic worlds. A paper on this approach will be submitted to corporate journals within the first quarter of 2025. The journal paper will come in addition to the published poster.

Personal testimonial:

The thesis and journey can be best summarized In Ashish's own words:

"Earning a DBA has been a transformative experience, a journey that I thoroughly enjoyed. While the journey has not been an easy one, the journey has let me reinvent myself, and realize my research talents. I have enjoyed every part of the journey whether it was classroom learning, interacting with my new colleagues, thinking through a real-world problem, and realising it was a research gap, and conducting the research. I also want to caution others embarking on this journey. Only proceed if you are passionate about finding a solution to a problem. It can be a lonely journey and challenging as you are creating knowledge. Do not underestimate the effort required. But if you think you can do it, go ahead. You will never regret the decision".

Conclusion:

In summary, Ashish's journey exemplifies the success of tackling a challenging topic, engaging industry stakeholders early on to build awareness and foster partnerships, and ultimately delivering impactful results. Notably, his thesis defense was fully accepted on the first attempt, underscoring the quality and relevance of his work.

Michelle LAGRAVE,
Mentoring and talent retention in
multinationals.



Introduction:

Michelle Lagrave, 40, is a seasoned international professional with over ten years of experience in talent management. With an Executive Doctorate in Business Administration (EDBA) from IAE Nice at the Université Côte d'Azur, she combines academic rigour with practical expertise. She is based in Switzerland. As Global Manager of Coaching and Mentoring at Philip Morris International, Michelle designed and implemented innovative mentoring programmes that have reached over 2,500 participants across 82 countries. These initiatives have strengthened leadership skills, accelerated the adoption of an inclusive culture, and significantly improved talent retention.

Topic and question:

The topic of this research, conducted under the supervision of Professor Marc Valax, examines how formal mentoring programmes can strengthen organisational culture and enhance talent retention in companies operating in virtual and multicultural environments.

The central research question is: *How can mentoring serve as a strategic lever for preserving and enriching organisational culture in global and virtual contexts?*

Conceptual framework:

This thesis is grounded in two well-established theoretical frameworks:

- Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which examines how individuals acquire new skills through observation and interaction.
- Weick's Sensemaking Theory, which analyses how employees interpret and make sense of complex organisational changes.

These frameworks provide insights into the role of mentoring in fostering inclusive environments and collaborative learning, both of which are essential for multinational organisations.

Methodology:

Adopting a rigorous ethnographic methodology, this study analysed a global mentoring programme within a large multinational company over a three-year period. Data collection was based on semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and quantitative data extracted from digital mentoring platforms. This approach bridges theory and practice while generating applicable and actionable results.

Findings:

The findings indicate that mentoring fosters:

- Psychologically safe environments that support learning and innovation.
- A significant increase in employee engagement, leading to higher retention rates in virtual teams.
- Stronger integration of organisational values across different cultures and regions.

These impacts are reflected in higher participant satisfaction and the development of an organisational culture aligned with strategic objectives.

Managerial recommendations:

1. Institutionalise mentoring: Develop formal mentoring programmes, supported by digital tools, to improve the transmission of organisational values.
2. Train mentors: Include modules on intercultural skills and the effective use of virtual platforms.
3. Measure impact: Establish clear performance indicators to assess the effectiveness of mentoring programmes.
4. Promote inclusion: Ensure mentorships reflect a diversity of profiles, strengthening collaboration and innovation.

Impact of the DBA and dissemination of results:

The recommendations were gradually implemented within the organisation, leading to tangible results:

- A well-established mentoring culture, with participation increasing from 750 to 2,600 participants in just two years.
- External recognition, winning the “*Most Impactful Mentoring Programme*” award in 2023.
- Stronger alignment between the company's strategic objectives and cultural transformation, demonstrating the effectiveness of mentoring as a key driver of organisational change.

Academic and professional contribution:

This thesis makes a twofold contribution:

- Theoretical: Enriching the literature on mentoring, particularly in virtual and multicultural environments.
- Practical: Providing a replicable model for organisations seeking to transform their culture and improve talent retention.

It also highlights the academic rigour and impact of the EDBA, demonstrating its scientific and societal relevance.

Kamahunda MULAMBA,
an entrepreneur in search of innovation.

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Introduction:

Kamahunda Mulamba is the head of a digital services company operating in several African countries since 2019. An engineer by training, he began his career in telecommunications, working for companies such as France Telecom and Alcatel, before co-founding his first software company. After selling his business in 2007, he turned his attention to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), working as an entrepreneur and consultant on international projects. Following the launch of Africatik, an EdTech initiative aimed at enhancing the DRC's education system, Mr. Mulamba felt the need to take a step back to gain a deeper understanding of innovation in emerging economies. This motivated him to embark on a DBA in 2021, while continuing to develop his business.

DBA journey:

Mr Mulamba chose the CNAM DBA to explore a subject close to his heart: *"What innovation strategies for grassroots players in Africa? – The case of the DRC."* He was supervised by Alexis Pokrovsky, Senior Lecturer at CNAM, and successfully defended his research in December 2024, earning the title of DBA.

His research examines the conditions and mechanisms that foster the development of original innovations in the African context, which is characterised by significant constraints and high uncertainty. Drawing inspiration from the work of S. Sarasvathy, N. Radjou, and C.K. Prahalad, Mr Mulamba sought to understand how to innovate effectively with limited resources, a central challenge for his start-up, Africatik.

His research highlights the importance of culture and 'techno-imaginaries' in the dissemination and appropriation of technologies. By revisiting the historical figure of the blacksmith king in the DRC - a symbol of innovation and reinvention – Mr. Mulamba illustrates how innovators adapt new knowledge to their specific context to create practical and meaningful applications for society.

His research methodology followed an abductive approach, alternating between theory and practice, with three main stages:

1. A comparison of innovation management theories with the history of the DRC, exploring Congolese imaginaries.
2. Field research based on three concrete cases of innovative solutions in the DRC: Africatik (Edtech), Maishapay (a Fintech) and the implementation of an e-administration system.
3. A feedback loop with theory, allowing for the identification of value-creating innovation recommendations.

Mr Mulamba proposes concrete recommendations for managing innovation through a five-stage process, taking local contexts into account: ideation, prototyping, initial realisation, replication, and industrialisation. He also advocates for the development of a National Innovation System (SNI) in the DRC, fostering stronger interaction between public administrations, universities, and businesses. This, he argues, is particularly crucial in technological and digital sectors, where local skills must be reinforced to sustain long-term innovation.

Impact of the DBA and dissemination of results:

Returning to the academic world marked a significant step in Mr Mulamba's personal and professional journey. The weekly workshops on the DBA programme provided a welcome intellectual break from daily pressures, offering the perspective needed to analyse and refine his professional practices. This enabled him to identify actionable solutions to the specific challenges faced in the African countries where his start-up operates.

During the programme, Mr Mulamba developed new analytical skills, enhancing his ability to assess complex situations and formulate recommendations grounded in recent research. For example, by revisiting innovation theories from the perspective of appropriation and use, he was able to adjust the development strategy for an application that his company is now deploying across 14 African countries in partnership with an international telecoms operator.

He has also begun to integrate the C-K innovative design approach, incorporating cultural dimensions of usage. This has led him to explore how globally available open-source knowledge and technologies can be adapted to meet the specific needs of innovators in emerging markets.

On the entrepreneurial front, the DBA's findings have directly influenced the strategic transformation of his start-up, Africatik. The company is now evolving into a hub for aggregating inclusive educational content, produced by contributors from across Africa and distributed via multiple platforms. This transformation aims to address the growing demand for education in Africa while strengthening its societal impact, particularly by promoting national languages within education systems.

Additionally, through collaborations with administrations, universities, and businesses in the DRC, as well as by engaging with business incubators in Kinshasa, Mr Mulamba hopes to foster a 'jugaad' innovation ecosystem in the DRC and Africa. By participating in exchange networks between African countries, Europe, and India, he aims to promote user-driven technology appropriation through contextually adapted innovation strategies.

To disseminate his research, he has taken initial steps by participating in international conferences and submitting his work to academic journals for publication. His engagements with UNESCO and other international donors emphasise the importance of a contextualised approach to fostering innovation in Africa.

Personal testimony:

"The Cnam's DBA programme was a transformative experience that profoundly reshaped my professional and personal perspective. I learned to observe myself in action, which redefined my practice. I now see strategy as an evolving process that must constantly adapt to available resources and external dynamics. Despite my initial training as an engineer, I am now comfortable with the idea of managing improvisation. I have the tools to navigate uncertainty and adapt quickly to complex, multicultural environments.

In the DBA programme, I particularly appreciated the support of the lecturers, who acted more as research partners, and the freedom to explore the theoretical fields that interested me. Although balancing my professional responsibilities with my DBA work was challenging, the programme allowed me to rediscover the pleasure of formalising my ideas through in-depth theoretical reading and survey analysis".

Conclusion:

To sum up, the DBA programme was a truly transformative experience for Mr. Mulamba, strengthening his confidence in his abilities while equipping him with tools to amplify his social impact. This journey has deepened his understanding of innovation strategies in constrained environments and enabled him to actively participate in initiatives promoting sustainable development in the DRC and across Africa. Thanks to the skills he has acquired and his broadened vision, he now feels better prepared to contribute to innovative projects within companies, incubators, and universities that address the continent's economic and social needs.

Guy NGAYO FOTSO,
the DBA as a means to identify the key leadership skills for the
21st century.



Introduction:

Guy Major Ngayo Fotso is currently a consultant and professor. After several years of professional experience as a strategy and organisational transformation consultant, followed by roles as a marketing and strategy executive in various organisations, in 2015 he felt drawn to the academic world. His motivation was to develop his expertise in leadership development, an area in which he was formally recognised in 2010 through certification from Columbia University in New York. His DBA thesis, defended in April 2019, was supervised by Ariane Berthoin Antal, then a professor at Audencia.

DBA journey:

When Guy began his thesis, leadership and its development were often criticised in academic literature, and the popular press even suggested that there was a problem. His objective was to understand the differences in how young leaders perceive the leadership skills required for the 21st century. Despite the growing body of research on leadership skills since the late 1980s, organisations continued to struggle with the challenge of identifying the right set of skills to develop. This was a crucial issue, as it influenced the way leadership skills were cultivated and how future decision-makers were trained. Interviews with young leaders who had leadership experience in voluntary organisations, combined with some professional experience, provided valuable insights. The analysis of this data revealed both similarities and differences in how young leaders perceived the leadership skills essential for the 21st century.

Managerial recommendations:

These findings led to the conclusion that it is essential to distinguish between different categories of young people, rather than treating them all as a single "Millennial" group, as they do not share the same perspectives on leadership skills. The results also demonstrated that both traditional and emerging leadership theories remain relevant to young leaders in the 21st century. In practical terms, this research has contributed to the development of leadership training and development programmes specifically designed for young people. Finally, it has led to the proposal of a list of leadership competencies for the 21st century, reflecting the views of young leaders in developed countries.

Impact of the DBA and dissemination of results:

This research led to the founding of the Swiss Leadership Institute, which is headed by the author. The institute now provides consulting services in strategic leadership development, as well as leadership training for senior executives and future leaders. Following his DBA thesis, Dr Guy Ngayo Fotso has been invited as a speaker at major international events, including the Davos Economic Forum, the Moscow New Technologies Fair, and the Salon des Entrepreneurs in Senegal. Dr Guy Ngayo Fotso has also published around twenty scientific papers in leading academic journals. In addition, he authored the book *Leadership: The Essential Competencies for the 21st Century*, with another book currently in progress. He now teaches leadership at Lausanne Business School, Paris Business School, TBS Education, and the University of Applied Sciences in Fribourg, Switzerland.

Personal Testimonial:

"I decided to pursue my DBA at TBS Education after more than 15 years in senior positions in management consulting, marketing, and strategic management. I wanted to make a career transition to academia and focus more on leadership consulting. Since graduating, I have lectured at institutions in various countries, been invited as a guest speaker and expert panelist, and participated in several events and conferences. I have also developed my coaching and leadership consultancy organisations..."

Publications :

Guy Major Ngayo Fotso has published a dozen academic articles and a book. Here are his academic publications as sole author:

Ngayo Fotso, G. M. (2021). Leadership competencies for the 21st century: A review from the Western world literature. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 45(6/7), 566-587.

Ngayo Fotso, G. M. (2022). Exploring intra-generational differences among young millennial leaders on the perceived required leadership competencies for the 21st century. *Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10(1), 14-21.

Ngayo Fotso, G. M. (2022). Differences between senior human resources managers and young millennial leaders on the perceived required leadership competencies for the 21st century. *Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10(1), 5-13.

Ngayo Fotso, G. M. (2024). Generational differences on the leadership competencies for the 21st century: A literature review. *International Journal of Work Innovation*, 5(1), 22-36.

Ngayo Fotso, G. M. (2024). What are the leadership competencies for the 21st century? A qualitative study of French millennials at an elite business school in France. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 0, 1-14.

For some of his other publications as co-author see: <https://sciprofiles.com/profile/3163877>

Barbara OFSTAD,
The DBA: self-development and
spanning boundaries¹⁷.



Introduction:

Barbara Ofstad, a German national, is Head of Siemens Professional Education in Germany. In this strategic role, she leads a team of 280 professionals across 19 training centres nationwide. Each year, her department provides training for 3,500 work-linked students and apprentices.

In 2022, Barbara achieved a long-held ambition by obtaining her Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) from the Business Science Institute. Her motivation for undertaking the DBA stemmed from a desire to bridge the gap between industry and academia. She also aspired to teach and share her expertise with the next generation, seeing the DBA as an opportunity to make this vision a reality.

DBA journey:

Barbara focused her research on *“Spanning Boundaries in Digital Transformation: A Unique Mixed-Method Case Study of Learning in a Vocational Training Department.”* Under the supervision of Professor Anne Bartel-Radic, she explored how a vocational training department in a multinational company can navigate between traditional training methods and the demands of “new work” in the digital age. Her methodology combined qualitative and quantitative approaches, including 21 interviews with managers and learning experts, as well as an analysis of internal practices.

Managerial recommendations:

Barbara emphasised the importance of strengthening the role of “boundary spanning” by promoting trainers who can navigate fluidly between different training centres to disseminate information and introduce innovative learning methods. She also advocated for social and open learning, recommending the creation of collaborative environments and the implementation of “learning days” to foster knowledge sharing. Regarding leadership and organisational culture, Barbara stressed that leaders must act as role models, foster an atmosphere of trust, and allow dedicated time for learning to support digital transformation. She recommended adapting structures and processes to enhance organisational resilience, particularly by investing in specialised digital skills. She suggested using the “boundary spanning” model as a framework for other teams facing digital transformation challenges and encouraged exploring cross-departmental interactions to strengthen cooperation. Her research expanded this model by demonstrating its importance within a single entity and introducing the concept of “boundary spanning propensity”. With her doctorate, Barbara now feels validated in transferring the professional expertise she has gained from managing a high-responsibility position, balancing family life with three children, and meeting rigorous academic requirements.

Impact of the DBA and dissemination of results:

The DBA profoundly transformed Barbara's career. Under her leadership, the SiTecSkills Academy was established to provide training programmes for both internal and external workers and employees, incorporating partnerships with external academic institutions. In October 2024, she launched nine new free digital learning offerings, covering topics such as sustainability and robotics. Barbara has also championed virtual and blended learning, introducing 20-minute “learning nuggets” for workers and “learning days” for her team of trainers. Committed to diversity and inclusion, she has actively contributed to initiatives such as BayFiD - Bayerns Frauen in Digitalberufen and the CyberMentor programme, which encourage young girls to pursue careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). She is also engaged in social and educational initiatives. In April 2024, Siemens Professional Education in Frankfurt trained young

¹⁷ With contributions from Stephen Platt, Alumni Engagement Manager at the Business Science Institute

people in Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) situations, providing them with work placements and technical skills to prepare them for industrial apprenticeships. Previously, she managed apprenticeship preparation classes for refugees, supporting them through their final exams. Barbara also collaborates with the Confederation of German Employers (BDA) to promote training and tackle the national skills shortage in Germany.

The DBA has strengthened Barbara's skills in leadership, critical thinking, and academic research. With this qualification, she feels legitimate in both academic and professional spheres, making communication easier. Professionally, her career has accelerated. Professor Hansjosten invited her to join the teaching staff at his institution as soon as she completed her thesis, and since 2023, she has been teaching human resources management at Heilbronn University. On a societal level, Barbara has shared her knowledge by publishing an article in June 2024 following the joint OECD/Cedefop symposium on apprenticeships. In 2023, she spoke at the Deskless Work conference on how Siemens is improving the digital skills of industrial workers. She is also actively involved in initiatives to promote future skills and democratic values among young learners, collaborating with schools and organisations to drive educational innovation.

Barbara has disseminated the results of her research through academic publications and presentations. She has published in journals such as *M@n@gement* and *International Management, Resilience and Ethics*. Her contributions to international conferences such as AIMS, EIBA, and ATLAS AFMI demonstrate her commitment to sharing her knowledge. Since 2023, she has participated in thesis panels at the Business Science Institute, providing a valuable professional perspective and strengthening the links between business and academia. She also collaborates with professors such as Anne Bartel-Radic and Alain Cucchi on research related to boundary spanning and collaborative learning.

Barbara's recent activities illustrate her commitment to vocational training and innovation. Through the SIEYA platform, she is making the concept of STEM accessible to young talent. By supporting training programmes focused on green transformation, her work helps prepare learners for the environmental challenges of today.

Personal testimonial:

“The DBA was an extraordinary adventure that redefined my professional and personal path. Being able to combine my managerial experience with academic expertise opened doors I had never imagined. One of the highlights for me was when, five minutes after my defence, one of the professors present asked if I would consider doing academic work at his university. I was very surprised and flattered by this unexpected offer. Participating in thesis juries as a company expert is particularly gratifying, as it allows me to support and inspire the next generation of researchers. To anyone considering this path, I say: don't hesitate. The challenges are many, but the rewards are immense.”

Publications:

Ofstad, B., & Bartel-Radic, A. (2024). Cooperative learning through boundary spanning: How a corporate learning department ensures that trainers and content stay current. *M@n@gement*, 27(4), 114-129. <https://doi.org/10.37725/mgmt.2024.9611>

Ofstad, B. (2024). Success factors in apprenticeship delivery in times of digital transformation: Facilitating new skills uptake by in-company trainers. In Cedefop & OECD (Eds.), *Apprenticeships and the digital transition: Modernising apprenticeships to meet digital skill needs* (pp. 148-164). Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2801/074640>

Ofstad, B. (2024). Crossing boundaries in digital transformation: The study a learning department. In N. Tournois & P. Very (Eds.), *International management, resilience and ethics* (pp. 109-128). Paris: Vuibert.

Ofstad, B., & Bartel-Radic, A. (2023). La durabilité d'un centre de formation : Comment une organisation d'apprentissage apprend à apprendre. In F. Chevalier & M. Kalika (Eds.), *Recherches sur la sustainability* (pp. 125-144). Paris: Éditions EMS. <https://doi.org/10.3917/ems.cheva.2023.01.0121>

Useful links: European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA): [Interview with Barbara Ofstad](#).



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Thomas QUARTIER,

Stakeholder alignment: a key to successful public sector IT projects.



Introduction:

Thomas Quartier, 52, is Principal Lean Agile Consultant at Capgemini and holds SAFe certification at SPCT level. He is an expert in digital transformation and the adoption of Lean Agile principles in complex organisations. With over 23 years of experience in leading IT projects and transformations, he has specialised in supporting public sector organisations since 2018, helping them navigate their transformation challenges.

With the support of Capgemini and under the supervision of professors Jani Merikivi and Stéphanie Gauttier, Thomas Quartier embarked on his DBA in 2020 as a continuation of his Executive MBA.

Thesis topic, managerial question and problem:

The thesis explores the factors and structures that influence the effectiveness of public IS projects, with a particular focus on the relationships between stakeholders. The expectations of citizens, public agents, and political decision-makers often diverge, adding complexity to project management. The central question is: how can a balanced triad structure emerge in a public IS project and foster its success?

This research examines the conditions necessary to align the relationships between prescribers, suppliers, and facilitators to enhance the performance of public IS projects. The study is centred on the ERPC (Éducation Routière et Permis de Conduire) project within the French Ministry of the Interior. This large-scale project, involving more than 120 people, was successfully completed between 2019 and 2024. ERPC aimed to modernise all road education and driving licence information systems, adopting a Lean Agile framework at scale, known as SAFe.

Conceptual framework:

The complexity inherent in public information systems (IS) projects, particularly in stakeholder management, serves as the conceptual starting point. Complexity theory is identified as the fundamental theoretical framework, as it provides a means to address the intricate dynamics, structures, and processes involved.

One component of complexity theory is network theory, which examines relationships between stakeholders by focusing on triads, the smallest inter-organisational unit. These triads (Vedel et al., 2016) help visualise and understand divergences in stakeholder needs, facilitating their alignment on common solutions (Axelsson et al., 2013).

The notion of Balanced Centrist (Gummesson, 2008) underscores the importance of considering the full spectrum of stakeholder interests - in this study, citizens, public agents, and policymakers. The Balanced Triad Structure (BTS) is introduced as the application tool, reflecting the concept of triadic collaborative structures that can evolve into positive ecosystems, ultimately contributing to the success of public IS projects.

Methodology:

This research follows the creative process of “disciplined imagination” proposed by Weick (1989), which involves a series of successive iterations combining a literature review, preliminary analyses, and the researcher's intuition (Cornelissen, 2006).

The research process consists of four stages, conducted between 2020 and 2024. The first stage involved defining the research topic through a creative process that combined a literature review, interactions with supervisors, and pilot interviews. The second stage focused on semi-structured interviews, providing an in-depth understanding of the case and leading to the presentation of an initial research proposal at an academic conference. The third stage employed Q-methodology to identify both consensus and divergence among stakeholders, ensuring methodological triangulation. Finally, the fourth stage involved the analysis, discussion, and application of the results.

Findings:

The findings indicate that the quality of relationships between stakeholders - divided into a prescriptive triad (comprising decision-makers, public officials, and citizens) and a project triad (comprising prescribers, suppliers, and facilitators) - relies on mediation, communication, trust, and the ability to co-create value. This dynamic is reflected in the emergence of individuals who act as “mediators” and “shields”, responsible for maintaining balance, ensuring diversity, and fostering consideration of all stakeholders' needs.

The study also reveals that stakeholders adopt different behavioural archetypes, similar to those identified for CIOs in the literature, reflecting the diversity of attitudes and priorities required for the success of a public sector IS project. From a theoretical perspective, the Balanced Triad Structure (BTS) concept is expanded by the idea that each node of the triad may itself contain a balanced sub-triad, providing a deeper understanding of relational complexity in public sector projects.

Managerial recommendations:

The implementation of a balanced triad structure (BTS) within public information systems projects complements Lean Agile practices. BTS facilitates the management of organisational complexity by identifying areas of consensus and divergence among various stakeholders, including citizens, public agents, decision-makers, service providers, and facilitators.

1. Strengthening trust and communication through mediation: Establishing mediation roles, embodied by legitimate and recognised individuals, can facilitate exchanges between different categories of stakeholders, improving collaboration and trust.
2. Preserving and leveraging useful divergences through “shields”: In addition to mediation, the presence of shields within the balanced triad structure ensures that differences in perspective, when beneficial to the project's overall value, are maintained. Unlike approaches that focus solely on convergence, BTS encourages the preservation of divergences that foster innovation and robustness.
3. Proactive crisis management and handling technological complexities: The public sector is characterised by increased organisational and technological complexity. Managers must anticipate potential crises, such as legislative changes, budget constraints, and operational incidents, by adopting a proactive approach. Implementing balanced triad structures enables organisations using Lean Agile practices to absorb shocks and stay aligned with collective objectives.
4. Using Q-methodology to understand subjective perceptions: Q-methodology is a novel tool for management that has provided insights into the different perspectives of stakeholders, offering a precise mapping of relational dynamics within triads. This method can help guide managerial decisions towards an optimal balance, fostering collaboration and alignment around project objectives.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/quartierthomas>



Thierry RUAUD,

The DBA to reinforce local collaborations and develop technological innovation in French Guiana.



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Introduction:

Thierry Ruaud is Deputy Director of ArianeGroup in Kourou, French Guiana. He joined the DBA programme because he saw it is a professional doctorate with a clear focus on theoretical knowledge and its practical application in business: “It’s not about making a contribution to the Academy in the way that a PhD course would, but rather contributing to management practice and making a difference in the aerospace industry in French Guiana”. Thierry defended his thesis in December 2022, under the co-supervision of Sophie d’Armagnac and Eric Michaël Laviolette, both from TBS Education.

DBA journey:

In 2018, French Guiana remained relatively underdeveloped in terms of highly qualified human resources, offering little to no opportunity for a multinational space transport organisation such as ArianeGroup to manage its talent locally or to contribute to the development of a high-tech entrepreneurial ecosystem in the region. In this context, the research question posed was:

“How can multinational companies manage talent to create and develop local high-tech entrepreneurial ecosystems?”

This question was explored through the lens of two interrelated areas of study: talent management and innovation management within multinational organisations. For ArianeGroup, the main objective was to optimise the operating costs of the Ariane 6 launcher, thereby enhancing the company’s competitiveness in the highly contested global space transport market. A recurring issue in human resources literature is the inefficiency with which organisations manage employee talent (Beer, 2016; Aguirre, 2013; Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005).

Adopting a case study approach with two sub-units of analysis—a multinational organisation and its host territory—qualitative data was collected to identify sources of value creation for both the organisation and the local ecosystem.

Managerial recommendations:

This research has highlighted the strategic importance for ArianeGroup of strengthening its local collaborations in Guiana, particularly in the field of technological innovation. Attracting start-ups with the support of the Prefecture of the French Guiana Region, the University of French Guiana and the CNES is a key priority. Additionally, enhancing professional training through partnerships with the Rectorat de l’Académie de Guyane is essential for developing a skilled workforce and a high-tech entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Impact of the DBA and dissemination of results :

The key recommendations led to the signing of partnerships with several start-ups and a collaboration with the Jean-Marie Michotte vocational school, which offers a vocational post-secondary diploma (baccalaureate) in aeronautics and space. These initiatives have set in motion the long-anticipated transformation of the local industrial fabric in the space sector, as envisioned by key stakeholders in French Guiana.

Following these efforts, the local educational offering in the space sector was further expanded with the official launch of a complementary training programme in aerospace mechanics, reinforcing the vocational baccalaureate in aeronautics and space.

For ArianeGroup, cost optimisation has been achieved by reducing the number of specialists sent from Europe to prepare Ariane launch campaigns. This has been made possible through the integration of locally trained resources, who have gained expertise in the launcher assembly process as part of the aeronautics and space vocational baccalaureate. At the same time, the number of innovative space projects in French Guiana is now approaching ten start-ups, fostering the development of a local entrepreneurial ecosystem in the space sector. Finally, the active participation of ArianeGroup employees based in French Guiana in these initiatives has enabled them to develop their skills in both education and innovation, bringing direct benefits to the company as well.

Ahmed SHAWKY MOHAMMED,
Leveraging Professional Experience
and DBA Insights to Transform the Business World.

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Introduction:

Dr. Ahmed Shawky Mohammed, an Egyptian innovator residing in London, UK, is the Founder and CEO of LevelUp ESG®, an AI-powered integrated platform for ESG and carbon management. He completed his DBA jointly from Durham University Business School and Emlyon Business School in 2023. Prior to his doctoral studies, Dr. Mohammed served as Executive Director & Chief Audit Executive at Sidra Medicine. His motivation to join the DBA program stemmed from his deep commitment to sustainable business practices and his vision to transform ESG reporting and assurance through innovative solutions. As an experienced internal audit professional, he recognized the critical need to address greenwashing risks through enhanced ESG reporting assurance.

The DBA journey:

Dr. Mohammed's research focused on mitigating greenwashing through ESG reporting assurance, examining how audit committees and internal audits could effectively ensure ESG disclosure credibility. His research questions explored the roles of these internal governance mechanisms in preventing both intentional and unintentional greenwashing.

The study employed a qualitative methodology through semi-structured interviews with 47 global participants, including:

- Board members and chairs
- Audit committee members
- Internal audit executives
- ESG consultants and external auditors
- Senior executives
- Subject matter experts

The research scope was international, covering multiple industries and regions. Under the supervision of Professor Tyrone S. Pitsis (Durham) and Professor Géraldine Hottegindre (Emlyon), Dr. Mohammed developed frameworks for enhancing ESG oversight and strengthening internal assurance processes.

Programme experience:

The DBA experience was marked by several key strengths and notable challenges that shaped the journey. Among the programme's strengths were exceptional guidance on research methodology, access to a global professional network, and a well-balanced approach that combined academic rigor with practical application. The programme also supported innovative research in an emerging field, providing an international perspective through its joint structure.

Despite these advantages, the experience included overcoming significant challenges, such as coordinating global interviews during the pandemic, balancing the demands of research with professional responsibilities, navigating the rapidly evolving ESG landscape, and breaking new ground in a relatively understudied area. These experiences collectively underscore the value and transformative nature of the DBA journey.

Impact of the DBA:

The impact of this DBA can be observed across multiple dimensions. On a personal level, it has enabled the development of enhanced expertise in sustainability and ESG, advanced research capabilities, and a systematic problem-solving approach. The DBA has also elevated Dr. Mohammed's recognition as a thought leader in the field while expanding his global professional network. Professionally, it led to the founding of the LevelUp ESG® platform, which incorporates research insights to deliver innovative AI-powered ESG solutions. This has established credibility as an ESG technology entrepreneur, complemented by roles as a regular speaker at international conferences, a Technical Committee Member at ESG Exchange, and an advisor to organizations on ESG implementation.

On a societal level, the DBA contributes to advancing ESG practices, promoting corporate sustainability, supporting organizations on their ESG journeys, developing solutions to combat greenwashing, and improving ESG reporting standards. The findings from this research are disseminated through the implementation of solutions via the LevelUp ESG® platform, presentations at major conferences in Washington DC and Dubai, regular thought leadership contributions, and advisory work with large organizations. This multi-level impact highlights the transformative potential of the DBA in addressing contemporary challenges in sustainability and ESG.

Personal testimonial:

"The DBA journey has been truly transformative, enabling me to bridge the gap between academic research and practical business solutions. It equipped me with both the knowledge and credibility to develop innovative approaches to sustainable business transformation. Through LevelUp ESG®, I'm now able to help organisations make meaningful environmental impact while ensuring regulatory compliance and mitigating risks. The programme's combination of rigorous research and practical application was instrumental in bringing this vision to life".

Conclusion:

Dr. Mohammed's DBA journey exemplifies the programme's ability to empower professionals to make significant contributions to both industry and society. His research has directly influenced the development of practical solutions for ESG reporting assurance and greenwashing mitigation. His case demonstrates how doctoral research can be effectively translated into innovative business solutions that address critical sustainability challenges.

Claire SOUVIGNE**Between the Social Focus on Attaining Happiness and Performance Requirements.****Introduction:**

Claire Souvigne, a French citizen, is currently Director of the Bachelor and Master of Science programmes at Inseec Paris. She defended her DBA thesis in 2021 at the age of 52. Prior to her DBA, Claire was Head of Internal Communications and Management in the communications industry.

DBA journey:

Research topic: *“Between the Social Focus on Attaining Happiness and Performance Requirements: The Difficult Balance the Manager Must Find”*. Claire explored the tension between organisational performance and employee well-being, drawing on Self-Determination Theory and the Ethic of Care.

Managerial question: This research addresses the critical challenge faced by managers in balancing employee performance with well-being and happiness. Managers are increasingly expected to meet organisational performance targets while ensuring employees' Quality of Working Life (QWL). Maintaining this balance is particularly challenging due to organisational constraints, such as regulatory requirements (e.g. French laws on psychosocial risks), as well as managers' reluctance to acknowledge their own vulnerabilities. The study highlights the difficulty managers face in reconciling these conflicting demands, exploring how they can develop sustainable approaches to balancing employee care with performance expectations.

Conceptual Framework

The research is based on two main theoretical perspectives:

- **Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000):** This framework focuses on individual motivation and highlights how autonomy, competence, and relationships influence well-being and performance.
- **Care Ethic Theory:** This perspective emphasises the importance of recognising vulnerability and implementing care-based management practices to promote employee satisfaction and organisational balance. The study examines how managers navigate the tension between their roles as carers and performance enablers, underscoring the need for sustainable managerial practices to address these conflicting priorities.

Methodology:

The research adopts a social constructivist paradigm and follows an action research approach to collaboratively address a real managerial problem. The study was conducted through monthly cycles over a six-month period, using an eight-step iterative process to analyse and respond to managerial challenges. The researcher's role as an internal actor enriches the study, aligning with Jean Marshall's (2011) first-person action research approach. This perspective enables a reflexive exploration of both individual and organisational learning throughout the process.

Management recommendations:

The study highlights the following key findings:

- Managers face significant challenges in reconciling performance demands with their responsibility for employee well-being.
- Managerial vulnerability is often overlooked, as acknowledging it may be perceived as a risk to professional credibility and the ability to meet performance expectations.
- A balance between performance and employee care can be achieved by adopting positive organisational behaviours that emphasise autonomy, recognition, and well-being.
- The iterative action-research process revealed a gradual shift in managerial perspectives, with managers increasingly integrating care-based practices into their performance objectives.

Research supervisors: Professor Damien Richard (Inseec Grande École) and Professor Julie Haddock-Millar (Middlesex University).

Impact of the DBA and dissemination of results:

At a personal level: the DBA has allowed Claire to develop an in-depth understanding of organisational well-being management and leadership skills.

At a professional level: Claire has played a key role in cultural change within her organisation, introducing practices that promote autonomy and well-being while still meeting performance targets.

Dissemination: she has delivered talks on leadership that explore the intersection between performance and well-being.

Annalisa TARQUINI

Luxury without Craftsmanship.



Introduction:

Annalisa Tarquini, an Italian national, is currently Associate Professor of Management and Director of the Master of Science in Luxury Management at the International University of Monaco (IUM), where she has been teaching since 2010. She defended her DBA thesis in 2019 at the age of 48.

Before joining IUM, Annalisa was Human Resources Manager at Fendi, bringing several years of experience in the luxury sector. Her decision to pursue a DBA in 2015 was driven by her strong interest in deepening her understanding of fashion and luxury through a structured academic framework.

Research topic: *“Luxury without Craftsmanship? Explicating Craftspeople Career Path Decisions in the Luxury Industry via Social Cognitive Career Theory.”*

Her research explored the career decisions of craftspeople in the luxury goods industry, highlighting the barriers and motivations that influence their choice to pursue and sustain a career in this field.

Managerial question:

The luxury fashion and accessories industry relies crucially on the expertise of skilled craftspeople, particularly for "Made in Italy". However, the younger generations are showing a declining interest in careers in the craft sector, due to the low social status of the profession, the lack of information on career opportunities and expectations that are often out of step with the reality of the job. Short-term initiatives by luxury brands, such as training and communication campaigns, have not addressed the root causes of this problem. Without long-term strategies, the industry risks losing essential skills and knowledge, threatening the quality and heritage of luxury craftsmanship. The challenge lies in overcoming these obstacles and attracting new talent to secure the future of this vital profession.

Conceptual framework:

This study examines the drivers and barriers influencing adolescents' career choices in luxury crafts, using Social Cognitive Career Theory.

Drivers: Passion for creative activities, family traditions, craftsmanship and direct exposure to craftspeople.

Barriers: Limited career prospects, low social status and visibility of the profession, lack of information on careers.

The conceptual framework highlights the need for long-term strategies incorporating targeted communication, vocational training and practical exposure to the craft. These strategies aim to make this career path more attractive to younger generations, while ensuring that essential skills are passed on.

Methodology:

The research adopts a qualitative approach guided by Lent et al.'s (2002) Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). Biographical narrative interviews with experienced and novice craftspeople explored their motivations, drivers and career obstacles. Interviews with HR managers, teachers and directors of vocational institutions provided information on labour market conditions and challenges. The interviews (lasting an average of 45 minutes) were conducted in Italian, transcribed and translated into English. Data analysis involved deductive coding (using SCCT concepts) and inductive coding (to identify new patterns). Cross-analysis of the cases revealed consistent themes among the respondents.

Findings: The study identifies two main routes to becoming a luxury craftsman and highlights the main drivers and barriers:

Obstacles: Low social status, poor reputation of the craft industry and lack of information on careers.

Drivers: Direct exposure to artisans and a passion for creative activities.

Managerial recommendations:

To enhance interest in luxury craftsmanship, it is recommended that luxury brands adopt long-term strategies to improve the perception and appeal of this career. A key approach is to develop targeted communication campaigns that highlight the value, prestige, and creativity associated with craftsmanship, repositioning it as a respected and fulfilling profession.

Additionally, brands should invest in vocational training programmes that offer structured pathways for young people to acquire the necessary skills while demonstrating clear career opportunities in the luxury sector. Another crucial initiative is to create opportunities for direct exposure to artisans, such as workshops, mentoring programmes, and studio visits. These experiences allow younger generations to gain first-hand insight into the artistry, passion, and cultural significance that characterise luxury craftsmanship.

By implementing these strategies, luxury brands can inspire new talent, ensuring that essential know-how is passed on and preserving the heritage and quality that define the luxury industry.

Research supervisors: Professor Hans Mühlbacher (IUM) and Professor Maria Kreuzer (MCI - The Entrepreneurial School).

Impact of the DBA and dissemination of results:

Contribution to research: The study extends the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) framework to a new context, providing insights into the development of career interests in the luxury craft sector. It highlights the unique influence of passion and exposure in shaping career choices.

Dissemination: Annalisa has shared her findings at international conferences and published articles in prestigious academic journals.

Personal level: Through the DBA, Annalisa has developed research, critical analysis, and talent management skills while strengthening her position in higher education.

Professional level: Her thesis has positioned her as an influential voice in the luxury industry, advocating for sustainable recruitment strategies for artisans. Since 2019, she has led academic initiatives focused on the transmission of know-how.

Dr Annalisa Tarquini-Poli is currently Director of the MSc in Luxury Management at the International University of Monaco (IUM). Her academic and professional expertise spans human resources, luxury fashion, and the yachting sector. She has designed and delivered courses at both Bachelor and Master levels on these subjects. Additionally, she is the creator of "The Mark Challenge", a global business plan competition focusing on luxury products and services, designed for students and alumni from around the world.

Publications:

Tarquini-Poli, A., Mühlbacher, H., & Kreuzer, M. (2022). The experience of luxury craftsmanship: A strategic asset for luxury experience management. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 38(13-14), 1307-1338.

Luong, V. H., Tarquini-Poli, A., Anadol, Y., Klaus, P., & Manthiou, A. (2024). Is digital fashion the future of the metaverse? Insights from YouTube comments. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 79, 103780.

Tarquini-Poli, A. (2022). Come fly with me: Exploring the private aviation customer experience (PAX). *European Journal of Marketing*, 56(4), 1126-1152.

Tarquini-Poli, A., & Alawad, N. A. M. (2022). Lifestyle of the rich and famous: Exploring the ultra-high net-worth individuals' customer experience (UHCX). *Journal of Business Research*, 147, 49-58.

Klaus, P., Tarquini-Poli, A., & Park, J. (2021). "(Priceless) Time-The UHNWI's Most Precious Possession: Implications for International Marketing Theory and Practice. *International Marketing Review*, 1, 2-2. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-02-2021-0085>

Tarquini-Poli, A., & Klaus, P. P. (2024). Sailing into Tranquility: The Rise of Slow Yachting in Luxury Tourism. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 1-19.

Cyril VIDAL,
The DBA: learning to unlearn and
revolutionising a profession.



SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
iaelyon



Introduction:

Cyril Vidal, a self-taught entrepreneur since the age of sixteen, has founded or taken over fourteen companies in the IT sector. At seventeen, he launched his first company, marking the beginning of a prolific entrepreneurial career. Despite his successes, Cyril felt the need to consolidate his academic knowledge. At thirty-four, he decided to return to education, earning a bachelor's degree, followed by a master's and an MBA, before naturally enrolling in the DBA programme. In 2023, at the age of forty, he obtained his **Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA)** from the Business Science Institute.

Motivated by the desire to generate knowledge that could transform how his clients, the notaries, perceive their profession and address complex challenges, Cyril saw the DBA as an opportunity to step back from his professional activities while making a lasting contribution to the future of his business. His aim was to “*get off the bike and take time to look ahead*”, anticipating developments and, perhaps, even initiating them. The DBA met his expectations perfectly, enabling him to create actionable knowledge that supports the evolution of notarial practice.

DBA journey:

Cyril focused his research on “*The managerial uncertainty of the notary: What strategic (re)positioning should be adopted for the future?*”. Under the supervision of Professors Jean-Philippe Denis and Damien Mourey, he examined the role of the notarial company director and the strategies for managing the uncertainty surrounding the future of the profession. His research was grounded in a constructivist epistemological approach. Using an inductive methodology, he identified a research problem based on semi-structured interviews conducted during an exploratory phase with notaries. The analysis of these interviews followed a mixed design, combining qualitative methods to uncover key concepts and quantitative analysis to highlight opposing perspectives among these concepts. This approach revealed tensions between the notary, their function, and their role in relation to both the State and the citizen. With the integration of IT tools and increasing regulatory compliance, the notary's role has evolved from authenticating agreements to certifying standardised contracts.

Managerial recommendations:

Cyril's research revealed that the uncertainty faced by notaries regarding their function is closely tied to the authentic form of the deed, as required by the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, and its perceived usefulness. His findings indicate that IT tools, widely presented as an essential evolution for the profession, have facilitated the implementation of normative justice, primarily aimed at the collection of various taxes and duties. These tools have transformed the role of notaries, shifting them from authenticating agreements between parties in accordance with the law to certifying contracts by ensuring compliance with established standards.

His work has led to recommendations designed to support a new collective organisation for the profession. He proposes that notaries should refocus on their role as trusted third parties for both citizens and the Ministry of Justice, by transitioning from notarised property sales to notarised property transfers. This shift would allow notaries to return to their foundational role while simultaneously adapting to technological and regulatory developments.

To support this transition, Cyril recommends the introduction of dedicated training programmes to enhance notaries' digital competencies, equipping them to navigate an increasingly technology-driven and evolving regulatory landscape.

He also underscores the need for ethical and collaborative governance within the profession. He advocates the creation of governance structures that embed ethical values and collective decision-making principles, enabling notaries to work more effectively while meeting the expectations of both citizens and public authorities.

Ultimately, Cyril's managerial recommendations aim to modernise and strengthen the notarial profession, making it more agile, collaborative, and aligned with contemporary technological and legal challenges. His proposed reorganisation would allow the profession to continue fulfilling its essential role as a guarantor of public trust and legal certainty.

Impact of the DBA and dissemination of results:

Following his thesis, Cyril developed the Asteroid project, which emerged from a combination of scientific research, the need for change in the notarial profession, and the desire to rethink digital trust while respecting ethical and civic values. His aim is to establish a DeepTech company to lead this initiative, driven by a commitment to making scientific knowledge widely accessible. Asteroid's contributions in IT, law, and political science will address the challenges of IT security and digital sovereignty posed by the implementation of the eIDAS 2 regulation, while also rethinking the concept of digital trust in citizen interactions. Cyril envisions a governance model built on scientific, notarial, and collaborative principles, with a clear ambition: to reconcile technological innovation, ethics, and notarial values, ensuring that the evolution of the notarial function benefits all European citizens.

His work has received several awards, including the *Startthèse* award launched by the ministry in 2023 and a prize at the DEEPTech sees BIG event organised by BPI in 2023. The development of his project has secured €400,000 in funding through a maturation programme with SATTe Clermont Auvergne Innovation and various institutional partners. With the creation of a DeepTech company planned for June 2025, Cyril aims to develop a European solution with the highest level of security, striving for a "mathematically perfect" system. Over the next 18 months, he plans to recruit six engineers and PhDs to support this initiative.

Some of Cyril's research has also been included in the 2024 report of the Assemblée de Liaison des Notaires de France, which focused on the future of notarial deeds. Notably, Proposal No. 8 from his DBA thesis, *"Enabling notaries to access the electronic signature and remote publication tool"*, was adopted by 88.7% and is expected to be implemented by the new board of the Conseil Supérieur du Notariat.

The DBA has not only transformed Cyril's career and professional ambitions, but has also positioned him as a key player in innovation and digital transformation within the notarial sector and beyond. His trajectory illustrates how a doctorate can serve as a catalyst for projects with strong societal and professional impact.

Personal testimonial:

"I joined the DBA to take the time to think things through. When I finished my thesis, I became a different person - 'a person with a capital H (Human)'. Before engaging in research, I had the impression that I knew a lot, perhaps more than the average person. But now that I've completed the DBA, I know one thing for certain: I don't know very much! I've learnt to unlearn".

Publications:

Vidal Cyril (2023). *The future of the notarial function*. EMS.

Useful links:

'Asteroid' at the 2023 Deeptech sees BIG event: <https://youtu.be/ST8Ny-IAU1k>

The future of the notary's profession, Xerfi Canal: <https://youtu.be/Hl64xAq8Nu0>

Marie-Christine WATEL**Awareness and meaning at work.**

“Thanks to the DBA, I have become a researcher-practitioner, supporting major transformation and modernisation projects within public service organisations”.

Marie-Christine Watel (DBA in 2020) is 62 years old and a management and human resources consultant with over 25 years of experience in the public sector in France, primarily in social security and local civil service. In recent years, she has also been involved in cooperation projects in Africa. Additionally, she has experience in the private sector, having worked in the steel, agri-food, and textile industries in France and across Europe.

Wishing to conceptualise her practice and deepen her understanding of managerial issues, she pursued her DBA thesis under the supervision of Professor Florence Noguera within the CORHIS Research Unit at Montpellier Paul Valéry University. Her thesis, entitled *“Awareness and Meaning at Work: A New Performance Challenge for Public Service Managers. An Action Research Study in a Social Security Organisation”*, was successfully defended in January 2020.

DBA journey:

The DBA was conducted within a 900-employee pension and occupational health insurance fund in France. The action research focused on the pension processing departments, which were experiencing peaks in activity that led to work-related stress. The objective was to streamline the processing of pension files to improve the well-being of the technicians responsible for handling them.

The theme of the thesis, a managerial question:

The thesis focuses on the development of socio-economic performance in the public service. The problematic relates to the difficulties encountered by local managers in performance management, and in particular to situational awareness in the decision-making process and its impact on performance. The research question is as follows: “To what extent would developing awareness of management situations among local managers help to create meaning and develop socio-economic performance in the public service?”

The thesis highlights the concept of “situation awareness” developed by Endsley (1995, 2000), which shows the importance of awareness in the decision-making process through perception of the situation. This awareness phase is made up of three levels: perception of the elements of the situation, understanding of the situation and projection of the situation into a new state. This concept is part of Richard Barrett's (2003, 2018) leadership of awareness, an integrative model of seven levels of organisational awareness, each addressing a type of leadership and values.

This model embraces the different dimensions of the organisation, ranging from the basic functioning of an organisation turned in on itself to an openness to the world and to the general interest, based on the development of the collective and partnerships. The thesis is also based on the socio-economic theory of Savall and Zardet (1989), which focuses on the role of social performance by studying the hidden costs of dysfunctions created by staff-structure interactions in organisations.

The research design is based on the investigative and analytical approach proposed by socio-economic theory in the organisation. The design of the research-intervention is based on qualitative research carried out through 50 individual and group semi-directive interviews with 31 managers, executives and superiors and 30 employees (technicians, advisers, controllers, technical relays and managers), giving a total of 61 people interviewed. The research was supplemented by a documentary study, on-site observations and the calculation of certain hidden costs. An interview guide was drawn up in line with the hypotheses put forward. The data collected was classified and then analysed. This enabled the causes of the malfunctions to be identified and recommendations to be formulated for a transformation project to be co-constructed with the stakeholders.

Findings:

The research and data analysis showed: a lack of professional dialogue between local managers and their superiors, and also with their teams, on understanding the objectives set and the means to achieve them in line with the Caisse's strategic orientations; a difficulty in agreeing on shared values in the confrontation between economic, organisational, social and moral values; a lack of the complexity of the tasks to be carried out within the deadlines set, with an overabundance of regulations and insufficiently trained teams; more generally, a lack of managerial skills among local managers to manage activities (steering), teams and transformations (change management), particularly in their leadership role as facilitators.

Managerial recommendations:

The strategic and operational levels need to be better linked, with objectives and performance indicators set at each level of the organisation; values need to be shared and made operational in day-to-day operations and projects; managers need to pay more attention to teams in terms of workload and peaks in activity; a management dialogue makes it possible to negotiate achievable operational objectives and relevant indicators to measure the progress of the activity by the local managers; the comitology of the organisation must be formalised to see the flow of communication and its coherence in the organisation of the various bodies so that everyone can have the information necessary for their work and in their horizon; to think short time and long time in the awareness of the decisions is essential for the local managers.

Impact of the DBA and dissemination of results:

The DBA project within the establishment has helped to build a professional "working together" by integrating a reflection on the various problems linked to the organisation and working conditions and the evolution of managerial practices. Together, the team shares and redefines the objectives and indicators in line with the strategic guidelines and operating methods. Local managers are in charge of organising work by adapting to work situations and individuals, and by putting into perspective the objectives to be achieved over time. By drawing up a charter of values and translating it into concrete action grounded in day-to-day work, the team is able to take account of the diversity of individuals and agree on a common working platform. The challenge is to bring the framework to life, to check that the principles of action are applied and to measure the impact in terms of socio-economic performance.

Personal testimonial:

"This DBA enabled me to take a step back and gain a deeper understanding of the complex managerial contexts and challenges in the public service, as well as my own practice. I developed a broader and more refined perspective on how organisations function and the dynamics within them. I have become an expert in more strategic projects, supporting management initiatives in local authorities and HR and management cooperation projects for finance ministries in Morocco and several countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Since completing the DBA, and thanks to the CORHIS laboratory, I have presented my work annually at the Academy of Management in the United States, as well as at AGRH and ISEOR conferences in France. I am currently preparing a doctoral thesis to explore the concept of managerial awareness in greater depth".

Promoting the work of the DBA:

Noguera, F., & Watel, M.-C. (2024). Hybridation à la Sécurité Sociale: Vers un management plus conscient et responsable. In *Hybridation dans les organisations publiques. Enjeux et perspectives* (Preface by M. Pénicaud). Collection Profession Cadre Service Public. Presses Universitaires de France.

Watel, M.-C. (2024). Managers' awareness: A lever for public socio-economic performance. Presented at the *Colloque ISEOR*, Lyon, France, June 2024.

Noguera, F., Watel, M.-C., Plane, J.-M., & Cappelletti, L. (2022). Public managers' awareness: Toward a more conscious management. *Academy of Management (AOM) Meeting*, August 5-10, Seattle, USA. 15 pages. (Best Paper Award, Management Consulting Division).

Mischa Zielke,
from consultant to Founder
of the McKinsey Health Institute.



Introduction:

Dr. Mischa Zielke lives in Dubai where he now heads the McKinsey Health Institute. Mischa has spent over 15 years at McKinsey, where he has worked with clients and global leaders to improve organizational performance on all levels. He served both public- and private-sector clients across more than 20 countries in Europe and Latin America before moving to the Middle East in 2015 to continue his work on transformational change. He had been suffering from the intensity of his work and work-related travel, that was concurrent with having a first child arrive. He decided that there must be a better way to ensure his own well-being as well as that of high-performance professionals like himself.

He decided to step away from his work as a consultant at McKinsey to pursue an Ecole des Ponts Executive DBA and focus his research on a new well-being framework and practice for corporates.

The EPBS Executive DBA journey:

In 2020, Mischa was interested in developing a data- and KPI-driven approach to employee well-being that corporates could embrace, and would make a positive impact on the well-being of professionals in the workforce.

His doctoral project consisted of three publications:

1. Individual well-being in the hybrid work context: a case study on effective habits (embedded case study)
2. A quantitative analysis of local versus expatriate employee well-being across the Middle East
3. Beating the conundrum of individual well-being and peak performance in high-pressured environments (teaching case)

He defended his research in March 2024 and graduated in December 2024.

Impact of the EPBS Executive DBA:

The project was so successful that even before he completed his research, Mischa presented the research findings to his former employers at McKinsey. They were so impressed that they invited him to set up the McKinsey Health Institute. An amazing example of academic research informing practice. Now McKinsey not only deploys the well-being program that Mischa designed but they are also helping their corporate clients deploy the program.

Mischa has also supported the firm's commitment to attract and retain top talent, including global efforts to create a more balanced, healthier experience for thousands of colleagues worldwide. He is now a geographical leader in the Middle East for the McKinsey Health Institute, a not-for-profit entity within the firm dedicated to improving global health and enhancing the quality of life for people worldwide.

Dissemination of the findings:

Even before completing his Executive DBA project in April 2024, Mischa's quantitative research and findings were included in an article published in January 2023 by the McKinsey Health Institute, entitled "Better health among Middle Eastern employees can start with awareness." Mischa has also supported the firm's commitment to attract and retain top talent, including global efforts to create a more balanced, healthier experience for thousands of McKinsey associates worldwide. He is a geographical leader in the Middle East for the McKinsey Health Institute, a not-for-profit entity within the firm. Mischa has the ambition to add 45 billion years of higher-quality life for people around the world. An amazing example of societal impact for a DBA project!

Conclusion:

Dr. Mischa Zielke's doctoral journey exemplifies the world-changing impact of DBA research. As his research and the ensuing framework for measuring and managing well-being continue to be shared with McKinsey consultants and their clients worldwide, the continued ripple effects of his research should be felt far and wide for many years to come.

Publication:

McKinsey Health Institute, Hammami, M., Osman, A., Schneider, V., & Zielke, M. (2023). [Better health among Middle Eastern employees can start with awareness.](#)

5. Profiles of participating institutions



Date of partnership programme creation:

- 2012 by Business Science Institute - IGENSIA Education Group
- 2014 by iaelyon School of Management
- 2022 by ICN Business School - Sustainable Innovation Management group



Names of DBA programme managers:

- Prof. Gregor Bouville, iaelyon School of Management
- Prof. Elisabeth Paulet, ICN Business School
- Prof. Michel Kalika, Business Science Institute



Organisation of the programme:

- Face-to-face & remote groups, asynchronous & synchronous groups
- Groups in French, English, German, Spanish (ongoing)



Total number of graduates since the programme launch: 205 (September 2024)



Number of participants: 212 (December 2024)

- 12% France / 19% Europe / 69% rest of the world
- 25% female / 75% male



Average age of doctoral-managers: 46



Comments: The DBA programme is accredited by AMBA (UK) and certified as a "Responsible Doctoral School" by IRAFPA (Switzerland). As of 1 January 2025, 60 books have been published, half by the programme's professors and half by the institution's **Doctors of Business Administration**.



Website: www.business-science-institute.com / <https://iae.univ-lyon3.fr/executive-dba-3> / <https://www.icn-artem.com/formation/dba/>

le cnam



Date of programme creation:

- In 2018, by Prof. Thomas Durand



Names of DBA programme managers:

- Prof. Olivier Basso, EPN Stratégies, CNAM



Organisation of the programme :

- Small cohorts: <10 participants
- Bi-monthly face-to-face workshops in French: introduction to research and writing practice from day one
- A volume of training adapted to management practitioners: 93 hours in 1st year, 56 hours in 2nd year, 44 hours in 3rd year



Framework Agreement with the General Directorate of the National Gendarmerie (2 Gendarmerie Officers per Year)



Total number of graduates since the programme launch: 16



Number of participants: 12

90% France / 10% worldwide
22% female / 78% male



Average age of doctoral-managers: 44



Comments: The Cnam's DBA programme stands out in two ways: its interactive teaching approach, which encourages active sharing of progress among students in line with the Cnam's values (mutual support, diversity, and practical application), and personalised supervision provided by a range of contributors, including researchers, coaches, experienced practitioners, and skilled writers.



Website: <https://formation.cnam.fr/rechercher-par-discipline/diplome-d-etablissement-dba-doctorate-of-business-administration-1263178.kjsp> -

**Date of programme creation:**

- In 2015

**Names of DBA programme managers:**

- Prof. Alon Rozen, Dr. Joseph Santora

**Organisation of the programme :**

- Synchronous meetings in Paris, in English, 4 times a week over 12 months, then 2-3 years' work with the supervisor.
- Programme delivered by École des Ponts Business School
- Diploma awarded by the École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées - Institut Polytechnique de Paris

**Total number of graduates since the programme launch:** 70 (December 2024)**Number of participants:** 207

- 10% France / 30% Europe / 60% Rest of the world
- 25% Female / 75% Male

**Average age of doctoral-managers:** 47

Comments: The DBA programme is accredited by AMBA (UK), a member of EDBAC (Executive DBA Council - USA) and the school is Qualiopi accredited.

**Website:** <https://pontsbschool.com/edba/>



- > **Date of programme creation:**
 - 2019 in partnership with Durham University Business School (UK) under the double degree format. The programme is entirely in English.
- > **Names of DBA programme managers:**
 - Prof. Michel Phan, Professor of Luxury Marketing at Emlyon Business School
- > **Organisation of the programme:**
 - Groups, synchronous groups, support for asynchronous and online groups
 - Groups in English only
- > **Total number of graduates since the programme launch:** 5 (30 December 2024)
- > **Number of participants:** 60
 - 5% France / 20% Europe / 75% Rest of the world
 - 30% Female / 70% Male
- > **Average age of doctoral-managers:** 42
- > **Website:** <https://em-lyon.com/en/executive/phd/gdba>

> **Date of programme creation:**

- 1993, the first DBA programme in Europe

> **Names of DBA programme managers:**

- Dr. Dima Louis, Academic Director of the DBA France (and international)
- Dr. Marielle De Jong, Academic Director of the DBA USA

> **Organisation of the programme:**

- Face-to-face (Grenoble, Paris, Los Angeles) & synchronous distance seminars
- Groups in English only with the option of writing the thesis in French

> **Total number of graduates since the programme launch:** 620 (December 2024)

> **Number of participants:** 125

- 10% France / 15% Europe / 75% rest of the world
- 40% Female / 60% Male

> **Average age of doctoral student-managers:** 43

> **Observations:** AACSB+ AMBA+ EQUIS

> **Website:** <https://www.grenoble-em.com/formations/dba-doctorate-of-business-administration>



Date of programme creation:

- 2008



Names of DBA programme managers:

- Prof. Elisabeth Walliser, Director of IAE Nice and Academic Director of the outsourced DBA programmes in China and Lebanon.
- Prof. Marc Valax, Academic Director of the Executive DBA Nice and the relocated programmes in Morocco and Côte d'Ivoire.



Organisation of the programme in Nice and for delocalised programmes:

- Face-to-face or hybrid groups, with three meetings per year.
- Courses in French (in Casablanca and Abidjan) and English (in Nice, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beirut with a double degree from ESA).

IAE Nice's programmes benefit from long-standing expertise in supporting and enhancing the applied research skills of managers and global leaders. The hybrid courses and doctoral follow-up workshops are spread over three years of training and are given over two days, Friday and Saturday, at a rate of two seminars per month between October and July. Individual doctoral tutoring meetings are organised on a regular basis, either face-to-face or remotely, depending on the location of the students and their supervisor.



Total number of graduates since the programme launch (2008): 73



Number of participants (2024-25): 11

- French: 1%
- Europeans (excluding France): 3%
- World Citizens: 96%.
- 41% female / 59% male



Average age of doctoral student-managers: 38



Website: <https://iae.univ-cotedazur.fr/formations/executive-dba-edba>



Date of programme creation:

- 2018



Names of DBA programme managers:

- Prof. Christian Defélix, Academic Director of the DBA



Organisation of the programme:

- Face-to-face & remote groups
- Groups in French (French-speaking Switzerland) and in English (China)



Total number of graduates since the programme launch (2018): 28



Number participants: 58

- 16% Europe (Switzerland)
- 84% rest of the world
- 64% Female / 64% Male



Website: <https://iae.grenoble-inp.fr/fr/international/dba-doctorate-in-business-administration>



Communication, Ressources Humaines, Intervention Sociale - EA 7400
Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3 - Université de Perpignan Via Domitia - Institut Régional du Travail Social



Montpellier Paul Valéry University



Programme creation date:

- 2013 by the Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3
- 2019 in partnership with Shanghai Jiao Tong University Education group in China
- 2019 in partnership with Sup de Com Libreville in Gabon and IHES in Dakar, Senegal



Names of DBA programme managers:

- Prof. Florence Noguera, Associate University Professor
- Prof. Jean-Michel Plane, Associate University Professor



Organisation of the programme:

- Organisation of the 3-year programme in the form of research seminars
- Face-to-face groups & remote groups, asynchronous & synchronous groups
- French-speaking programme (DBA students from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Quebec, Lebanon, French-speaking Africa, Maghreb countries, Middle East, etc.)



Total number of graduates since the programme launch (2018): 160 (January 2025)



Number of participants: 45 doctoral students in the DBA France programme; 64 doctoral students in the DBA Africa programme and 50 doctoral students in the DBA China programme.

- 39% European Union (including France)
- 5% (outside France)
- 61% rest of the world
- 32% women / 68% men



Average age of doctoral student-managers: 45



Observations: The DBA programme at Montpellier Paul Valéry University is associated with the CORHIS research laboratory - Communication, Human Resources and Social Intervention - Research Unit 7400 of the University. Doctoral students in management are registered with the University's Research and Doctoral Studies Department (DRED), a central service under the responsibility of the University's Scientific Vice-President. It is possible to transfer from the DBA thesis to the doctoral (PhD) thesis.



Website: <https://www.univ-montp3.fr/fr/formations/offre-de-formation/autres-diplomes-9/droit-economie-gestion-DEG/diplome-d-universite-executive-doctorate-in-business-administration-I5E033BV.html>



International University of Monaco (IUM) :

A business school based in Monaco, founded in 1986, IUM now has over 1,000 students in its BBA, Msc, MBA and DBA programmes, which focus on Monegasque areas of expertise such as Luxury Management, Finance and Sport Business Management. The degrees are accredited by the State of Monaco, and IUM is AMBA and AACSB accredited.

- > **Programme creation date:** 2014
- > **Director of the DBA programme :**
 - Prof. Dr. Mariateresa Torchia
- > **Total number of graduates since programme launch:** 34
- > **Number of participants:** 30

> **Organisation of the programme:**

The programme is organised over 6 residential weeks, which take place twice a year. These sessions alternate with online courses, asynchronous sessions and candidates working independently on their research under the supervision of two research supervisors. A presentation at an international conference and a non-rejected paper in a ranked journal are prerequisites for the defence.

> **Nationalities of students:**

- French: 2.9%.
- Europeans (excluding France): 58.8%
- Rest of the World: 38.2%
- 47% Female / 53% Male

> **Average age of doctoral-managers:** 42

> **Website:** <https://www.monaco.edu/programmes-formations/programme-dba/>



INSPIRING EDUCATION
INSPIRING LIFE



Programme creation date:

- 2011 by TBS in partnership with Jinan University, Guangzhou, China
- 2014 as part of a partnership between TBS Education and Audencia



Director of DBA :

- Dr. Stéphane Thion



Organisation of the programme :

- Eight seminars, half of which are co-modal (i.e. hybrid face-to-face and online) and the other half distance learning.
- In English only



Number of graduates since 2011: 118 (September 2024)



Number students: 130

- 7% France
- 4% Europe outside France
- 21% Middle East
- 8% Africa
- 52% China
- 5% Asia excluding China
- 4% Americas
- 23% Female / 77% Male (40% women in recent cohorts)



Average age of doctoral-managers: 47



Observations: The programme is AACSB and EQUIS accredited



Website: <https://www.tbs-education.fr/formation/dba/>

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7. Coordinators & Contributors

Coordinators:

Michel KALIKA is the founder and current director of the [Business Science Institute \(IGENSIA Education Group\)](#). An honorary professor at the iaelyon School of Management – Université Jean Moulin, he previously served as director of the Strasbourg School of Management and developed numerous MBA and DBA programmes for managers at Université Paris-Dauphine. He is the author or co-author of more than twenty-five management books, including *Management Stratégique*, the most widely reprinted French strategy textbook. In addition, he has published around a hundred articles, papers, book chapters, and case studies on strategy and information systems. His current research focuses on information overload, the millefeuille theory, and the impact of business schools. Over the course of his career, Michel Kalika has supervised approximately sixty doctoral theses. In 2019, forty colleagues honoured his contributions with the book *Entrepreneur à l'Université* (EMS). He is also a member of the Board of Directors of EDBAC (Executive DBA Council).

Jean-Pierre HELFER is Professor Emeritus at IAE Paris Sorbonne Business School, Director of Research at Excecia Business School, and Strategic Advisor to Planeta Formation and Universités France. He also serves as Chairman of the Academic Committee of the Business Science Institute. Previously, he was the director of IAE Paris and Audencia. An author of several books in the fields of marketing and strategy, he is recognised as an expert in the organisation of higher management education in France and internationally. He also works as a consultant in this field. In 2014, a book dedicated to his career, *Le professeur de management à 360 degrés*, was published by Editions Vuibert.

Contributors:

Olivier BASSO is an associate professor of leadership at the CNAM and director of the "Leadership and Complex Management" Certificate at Sciences Po Executives. Holding a qualification to supervise research (HDR), he has published several books and around thirty articles, particularly on intrapreneurship and leadership development. As head of the DBA programme at the CNAM, he also works as a coach and facilitator for senior executives in major companies. His latest book, co-authored, *Management: Fondements et nouvelles pratiques*, was published by Dunod in 2024.

Gregor BOUVILLE is a University Professor of Management Sciences at the Université Jean-Moulin, iaelyon School of Management, UR Magellan. His areas of expertise include human resources management and industrial relations. His research aligns with the critical approach in human resources management, focusing on the interaction between work management methods and employee health. He also studies gender in the workplace and the challenges related to balancing professional and private life. He is the director of the EDBA and co-director of the Master RHO at the iaelyon School of Management.

Jérôme CABY is Professor of Corporate Finance at IAE Paris-Sorbonne, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, and Secretary General of FNEGE (Fondation Nationale pour l'Enseignement de la Gestion des Entreprises). A specialist in corporate finance, he has published numerous articles in French and international scientific journals, as well as six books as author or coordinator. He is also a regular commentator on financial news in the mainstream media. Throughout his career, he has held several leadership positions in higher education institutions, including serving as Director of IAE Paris, Managing Director of ICN Business School Nancy-Metz, and Managing Director of ESCE in Paris.

Marie-Christine CHALUS SAUVANNET is Managing Director of iaelyon School of Management - Université Jean Moulin and President of the IAE FRANCE network. A university professor, she is Head of the Strategy Teaching and Research Centre. She is also Director of the Graduate School "International Entrepreneurship and Innovation for Society". A recognised researcher and specialist in strategy and entrepreneurship, she is Vice-President in charge of development at the Académie de l'Entrepreneuriat et de l'Innovation. She founded and directs the CREATE applied entrepreneurship research team. She is the author of several books and regularly publishes in leading French and international journals. Highly involved in socio-economic circles, she was President of the Société d'Économie Politique et Sociale de Lyon (SEPL). She worked in the private sector for seven years, supporting corporate strategy.

Christian DEFELIX is a university professor of management science at Grenoble IAE-INP, Université Grenoble Alpes. A specialist in human resources management, he founded and co-directs the Human Capital and Innovation Chair, in conjunction with the Grenoble-Isère high-tech ecosystem. He was Director of Grenoble IAE from 2012 to 2022 and is currently Academic Director of the DBA programme.

Dima LOUIS is Associate Professor of Leadership and Organisation Studies at Grenoble École de Management. A DBA graduate herself, she turned to academia after a career spanning more than 20 years in HR, talent management, and leadership development in multinational organisations across various sectors and countries. She is certified in professional assessment by the British Psychological Society and has received a Harnisch Fellowship from the Institute of Coaching at McLean Hospital, affiliated with Harvard Medical School, for her research on coaching. She publishes regularly in peer-reviewed journals and is a member of the Executive DBA Council (EDBAC).

Jean-Philippe MULLER After completing postgraduate studies at HEC Paris, pursued a doctorate in Management Sciences at ESSEC Business School. He has held management positions in several French Grandes Écoles, including Audencia Nantes École de Management and Skema Business School. From 2006 to 2010, he served as vice-chairman of the 'Chapitre des Écoles de Management de la Conférence des Grandes Écoles'. He also contributed to the Livre Blanc des Grandes Écoles de Management (2006), writing the chapter on "Research".

Since 2013, he has been Director General of the International University of Monaco, which obtained AACSB accreditation in early 2021. He has been a member of the AACSB's European Advisory Council (EAC) since July 2022. In addition, he has been a member of Monaco's 'Conseil Stratégique pour l'Attractivité' since 2017. Since July 2024, he has also served as a French Foreign Trade Advisor (CCF) in Monaco.

Florence NOGUERA is an associate professor of management science at Paul Valéry Montpellier 3 University, specialising in human resources management. She holds a doctorate in management science from Lyon 2 University and is qualified to direct research at Panthéon-Assas Paris 2 University. In 2013, together with Professor Jean-Michel Plane, she founded the only DBA programme offered in France by an LLASHS (Humanities, Languages, Arts and Social Sciences) university, the Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3. She has been President of the Association Francophone de Gestion des Ressources Humaines (AGRH) since 2021 and is Vice-President of the University in charge of employability and relations with the socio-economic world. She has published over 200 scientific papers in FNEGE-accredited journals and has presented her research at national and international conferences, including AGRH, AIRMAP, EGOS, IFSAM, and AOM.

Elisabeth PAULET is Professor of Economics and Finance at ICN Business School in Nancy. After completing her doctorate at the European University Institute in Florence, she held the Jean Monnet Chair. Her main areas of interest are banking structures and corporate finance policy, both from historical and contemporary perspectives. She has published several books with Pickering Chatto, Chandos Elsevier, and Cambridge, as well as numerous scientific articles in journals such as *Corporate Governance*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of European Economic History*, *Strategic Change*, and *Asia Pacific Business Review*. She is currently responsible for ICN's doctoral programmes.

Michel PHAN has been Professor of Luxury Marketing at Emlyon Business School since September 2011. He is currently the Director of the Global DBA programmes, having previously served as Director of the MSc in Luxury Management and Marketing at Emlyon. He spent many years in Asia, particularly in Singapore and Shanghai. Before joining Emlyon Business School, he taught at several prestigious institutions, including ESSEC Business School and Sydney University Business School (Australia). He has also been a visiting professor at Zurich University (Switzerland), Cornell School of Hotel Administration (USA), Parsons Paris (France), Sogang Business School (South Korea), and Shanghai International Studies University (SISU) (China). In addition, he has been a guest speaker at various Asian universities, including Yonsei University in Seoul (South Korea) and the National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School.

Jean-Michel PLANE is Associate Professor at the Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3. He is the director of the CORHIS research unit, which hosts doctoral students and includes nearly 80 researchers and professors. He has conducted numerous expert appraisals for HCERES and was a member of its board of directors from 2016 to 2019. Throughout his career, he has produced nearly 300 publications, including 40 articles in peer-reviewed journals and 24 books (solo or collective). His work has received several distinctions, including a best paper award from the Academy of Management, Management Consulting Division (USA), and four labels from the FNEGE labelling college. He is also co-editor-in-chief of the *Revue de Gestion des Ressources Humaines* (rank 2 CNRS in France). His most recent books include *Management des organisations. Théories - Concepts - Performances*, 6th edition (Dunod, 2024); *RSE, Développement durable et théorie des parties prenantes. Une perspective internationale* (ESKA, 2023); and *Théorie des organisations*, 6th edition (Dunod, Les Topos, 2023).

Alon ROZEN is Managing Director, Chairman of the Executive Board, Dean, and Professor of Innovation at École des Ponts Business School, a subsidiary of École nationale des ponts et chaussées - Institut Polytechnique de Paris (ENPC). Since becoming Dean in 2014, he has led the school in developing innovative programmes for experienced professionals, including the prestigious Executive DBA, launched in 2015 and now in its 11th intake. Alon is also an active researcher, focusing on topics such as the circular economy, adaptive leadership, and business models.

Stéphane THION is responsible for the Executive DBA programme at TBS Education. After more than 20 years in the corporate world, notably as Marketing Director in Business Units within the Orange Group, he obtained his PhD in Management Sciences from Toulouse Capitole University in 2019. Since then, he has held positions as a teacher-researcher in business schools and has led several programmes, including an MSc at TBS Education. He is also the author or co-author of several research articles and books on marketing, covering diverse fields such as information technology and military history.

Marc VALAX is Professor of Management Sciences at IAE Nice, GRM laboratory, Université Côte d'Azur. His teaching and research focus on longitudinal qualitative methodologies that examine the international mobility practices of HR and leaders. His research has identified and compared shortcomings in the social responsibility of multinationals, as well as the HR tools required to support empowerment processes in West Africa and to combat organisational corruption, particularly in the Middle East (Wasta in Jordan and the Gulf States). Since September 2020, he has been responsible for teaching the Executive DBA programme at IAE Nice. He also teaches and supervises DBA theses across IAE Nice's five outsourced programmes.

Vincenzo VINZI Vincenzo Vinzi is the Managing Director of ESSEC Business School. He holds a doctorate in statistics and computer science from the University of Federico II in Naples and was a professor of statistics at the university until 2007. He has been a visiting professor and lecturer at numerous universities and research centres across Europe, the United States, and Asia. He is the author of around 80 scientific articles published in international journals and has also served as editor and co-author of specialised books. Vincenzo Vinzi is President of the Conférence des Directeurs d'Écoles Françaises de Management (CDEFM), Vice-President of the Conférence des Grandes Écoles (CGE) in charge of the Diversity & Inclusion Commission, and President of the SESAME competition.

Business Science Institute



CNAM



Ecole des Ponts Business School



Emlyon Business School



Grenoble School of Management



Grenoble IAE-INP, Grenoble Alpes University



IAE Nice, Côte d'Azur University



iaelyon School of Management



ICN Business School



International University of Monaco, IUM



TBS EDUCATION



Montpellier Paul Valéry University



WHITE PAPER
DOCTORATE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (DBA)
Bridging Management Research and Business Practice

Coordinators:

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