

Business and Management Doctorates World-Wide

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Business and Management Doctorates World-Wide: Developing the Next Generation

BY

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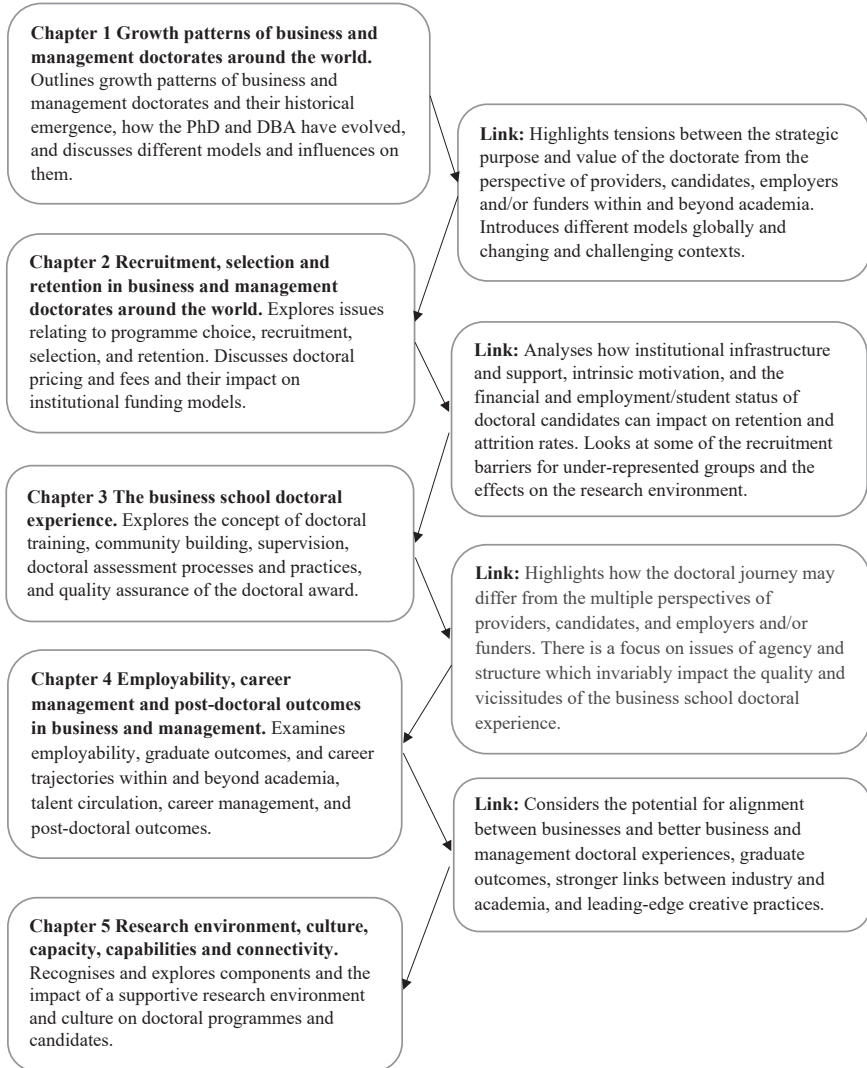
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Outline of the Book: A Flow Diagram



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Contents

About the Authors	<i>x</i>
Foreword	<i>xii</i>
Preface	<i>xiv</i>
Acknowledgements	<i>xv</i>
Chapter 1 Growth Patterns of Business and Management Doctorates Around the World	1
Overview	1
An Overall Increase in Doctoral Qualifications Worldwide	1
Elite Reproduction and Academic Excellence	2
Training for Research Excellence	5
Producing Business School Doctoral Graduates for the Knowledge Economy	7
The DBA as a Practice-Based and Work-Based Learning Approach to Doctoral Education	10
Differences and Similarities Between the PhD and DBA – Horses for Courses?	11
Institutional Strategic Aims of Business and Management Doctorates	13
Delivery of Business School Terminal Degrees as Executive Education	18
The Idea of a ‘Modern Doctorate’	19
Changes During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Reflections on the Future	20
Summary	23
Chapter 2 Recruitment, Selection and Retention in Business and Management Doctorates Around the World	35
Overview	35
Who is Being Targeted for Business Doctorate Recruitment?	35
Recruiting to a Diverse and Inclusive Research Environment?	36

Pricing and Fees	38
Doctoral Admissions to Reproduce the Academy	42
Journeying across Boundaries	43
Variations in the Recruitment of Business School Doctorate Candidates	45
The Language of Application	46
Recruitment, Selection and Admissions	48
Retention of Business School Doctorate Candidates	51
Changes During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Future Prospects	55
Summary	56
Chapter 3 The Business School Doctoral Experience	69
Overview	69
Socialisation into Business and Management Doctoral Studies	69
Doctoral Communities	72
Progression, Quality Assurance and Assessment	75
Influences on the Shape of the Doctorate	77
Implications of Funded PGRs	79
Working While Completing a Doctorate	81
The Doctoral Examination	83
The Role of Academic Advisors and Supervisors in the Business Doctorate	84
The Business Doctorate as Doctoral Training for Whom?	88
Changes During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Future Prospects	91
Summary	92
Chapter 4 Employability, Career Management and Postdoctoral Outcomes in Business and Management	103
Overview	103
Brain Drain, Brain Gain and Business Doctorate Mobility: The Academic Career Market	103
Role Modelling Business School PhD Graduate Careers	105
Business School PhD Graduate Careers Beyond Academia	107
Career-Oriented Researcher Development Needs	109
DBA Impact on Careers – Key Challenges	110
Impactful DBA Programmes	111
Impacts that Hit Multiple Policy Agendas	112
Structural and Agentic Influences on the Impacts of Business Doctorates	115
Changes During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Reflections for the Future	117
Summary	117

Chapter 5 Research Environment, Culture, Capacity, Capabilities and Connectivity	125
Overview and Context	125
Business School Research Environments	125
Cultural Paradigms and the Business School Doctoral Research Environment	128
Research Culture and Organisational Behaviour	130
Professionalisation of Doctoral Supervision	131
Business Doctoral Education and Capacity Development	132
Mentoring, Social Capital and Capacity-Building	133
Mental Health and Well-Being and Diminished Capacity	135
Capabilities as Opportunities to Enable Being or Doing	137
Connectivity	138
Interdisciplinarity and Team Science	139
Looking to the Future of Business School Doctorates	140
Summary	140
Final Reflections	142
Index	153

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About the Authors

Nicola J. Palmer has worked in Higher Education for over 25 years and in Doctoral Programmes Management for almost 15 years. She is an experienced Business School Doctoral Supervisor who, to date, has supervised 19 doctoral candidates to completion and examined over 20 candidates. She was one of the first doctoral supervisors to achieve UKCGE Research Supervisor Recognition and has won an Inspirational Research Supervisor award for her practice. Nicola served on the ESRC-initiated Northern Advanced Research Training Initiative (NARTI) Board 2014–2017 and the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) Doctoral Programmes Committee 2016–2022. She is an academic based in the Doctoral School at Sheffield Hallam University and the School for Business & Society at the University of York and is involved in the delivery of Research England funded projects on postgraduate research race equity and the transformation of doctoral supervision.

Julie Davies is a Professor in the Global Business School for Health at University College London, where she is Director of the MBA Health Programme. She earned her PhD in Strategic Management at Warwick University while working full time. Julie has worked in Business Schools for almost three decades and has facilitated Business School Deans' Development Programmes globally. Julie has completed the UKCGE Research Supervisor Recognition Programme and publishes research on impact and gender, hybrid leadership, ethnic minority micro-enterprises, and management education. She co-authored the *Routledge Book Leading a Business School*. Julie also served on EFMD's Doctoral Programmes Committee 2017–2022.

Clare Viney took up the role of Chief Executive Officer of CRAC in October 2016. She is a Strategic Leader with over 20 years' advocacy, policy and external affairs experience, and extensive experience in the not-for-profit sector. Clare is passionate about investing in future generations and those from diverse backgrounds and experiences, empowering people to realise their potential, and achieve their career and development goals. She currently sits on the UK R&D People and Culture Strategy Ministerial Coordination Group, QAA Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers, and Technician Commitment Steering Board. CRAC manages the Vitae Programme in higher education, strengthening institutional provision for the professional development of researchers through research and innovation, training and resources, events, consultancy, and membership. Clare also served on EFMD's Doctoral Programmes Committee 2017–2019.

Foreword

Doctorates at business schools serve a variety of functions for society, academic disciplines, and the institutions that award the qualifications. The societal impact of Doctorates of Business Administration (DBA), other professional doctorates and PhDs has largely been neglected in the focus on providing business and management studies undergraduate degrees and programmes such as MBA. Yet, the future pipeline of academic faculty and highly qualified practising executives relies on a supply of business and management doctorates. Furthermore, holders of business doctorates are a source of research and new knowledge to inform practice as they shape the thinking, relevance and rigour of the most popular subject in universities globally – indeed, they are the custodians of their disciplines and creators of new knowledge that has a major that influence on our lives.

Business and Management Doctorates World-Wide: Developing the Next Generation by Nicola J. Palmer, Julie Davies, and Clare Viney offers valuable and differentiated insights and critical commentary on business school doctorates today. The authors seek to give an overview of the different types of business and management doctorate to present different models in the field. They draw upon a combined wealth of experience and acknowledging historical and contemporary influences. This volume skilfully engages with extensive published literature alongside experiential learning and navigates issues of structure and agency, highlighting tensions between the strategic purpose and value of the doctorate, barriers for under-represented groups, and effects on the research environment.

The authors draw attention to multiple stakeholder perspectives from business school educators, candidates and alumni, employers and policy makers to highlight the contributions to management scholarship and management practice of doctoral programmes in business schools.

As readers, we are encouraged to explore further the potential for alignment between businesses and better business and management doctoral experiences, graduate outcomes, links between industry and academia, and leading-edge creative practices. We are also challenged to broaden our own perspectives beyond familiarity with particular national systems to see the rich variety of doctorates.

In the following pages, you will find a comprehensive analysis of the current state of business and management doctorates not just on the European continent but around the globe. This complements the *EQUAL Guidelines for Doctoral Programmes in Business and Management* which present a common view of a doctorate in the field of business and management research, the largest in higher education.

We are confident that doctoral education in management, whether PhD, DBA, professional, executive, and other doctorates provided by business schools offers tremendous opportunities to bridge theory and practice in an applied discipline. This is particularly salient in a world that continues to question the rigour and relevance of business school research. We congratulate the authors on highlighting important aspects of management education and supporting progress in this popular and dynamic field.

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Director of the Stellenbosch Business School,
Cape Town, South Africa

Friedemann Schulze-Fielitz

Director, EFMD Global Network Americas & Business
School Services

Preface

In this book, we provide reflections on the purpose of business doctorates and international comparisons of innovations in doctoral education within different national educational systems and research and industrial strategies.

A great deal has been written about the MBA, undergraduate business education, and changing models of business schools themselves. With an increase in doctoral candidates world-wide, concerns have been expressed about their employment prospects and the oversupply of graduates in the management field. It would appear that although management is an applied discipline, even professional doctorates in management are decoupled from the growing research impact and interdisciplinary agendas.

To complement recent texts about professional doctorate supervision and perspectives on DBA students as scholar-practitioners, we draw attention more broadly to the purpose of doctoral education in business schools, programme design and management, and candidate experiences. The book draws on the authors' practical experiences, observations, and research on business school doctorates and the development of researchers.

We note the importance of perspective when examining doctoral education. Doctoral researchers and supervisors in business schools need to take a broader helicopter view of changes in management disciplines and business functions. Of course, the successful completion of business and management doctorates around the world requires hard work, courage, and thrift and the ability to analyse detailed evidence while seeing the big picture and making theoretical abstractions. There is a need to foreground individuals in the doctoral environment as persisting in the face of incoming challenges. Our book's front cover reflects these elements.

We hope that you find some useful and thought-provoking insights in this book. We look forward to continuing conversations about the value of business doctorates, re-imagining different models, ecosystems and interdisciplinary, cross-sector, and international collaborations.

Nicola Palmer
Yorkshire

Julie Davies
London

Clare Viney
Cambridge

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To quote T. S. Eliot, it's been 'such a long journey' since Nicola, Clare, and I first met in Grenoble and great fun collaborating with fellow travellers who believe that doctorates can transform lives. I also owe a huge debt of gratitude to my family.

I would like to thank Nicola and Julie for allowing me to tag along on this journey! When I first met them at the EFMD Conference in Grenoble, I naively thought that the culture and practice in Business Schools might help Vitae unlock the secrets to helping ALL researchers realise their potential. Consistently, around 80% of researchers aspire to an academic career with over 60% expecting to achieve this, though we know that while the numbers of researchers have continued to increase, there has been little or no growth in the availability of academic positions. Therefore, the career aspirations of most researchers are unrealistic compared to the probability of achieving a long-term academic career.

xvi Acknowledgements

We are a small team that sits at the heart of a diverse community in over 20 countries. All of the CRAC-Vitae research has been conducted by Dr Robin Mellors-Bourne and Dr Janet Metcalfe, I thank them for their curiosity, thoughtfulness, integrity, and passion.

Chapter 1

Growth Patterns of Business and Management Doctorates Around the World

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the historical emergence of business schools in Europe, the evolution of the PhD in business and management education from its origins in the USA, the development of the Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) in different parts of the world including Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and non-OECD countries. We highlight debates about Western models of doctoral management adopted in non-Western contexts, specifically the influence of elite Anglophone business schools. In particular, we discuss the influence of media rankings and global mobility of candidates. Finally, the growth patterns of business and management doctorates worldwide are viewed in the context of rapid changes to online learning during the pandemic and a cold war geopolitical context in what has been called the Asian century (Woetzel & Seong, 2019).

An Overall Increase in Doctoral Qualifications Worldwide

A great deal has been written about the MBA, undergraduate business education, and changing models of business schools (see, e.g., Cheit, 1985; Glen, Suci, & Baughn, 2014; Krishnamurthy, 2020; Navarro, 2008; Parker, 2018; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Less focus has been placed, however, on terminal degrees at doctoral level in business schools.

Since the appearance of the first business schools, which developed in Europe from trade or vocational commercial schools in the eighteenth century (Passant, 2016; Thomas, Thomas, & Wilson, 2013; Thomas & Wilson, 2011), the scale and continued growth of management education are unparalleled compared with other academic disciplines (De Meyer, 2013; Reddy, 2008; Thomas & Wilson, 2011). Over the last 50 years, the provision of doctorates in business and management has also enjoyed phenomenal global expansion.

The introduction of the PhD in business and management can be charted back to the USA in 1920 in what is now the University of Chicago Booth School

of Business. The development of the DBA has followed a less straightforward path. In the USA, for example, its introduction was driven by administrative forces. The DBA was first offered at Harvard University in 1953 as the business school was not authorised to issue a PhD until 2018 (Bogle, personal communication with Julie Davies, July 15, 2019; Marakas, n.d.). The award is not offered by business schools globally as widely as the PhD. Notably in Germany, the DBA still lacks recognition by the national government as an equivalent award to the PhD even though the same DBA programme may be officially recognised in another country where the DBA awarding institution is based such as in the UK (Graf, 2014). This may not matter for those with DBAs in multinational firms based in Germany. There has been a tendency for the DBA to gain worldwide reach as a collaborative degree offered onsite in partner countries but awarded by Australian, North American, and UK universities.

Across all types of doctorates in all academic disciplines, growth in the rate of the qualification had reached a point where it was estimated that over one percent of the working-age population were qualified to doctoral level in more than one-third of OECD countries worldwide in 2015 (OECD, 2017). Between 2013 and 2017, the number of candidates graduating with a doctorate increased by approximately 8% across OECD countries (OECD, 2019). In business and management specifically, there has been growth in the provision of doctorates across the globe (Lean, Wilkins, Moizer, & Heffernan, 2022).

With the increase in doctoral candidates, concerns have been expressed about their employment prospects and over-supply of graduates in the management field (see, e.g., De Meyer, 2013; Ingeborgrud, Korseberg, & Lyby, 2021; Owen, 2009; Suomi, Kuoppakangas, Kivistö, Stenvall, & Pekkola, 2020).

Yet beyond OECD countries, it is important to recognise that geographically contextual conditions have impacted on doctoral education provision. There is an uneven playing field globally. The idea that ‘globalization in doctoral education brings with it the legacies of imperialism, colonialism, and Western domination’ (Nerad & Heggelund, 2011, p. 6) is mirrored when we look at business school doctoral education where globalisation is more widespread (Friga, Bettis, & Sullivan, 2003) or in many business schools where the doctoral education provision is less maturely developed (Bruner & Iannarelli, 2011; Suh, 2008). The influence of international excellence and the existence of a ‘super league’ of institutions that dominate the academic knowledge economy and the competitive environment warrants consideration.

Elite Reproduction and Academic Excellence

Pioneering business schools such as Wharton and Harvard Business School in the USA are noted as catalysts of global business school development. The private/non-profit business schools of INSEAD (France), IMD (Switzerland), and Harvard Business School (USA) have exerted some of the greatest influence on models of management education (Thomas et al., 2013).

Over time, business school performance has been increasingly measured (and shaped) by accreditation body and media rankings that primarily provide education quality assurance and enhanced business school reputations. Rankings methodologies have focused on variables that consumers of management education appear to value such as average earnings and alumni destinations (Thomas et al., 2013). Journalists including Jack (2022) have noted the influence of metrics such as *The Financial Times* (FT) business school rankings on multiple business school stakeholders. These affect potential candidate choice, employer recruitment and ‘placement’ of graduates following completion of their doctorates and hold implications for career trajectory and lifetime earnings. There are also unequal opportunities in faculty hiring, remuneration, and promotion (Pitt-Watson & Quigley, 2019). Notably, the international ranking of top performing business schools tends to be Western-led and linked to MBA programme characteristics. In relation to doctorates specifically, however, we also note implications for the quality of research training and research outputs. The proportion of female faculty and female candidates reported in the top 100 business schools ranked in the FT global MBA league tables indicates significant scope for better gender equity (Yarrow & Davies, 2023a) among candidates and faculty delivering MBA programmes. There are significant opportunities to mitigate gender inequalities in business education (Yarrow & Davies, 2023b) and to involve more women in business schools in research with impact (Davies, Yarrow, & Syed, 2020). This also applies to doctoral-level study in business schools.

Until recently there has been a sizeable, seemingly immovable, power differential between the international ranking levels of business schools located in Western countries (mainly in the USA and Europe) and the rest of the world (Vidaver-Cohen, 2007; Wedlin, 2006). Many institutions and countries worldwide, however, seek the reputation to be gained by climbing up the ranks of international schemes that originate from the West (and are driven by Western values of education quality). Latin American business schools, for instance, are reported to hold North American rankings in esteem (Orozco & Villaveces, 2015), whereas European rankings such as Eduniversal are influential in South Africa.

Ostensibly at least, business school education has become increasingly oriented towards internationalisation although local issues were accentuated during pandemic lockdowns. The drive to internationalisation is encouraged by business school accreditations such as AACSB and EQUIS which emphasise international mindsets. Growth in the doctoral education of graduates worldwide has involved international mobility of candidates and faculty members, especially pre-pandemic. This has impacted the global provision of business and management doctorates, contributing to a situation where ‘on average across OECD countries, 25% of enrolled doctoral graduates are international students’ (OECD, 2019, p. 1). International candidate mobility generally involves movements from less to more developed countries or between developed countries. In the case of business school doctoral education, this mobility of candidates is linked to faculty

4 Business and Management Doctorates World-Wide

upskilling and goals of reproducing business models found outside low- and middle-income countries.

Research performance and ‘academic excellence’ are commonly measured through contributions to the world’s leading business and management journals which are ranked, for example, in the *Academic Journal Quality Guide* and the *Financial Times* top 50 list of academic journals. There has been a rise in publications from business school academics in Asia (Collet & Vives, 2013). This tends to correlate with improvements in the quality of research training (Saunders, Wong, & Saunders, 2011).

It is common in top-ranking business schools for permanent academic contracts or tenure and promotions to depend on publishing in top-tier business and management journals. Additionally, there is a history of university and business school research assessments and research standing based on outputs in these journals. Pressures to publish are growing for business and management doctoral candidates in the UAE (Hill & Thabet, 2021). US-trained or US-based scholars of Middle Eastern or African origin can overcome traditional barriers to their career development by their exposure to conducting and publishing research in leading international journals (Lages, Pfajfar, & Shoham, 2015).

The impacts of privileging Western business school research ranking systems are not clearcut or wholesale in terms of the reproduction of an elite league of business schools. It has been reported, for instance, that ‘unlike the USA and the Euro-area, where the top researchers are mainly born and research trained in their own country, the UK’s leading business and management researchers tend to be non-locals trained outside the UK’ (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 401). This may have changed following Brexit in 2016.

National models of training in doctoral education influence the development of doctoral education worldwide (Nerad & Heggelund, 2011). We can observe general patterns in the transfer of credit-bearing PhD training from the USA to Europe. This training has been linked to third-cycle higher education goals under the Bologna Process in Europe (Carter, Fazey, Gonzalez Geraldo, & Trevitt, 2010). National programmes have also been shaped by the implementation of transferable credit-bearing training as part of a commonly aligned and portable licence to practise and the development of a *European Code of Practice for Doctoral Studies in Management and Business* (EIASM & EDAMBA, 2020).

Bogle (personal communication with Julie Davies, July 15, 2019) contends that the UK was historically at the forefront of PhD training developments before the EU broadened PhD training with encouragement from the European Universities Association (EUA), the European Commission and university associations such as the *League of European Research Universities* (LERU). A UK model where training is located outside the PhD research programme, often linked to master’s research training in the social sciences and business and management, has been acknowledged to have transferred to Australia. However, we can also observe exceptions in commonly acknowledged diffusion patterns of PhD training models. For example, Saunders et al. (2011) noted the adoption of the USA PhD training model by London Business School in the UK. Most recently, this has also happened at Warwick Business School.

Training for Research Excellence

Middle East and North African (MENA) universities have been impacted by regional factors not least ‘the absence of intellectual freedom and the constraints imposed on the free expression of ideas in all MENA universities’ (Forster, 2018, p. 1025) combined with strategic under-investment in university research and teaching. Subsequently, there have been attempts to align the provision of doctoral education across the region with European models (El Hassan, 2013) and the Americanisation of business education has been observed especially in the context of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Juusola, Kettunen, & Alajoutsijärvi, 2015) whereby AACSB-accredited UAE institutions have recruited North American faculty with PhDs from AACSB-accredited universities to support the development of ‘quality assured’ in-country doctoral programmes.

The quality of US doctoral training is also appreciated in South Korea where almost 90% of business school faculty have been observed to hold US social science PhDs (Kim, 2007). Suh (2008) described an expectation in South Korea that a small number of leading universities will dominate global higher education and, thus, there is a need to achieve globalisation in education and research programmes to compete. It is noted that many private universities dominate the top ranks in business and economics disciplines’ performance and have the highest school reputations among the general public in South Korea (Jin, 2019). Recruitment of international candidates and international faculty are viewed as a marker of offering the highest quality education in line with goals of achieving a place among ‘best universities in the world’.

Furthermore, the US model of doctorates is noted to have influenced the design of doctoral programmes in China (Sun, 2010; Wang & Byram, 2019) whereby the ‘numbers of PhD holders and the scale and quality of doctoral education is taken as an important indicator of the level of higher education and overall development of a country’ (Wang & Byram, 2019, p. 256). This has driven the massification of doctoral education and China’s position as one of the largest PhD-awarding countries worldwide (China Admissions, 2022, 2023). Degrees from China at all levels are increasingly recognised internationally and international demand has been supported by Chinese Government Scholarships and the ‘Confucius China Studies Programme’ (CCSP) aimed to provide financial assistance to Chinese citizens wishing to pursue their PhD abroad and to pump-prime doctoral research that focuses on China, respectively. Notably, the country is also beginning to attract international candidates from beyond developing countries – particularly from the USA and France. There is an interesting growth pattern to be observed; increasingly, Western-educated Chinese *PhD* graduates in management are starting their academic careers in *Chinese business schools* (Marini & Yang, 2021; Xu, 2009; Zweig & Yang, 2014). They are using their knowledge and experience of the Western system to inform Chinese business school doctorate programme design and delivery. In turn, through a diffusion strategy, these programmes are emerging as competitors of Western business school PhD offerings.

In a different part of the world, Jowi (2021, p. 159) notes the challenges of ‘weak internal capacities for research and low numbers of staff with PhDs’ across Sub-Saharan African universities. This has prompted a focus on securing rapid growth in PhD graduates. This development, however, is uneven with respect to doctoral enrolment and graduation rates. It is focused on upskilling staff to build academic capacity and it is limited to ‘universities in a handful countries, especially South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana’ (Jowi, 2021, p. 161). Creative solutions are sought to address resource challenges not least in terms of supervision and doctoral training including centres of excellence, collaborations, and partnerships within the region and beyond. A collaboration between Stellenbosch Faculty of Economics and Management (South Africa) and the University of Bath (UK) illustrates an attempt to build capacity through partnership and collaboration (University of Bath, 2021) rather than through traditional approaches whereby Western models are often imported that are ‘more tailored towards functioning in a Western style environment’ (Tshabangu-Soko & Caron, 2012, p. 37).

In 2021, a new doctoral training consortium was launched under the auspices of the South Africa-UK University Staff Doctoral Programme (USDP). Ten students at Stellenbosch University and the University of Fort Hare were selected to join the programme from 2021 to 2026 to study for a PhD degree in the field of public policy and inclusive development.

This partnership was designed to address some of South Africa’s most challenging societal issues by helping to inform better policy making, support inclusive growth, and to generate new knowledge as part of South Africa’s post-Apartheid Transformation agenda. It is a part-time, blended programme, which includes cohort-based research training, professional skills development, and international mobility for research visits, conferences, and summer schools. Customised support includes buy-out of teaching, and online interactive platforms. University of Bath (UK) academics in social science disciplines co-supervise, mentor and support cohort-building activities.

A two-day virtual orientation enables candidates to present their projects, work with their supervisors, and gain insights from colleagues at Bath, Fort Hare, and Stellenbosch as they prepare for the PhD journey and an academic career in different cultural contexts through interdisciplinary scholarship. The USDP project is aligned closely with priorities in South Africa’s National Development Plan and reflects academic strengths and research profiles across the three partner universities. The African Doctoral Academy supports the programme and it is led by Stellenbosch’s Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. The Faculty of Management and Commerce hosts the project in Fort Hare and at Bath University, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences leads on the partnership in close collaboration with the School of Management and other departments and academic units.

This PhD training support for academic staff in South Africa receives funding from the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the British Council. Only approximately 40% of academic staff employed in South African universities have a PhD. There are particular challenges for faculty who are undertaking doctoral research in terms of completion, especially in historically disadvantaged universities such as the University of Fort Hare and among disadvantaged people, including women, black, and working-class academics.

To address this issue, the USDP concept was launched by the South African government in the context of wider higher education reform for widening participation, encouraging both new international links and stronger connections between research-intensive and disadvantaged universities within the country. In 2017, a pilot call was launched for consortia with US universities, followed in 2018 by a second call for partnerships with the UK.

Building on Bath's and Stellenbosch's experience of delivering blended doctoral training for international cohorts, the Stellenbosch-Fort Hare-Bath project will allow sharing of good practice developed around the UK's Researcher Development Framework (RDF) (Vitae, n.d.) with South Africa's review of doctoral standards and PhD graduate attributes.

In recognition of its innovative approach, the project featured as a case study at the Africa-Europe Conference on Higher Education Collaboration: *Investing in people, by investing in higher education and skills in Africa*, which took place in Brussels in October 2019 and was attended by Professor Jeremy Bradshaw, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International & Doctoral) and Dr Tina Schilbach from the International Relations Office.

Professor David Galbreath, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, commented:

I am very excited about the launch of the USDP programme. Building on our successful partnership with Stellenbosch University, this innovative consortium will see Bath contribute to staff doctoral training in South Africa and join forces to revitalise and strengthen the links between academia and policy-making in the country. As a partner to this programme, we will benefit from new, interdisciplinary links in international development studies while building new policy research networks for our students and staff.

The USDP programme is refreshing in terms of its collaborative approach. Shin, Postiglione, and Ho (2018) observe that discourses on world-class higher education often emphasise global competitiveness at the risk of neglecting local relevance, particularly in relation to doctoral training but also with respect to the knowledge economy. In some parts of the world like India, for example, we note an 'exploding market' with a lack of business school maturity. This holds implications for the nature of global competition and the ability of local market demand to be satisfied through local supply.

Producing Business School Doctoral Graduates for the Knowledge Economy

We are aware that 'knowledge economy' is essentially terminology used in Western discourse. Powell and Snellman (2004, p. 199) define the knowledge economy as 'production and services based on knowledge-intensive activities that contribute to an accelerated pace of technical and scientific advance, as well as rapid obsolescence'.

Doctoral education is in a knowledge creation arena with a shifting agenda. Globally, universities are expected to contribute to the advancement of knowledge

and innovation. The idea of knowledge production, specifically in the context of business schools, has received attention (see, e.g., Chia & Holt, 2008; Huff & Huff, 2001; Van Aken, 2005; Wilson & Thomas, 2012). Linked to this, Bartunek and Rynes (2014) have noted the paradoxes inherent in academic–practitioner relationships, a theme further explored by MacIntosh et al. (2017) (relational impact) and Boyer (1996) (engaged scholarship).

Building on these ideas together with the seminal works of Gibbons, Limoges, and Nowotny (1997) (different modes of knowledge production) and Barnett (1999) (applications of knowledge – knowledge in use), the doctorate *per se* can be linked to macro-level national growth policies and knowledge economy strategies (OECD, 2022).

In relation to business schools, Anderson and Gold (2019) recognised the value of the doctorate as part of the broader field (or portfolio) of management education. Debates continue about the shape of this education, namely the extent to which business schools exist as schools for business and the purpose of business education – advancing scientific research knowledge, providing professional training or a combination of both (Bennis & O’Toole, 2005 –) and the legitimacy of the business school in a situation where ‘production of management knowledge straddles the precarious divide between academic rigour and practical relevance’ (Thomas & Wilson, 2011, p. 443). Linked to this, the nature of business and management doctorates can be associated with the ethos of business schools, wherein ‘Far from being the Cinderella of business schools ... doctoral researchers are key to knowledge production and advancing the business and management education field’ (Davies, Palmer, Braccia, Clegg, & Smith, 2021, p. 1).

Among more than 13,000 business schools worldwide (AACSB as cited in Parker, 2018) there exists a combination of state-funded (e.g., dominant in the UK), privately-owned (e.g., dominant in the USA) public–private partnerships (e.g., dominant in France and largely financed by Chambers of Commerce), for-profit and non-profit institutions. The value of the business school to private investors lies in reputation, quality and excellence linked explicitly to European, US and UK accreditation (Conboye, 2019). From the perspective of ‘end users’, business schools may be ‘the “nurseries” of the corporate world’ (van Baardewijk & de Graaf, 2021, p. 188). After all, business schools contribute to the ethical education of business leaders (Sigurjonsson, Vaiman, & Arnardottir, 2014). Within higher education institutions, however, the business school often plays a principal role as the ‘cash cow’ (Starkey & Tiratsoo, 2007). This is based on the popularity of, enduring demand for, and resilience of higher level business education courses in hard times (Moules, 2018; Willetts as cited in Morgan, 2013). Business schools, however, tend not to be regarded as a ‘golden goose’ for scientific knowledge capabilities (Arora, Belenzon, & Patacconi, 2015).

University leaders often seek to enhance their reputations by expanding postgraduate research (PGR) candidate numbers. Business schools typically offer the most popular subjects and attract the highest numbers of postgraduate and overseas students. Yet academic labour markets may not be able to absorb the number of doctoral graduates produced and businesses may be wary of the benefits of doctoral study and qualifications (Malloy, Young, & Berdahl, 2021; Smith, 2021; The Economist, 2010). Indeed, growth in the provision of PhDs alongside