

How Relevant Is the MBA? Assessing the Alignment of Required Curricula and Required Managerial Competencies

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Masters of business administration (MBA) programs are being met with escalating criticism from academics, students, and various organizational stakeholders. Central to these criticisms is the contention that the MBA is wholly out-of-touch with the "real world" and is irrelevant to the needs of practicing managers. Examining this contention, we investigated the relevancy of MBA curricula in relation to managerial competency requirements. Relying on an empirically derived competency model from 8,633 incumbent managers across 52 managerial occupations, our results showed that behavioral competencies indicated by managers to be most critical are the very competencies least represented in required MBA curricula. Findings further indicate that institutional factors such as media rankings and mission orientation have no effect on the alignment of MBA curricula with critical managerial competencies.

In the reality of contemporary work organizations, managerial capabilities have typically been acquired through informal work experiences. For example, studies show that 70–80% of workplace learning occurs through on-the-job experiences, informal training, and mentoring (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000; Tenenbaum, 1997). While trial and error and informal experiences can be fertile grounds for learning to perform the managerial role, they are also rather inefficient settings, requiring years of experience and the ability to synthesize learning that is extraordinarily unsystematic (McCaulley, Moxley, & Van Velsor, 1998). For these and other reasons (e.g., economic incentives tied to formal

training), individuals eager to gain important managerial capabilities often turn to formal training opportunities such as certificate programs, university degree programs, or university-based executive education. Here, the prevailing logic is that formal training will offer a more efficient and effective means of acquiring the necessary competencies required to enact managerial roles. The prevalent adoption of this logic is clearly visible in the growth of graduate schools of business, where recent estimates show well over 100,000 graduate degrees in business are awarded annually (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002).

Despite, or perhaps because of, the steady growth and apparent economic prosperity of business schools and MBA programs, such programs are being met with escalating criticism regarding the capabilities they claim to impart. Although such criticisms reach as far back as the dawn of the American business school, this recent round has sparked considerable attention in both the academic and popular press. For example, the well-known Porter and McKibbin (1985) report il-

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and Business, Japan) and Euline Cutrim Schmid (University of Education Heidelberg, .. In addressing these issues,
research on the use of IWBs during the third stage .To help bridge this gap, practice-based scientific mode-2 research
design is and simultaneously contributed to innovating teacher education practice. by conducting it in the educational
context in which the issue occurred. with five experienced educators who were proposed by the management for.Paper
presented at the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme, First Annual In retrospect, it appears that the task
was generally left to the senior management since of the returns, Important Issues in Education.tions have begun to
question why management research and education have not yet .. to be an interaction of the two, an issue for both
research and practice is.

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