

# A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

## *Solving a problem: what a DBA is ultimately about!*



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If you are wondering whether a DBA journey is the right thing for you, you need to read what follows!

A DBA research and dissertation is an incredible experience that enables you to establish a bridge between two worlds: the world of business and the world of research.

### How is that so?

At Business School Lausanne, we consider that every DBA research and dissertation aims to enable you to transform business while advancing academic research at the same time.

In other words, the objective of every DBA research lies within a transformative contribution to your industry on a two-fold level: the level of business and the level of academic production through research done in the area of business administration related to your research topic.

### **What is special about the problem you want to solve?**

Every DBA journey should start with a problem that you have identified in your professional environment and practice and that you want to solve. This problem can be of any nature related to business administration.

What makes solving this problem different from a consulting practice, is that within a DBA research you will have to make an advancement of the theory that will lead to or is caused by a transformation of business on an operational or a strategic level.

Your research will attempt to offer a solution at the academic level of your business problem. For example, it may be a new problem or a problem that no one has ever seen before, or the solution which exists does not lead to the expected results and could be improved, or the solution is not able to solve the problem anymore.

The DBA research is also different in terms of problem-solving from the consulting practice because we do not want you just to **imagine** new solutions to apply from which you think that they might work to solve the problem you have identified.

We want you to **validate** the solutions and collect data in the field with a scientific methodology, regarding the proposed solution to the problem, so that your solution becomes backed with academic rigor.

Sometimes the problem is evident and easy to identify. Sometimes it is blurry, complex and intricate. Sometimes the problem is restricted to one research field. Sometimes the problem has multi-disciplinary aspects. Sometimes the problem comes from a change of paradigm. Sometimes the problem has been addressed many times already but with a non-satisfactory solution, and sometimes the problem you think you have identified is not the problem you will end up solving in your DBA journey.

The two key ideas to remember are that: the starting point of every DBA journey lies within the identification of a problem, and the problem you may have identified is not necessarily the problem you will end up solving in your Research.

So why is the problem you have identified, not necessarily the problem you will end up solving?

Because the second and central component of your DBA journey is related to the level on which you are going to solve the problem you have identified.

This level is the level of the advancement of theory and academic research. You will not solve the problem you have identified from a consulting perspective, staying at the level of your business or company in terms of impact. You will solve the problem on a larger scale, contributing to transforming the theory, and thus having an impact on your industry, and not on a specific company.

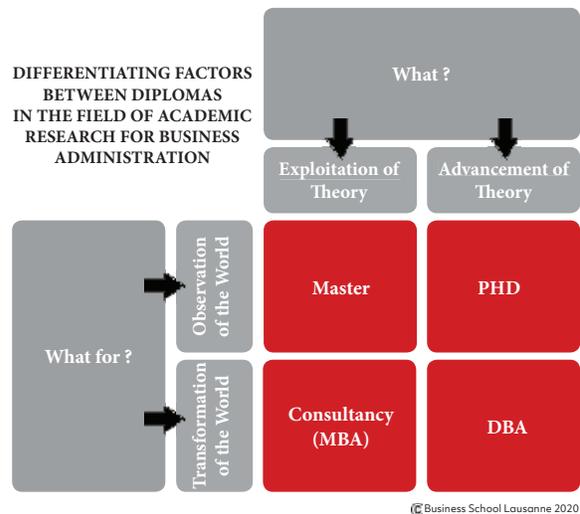
## DBA thesis versus Ph.D. thesis

The DBA research bridges the gap between the academic need for advancement of theory at the level of Doctoral studies and the actual transformation of the business world. In this respect, DBA research is very different from the Ph.D. research, which stays at the level of the advancement of the theory only, most of the time.

Therefore, you will have to make sure that your doctoral journey digs into the existing literature to see how the problem has been addressed or analyzed on an academic level so far.

And this is also where your researcher's journey starts.

As a Doctoral journey aims to contribute to the advancement of theory, you need to find a gap in the existing academic theory. This gap can consist of a blind spot, for example, or of partial research done on the business topic related to the problem you want to solve.



## What can you expect to do in the course of your research?

Once you have identified a gap in theory that is related to the problem you want to solve, you can use different research methodologies that you will discover and learn to master throughout your DBA journey, to fill that gap with a new piece of academic research.

This way you will, at the same time, contribute to solving a business problem and advancing theory.

A DBA journey leading to the writing of a Doctoral dissertation is not a linear process and is difficult to time precisely.

Your journey starts with the first piece of your dissertation, the literature review, showing that you master and can challenge and question the current state of academic theory.

Based on the literature review and on the gaps you have identified in the theory, you will be able to select the methodologies (qualitative and/or quantitative) that can help you fill the theoretical gap and develop a new solution that will be of a transformative nature for your industry.

Following the literature review, the case study methodology most commonly used at BSL, (as a first step to get back to the business problem you want to solve), enables you to conduct action research in the field and within your industry.

The findings of your first case study will then lead you to choose a research methodology to either confirm your findings or dig into another direction.

The results you get from your research and the help of your supervisor guide you constantly towards the next steps of your researcher's journey and ultimately to the successful completion of your DBA thesis.

## The difference the advancement of theory makes

It is very important to understand that the results of your research are going to constitute your findings and that these findings are going to be the central part of your thesis dissertation.

Your findings will either validate or invalidate the solution you think should be applied to the problem you identified when starting your researcher's journey.

That is how you become a researcher! You do not presuppose the solution. You humbly look for the solution having a starting point in mind.

You are ready to challenge your intuition and your assumptions.

You are prepared for the fact that your findings might contradict your beliefs on how to solve the problem.

Throughout this journey, you will become a game-changer in your industry, as well as an accomplished academic.