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## Doctor of Business Administration (D.B.A.): A Viable Credential for Faculty in Programmatically Accredited Business Degree Programs?

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### Abstract

Is the Doctor of Business Administration (D.B.A) a viable degree option for those wishing a career in academe? The D.B.A. degree is often considered to be a professional degree, intended for business practitioners, while the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree is portrayed as the degree for preparing college or university faculty. Conversely, many academic programs market their D.B.A. programs to future academicians. In this study, we investigated whether the D.B.A. is, in fact, a viable faculty credential by gathering data from university catalogs and doctoral program websites and handbooks from 427 graduate business and management programs to analyze the terminal degrees held by 6159 faculty. The analysis indicated that 173 institutions (just over 40% of the total) employed 372 faculty whose terminal degree was the D.B.A. This constituted just over 6% of the total number of faculty. Additionally, the program and faculty qualification standards of the six regional accrediting agencies and the three programmatic accrediting agencies for business programs (AACSB, IACBE, and ACBSP) were analyzed. Results indicated that all these accrediting agencies treated the D.B.A. and Ph.D. in business identically and that the D.B.A. was universally considered to be a valid credential for teaching business at the university level. Suggestions for future research are also offered.

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## Introduction

According to the Survey of Earned Doctorates--sponsored annually by six federal agencies--1,545 doctoral degrees in business management and administration were awarded in 2013, comprising 2.9% of total U.S. doctorates awarded that year (National Science Foundation, 2015). With few exceptions, these degrees were either the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) or the Doctor of Business Administration (D.B.A.).

The Ph.D. in business has been available in the United States since the early 1920s (University of Chicago, 2015). The newer D.B.A. was developed in 1953 at Harvard Business School as a more scholarly successor to its Doctor of Commercial Science degree. By the end of its first decade, the D.B.A. had become firmly established as Harvard's primary business doctorate (Harvard Business School, 2014a; Lockhart & Stablein, 2002). Other U.S. universities would soon begin offering their own D.B.A. degrees. By the early 1990s, the DBA degree had begun to be adopted internationally (Banerjee & Morley, 2013).

Is the D.B.A. a viable degree option for those wishing a career in academe? The answer could be a critical one in the selection of a business doctoral program. The messages from websites and even from the schools themselves can be confusing, as some institutions will claim that the D.B.A. is designed primarily for business practitioners, while the Ph.D. is the proper degree for college and university faculty (e.g., Lewis, 2013). While a number of studies from the U. K. and Australia have investigated the impact of "professional doctorates" (including the D.B.A.), comparatively little such research has been conducted among U.S. higher education institutions (Erwee, 2004; Fink, 2006; Gill & Hoppe, 2009).

An analysis of prior studies on the D.B.A. versus the Ph.D., the origin and history of professional doctorates (including the D.B.A.), and a comparison of D.B.A. and Ph.D. curriculum from over 100 doctoral programs in management has been done previously by the authors (Piña, MacLennan, Moran, & Hafford, 2016). In this study, we will address the viability of the D.B.A. as a credential for business faculty by considering the following research questions:

- Do institutions offering the D.B.A. indicate that it is a faculty credential?
- Do regional and programmatic accrediting agencies distinguish between the D.B.A. and Ph.D. as a faculty credential?
- How prevalent is the D.B.A. among faculty in general business and management programs?

## D.B.A. Granting Institutions

A review of the websites of U.S. institutions offering D.B.A. programs was performed to locate language indicating whether the program intended the degree to be used as an academic credential (Banerjee & Morley, 2013). The programs reviewed included those delivered online and in the traditional classroom, regardless of accreditation. As indicated in Table 1, 28 of the 36 websites, or 78% of those reviewed, provided some indication that the program intended to prepare graduates for careers in academe.

<b>Table 1: Does D.B.A. Prepare Graduates for Academe?</b>					
<b>INSTITUTION</b>	<b>ACADEME</b>	<b>INSTITUTION</b>	<b>ACADEME</b>	<b>INSTITUTION</b>	<b>ACADEME</b>
Alliant International University	YES	Harvard University	YES	Temple University	NO
Anderson University	NO	Indiana University	YES	University of Dallas	NO
Argosy University	YES	Jacksonville University	YES	University of Florida	YES
Benedictine University	NO	Kennesaw State University	YES	University of Northern Virginia	YES
California International Business University	YES	Keiser University	YES	University of Phoenix	NO
California Southern University	NO	Liberty University	NO	University of South Alabama	YES
Capella University	NO	Louisiana Tech University	YES	University of South Florida	YES
Cleveland State University	YES	Northcentral University	NO	University of Texas	YES
Creighton University	YES	Pace University	YES	U. of Wisconsin at Whitewater	YES
DePaul University	NO	Sacred Heart University	YES	Walden University	YES
Florida Institute of Technology	YES	Saint Leo University	YES	Washington University-St. Louis	YES
Georgia State University	YES	St Ambrose University	YES	Wilmington University	YES

Adapted from Banerjee & Morley, 2013, p. 177.

## **Regional Accrediting Agencies**

In order to determine whether the six regional agencies that accredit U.S. higher education institutions distinguish between the faculty qualifications of D.B.A. and Ph.D. holders, an analysis of accreditation resource manuals, faculty credentials guidelines, and websites of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE, 2009, 2011), the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (CIHE, 2011), the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (Higher Learning Commission, 2013, 2015), the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU, 2013), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC, 2006, 2012), and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC, 2013).

The standards and guidelines put forth by regional accrediting agencies and the tasks performed by those serving on accreditation review teams tend to focus on the operations of the entire insti-

tution, rather than the requirements of specific disciplines such as business and management. The process of gaining initial accreditation or pursuing substantive changes or reaffirmation of accreditation for all regional accreditation agencies requires institutions to verify that faculty are qualified to teach the courses that they teach. When degrees are mentioned in relation to faculty credentials, it is done by level (e.g., baccalaureate, master's, doctorate, graduate, terminal), as in these examples:

Faculty teaching in graduate programs should hold the terminal degree determined by the discipline and have a record of research, scholarship or achievement appropriate for the graduate program (Higher Learning Commission, 2015, p. 3).

Faculty teaching graduate and post-baccalaureate course work: earned doctorate/terminal degree in the teaching discipline or a related discipline (SACSCOC, 2006, p.1).

In June of 2006, a "Report on the Task Force of the Professional Doctorate" was received by the Board of Trustees of the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. The report's comments on the types of degrees considered to be "professional" (primarily "clinical" or "practicing" doctorates in health care fields) and the fact that the Ed.D.--(a degree with similar characteristics to the D.B.A)--is regarded to be outside the scope of the report, it seems clear that the D.B.A. would not fall under the Task Force's definition of professional doctorate (Higher Learning Commission, 2006).

With the single exception noted in the previous paragraph, none of the accreditation documents, faculty credential documents, or websites from the six regional accrediting agencies distinguished between the various doctoral degree titles and none mentioned the D.B.A. at all. The primary concern of the regional accrediting agencies is whether or not a faculty member's degrees are terminal and whether or not they are in the teaching discipline or related areas.

## Programmatic Accrediting Agencies

To determine which degrees are considered terminal and in the teaching discipline of business and management, we turned to the three accrediting agencies recognized by CHEA for business programs (Brink & Smith, 2012). An analysis of accreditation resource manuals, faculty credentials guidelines, and websites of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the International Assembly of Collegiate Business Education (IACBE), and the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) was undertaken to identify any distinction that these agencies make between the D.B.A. and Ph.D. in terms of qualifications for business faculty (AACSB, 2009, 2011, 2015; ACBSP, 2013, 2015; IACBE, 2011, 2015).

AACSB's accreditation manual (AACSB, 2015) and its publications on faculty credentials, *AQ/PQ Status: Establishing Criteria for Attainment and Maintenance of Faculty qualifications* (AACSB, 2009) and *Deploying Academically Qualified Faculty: An Interpretation of AACSB Standards* (AACSB, 2011), affirm the role of the doctoral degree as a qualifying credential. However, none of the documents specify any differences between the D.B.A. and Ph.D. In fact, none of the documents mention doctoral degrees--either D.B.A. or Ph.D.--by name. The following quote is representative:

For AQ [Academically Qualified] faculty, a doctoral degree is normally expected representing...completion of a degree program intended to produce scholars capable of creating scholarly contributions through advances in research or theory (AACSB, 2009, p. 4)

In its document, *Becoming a Business Professor* (AACSB, 2007), AACSB states that, "In an earlier era of business education, the DBA was popularly regarded as providing a more general exposure to business topics geared towards practice, while the PhD was viewed as focusing more on

research in a given business specialty. Over time, the distinction between these degrees has become blurred at many institutions” (p. 1-2). An AACSB website indicates that “The DBA (or Doctor of Business Administration) is designed to provide business executives with competencies needed to pursue business/public administration careers that require more advanced research skills and qualifications. Some DBA programs may also be pathways into careers in academia” (AACSB, n.d., para. 3).

IACBE considers faculty to be “doctorally qualified,” when they hold a doctoral degree in business or in the area of assigned teaching responsibilities (IACBE, 2011, 2015). Regarding the D.B.A. versus Ph.D. as a teaching credential, IACBE takes the following position:

Generally, any doctorate other than a Ph.D. or D.B.A. in a business content field is considered, for business accreditation purposes, to be an out-of-field doctorate. Out-of-field doctorates include degrees such as the Doctor of Education degree; the Juris Doctor degree; non-content-area Ph.D.s, such as a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration; or interdisciplinary degrees, such as a Ph.D. in Leadership (IACBE, 2015, p. 39)

Although ACBSP uses the term “academically qualified,” rather than “doctorally qualified,” the language for faculty qualifications is similar to IACBE and may reflect their common backgrounds (Green & Gash, 2010). ACBSP also recognizes business and “out of field” doctorates and identifies the D.B.A. with the former category, not distinguishing it from the Ph.D. in business (ACBSP, 2015).

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants included 6,159 management and general business faculty from 427 institutions in the U.S. offering graduate degrees in management and business. To be included in this study, institutions had to be regionally accredited and the management programs had to be both regionally and programmatically accredited by AACSB, IACBE, or ACBSP.

### *Procedure*

Eligible institutions were identified by performing searches of member institutions lists on the AACSB, IACBE, and ACBSP websites and identifying those institutions that offered graduate degrees in management. The search yielded a pool of 486 possible candidates.

Data were gathered from sources made publicly available by the institutions. These sources included university and academic program websites, university catalogs, and program handbooks. Because no human subjects at the various institutions were contacted directly, an expedited IRB approval was sought and obtained. The data gathered were the number of program faculty, terminal degrees (Ph.D., D.B.A., Ed.D., J.D., D.M., D.P.A., D.Sc.) held by each faculty member, and, where available, the institution that awarded the degrees of faculty possessing the D.B.A. The majority of programs listed full-time faculty separately from adjunct faculty and the information for full-time faculty was included in this study. For the minority of programs that did not identify whether faculty were full-time or adjunct, all faculty in the program were included.

Fifty nine of the eligible institutions provided a list of faculty, but either did not include the terminal degrees of their faculty or did not indicate the specific program or discipline in which faculty members taught. These 59 institutions were excluded from this study, leaving 427 institutions from which data were gathered. Faculty members in related disciplines, including accounting, finance, operations/supply chain management, marketing and information technology management, were excluded from this study. The members of the research team did not receive com-

penetration for the study; however, an institutional research grant was awarded to support the dissemination of the study's preliminary results at a national conference (Piña, Moran, Hafford, MacLennan & Kaelin, 2012).

## Findings

### ***Faculty with D.B.A.***

Figure 1 presents the total number of general business or management faculty with Ph.D. and D.B.A. degrees across the three programmatic accrediting agencies. Of the 6,159 faculty included in this study, 372 (6.04%) possessed the D.B.A. as their terminal degree. AACSB accredited programs contained the largest number of faculty (240) but the smallest percentage of faculty with the D.B.A. (4.6%). Programs accredited by ACBSP accounted for 81 D.B.A. holders (13.8%) while IACBE programs employed 51 (14.3%).

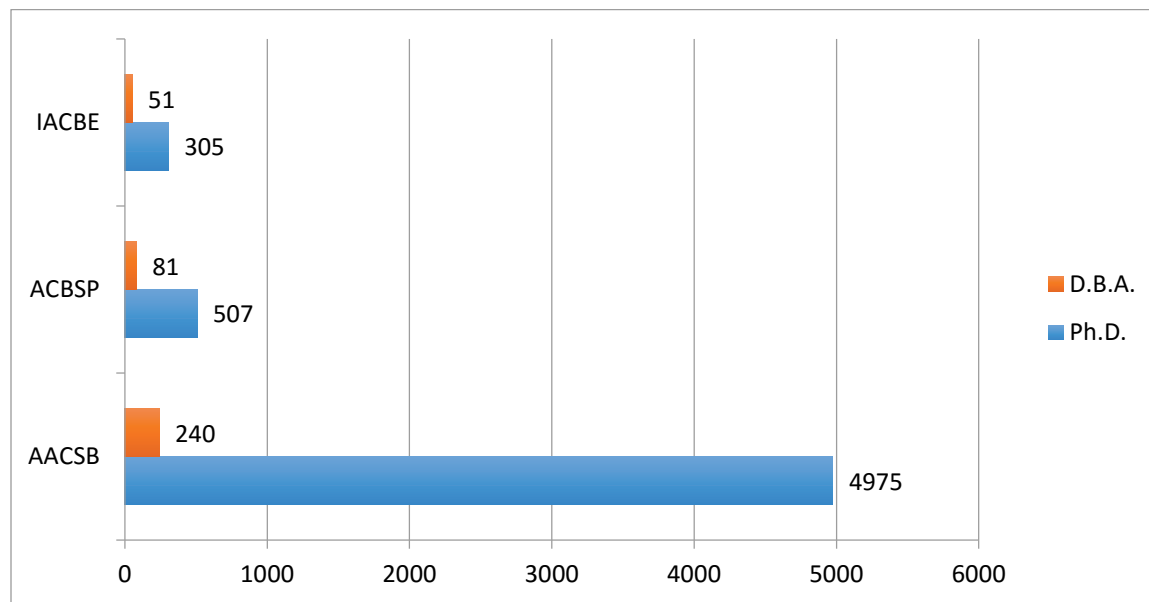


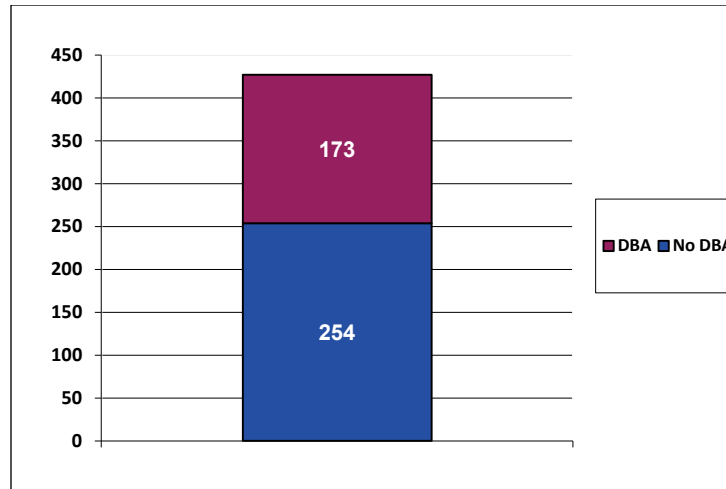
Figure 1. Comparison of Faculty with D.B.A. and Ph.D. (n=6159)

### ***Institutions with D.B.A. Faculty***

Figure 2 presents the total number of institutions included in this study that employed general business and management faculty possessing the D.B.A. Of the 427 institutions, 173 (40.5%) reported faculty whose terminal degree was the D.B.A.

### ***Institutions Granting D.B.A. Degrees***

Most of the faculty listings accessed for this study also contained the names of the institutions from which the faculty members received their D.B.A. degrees. A total of 41 different institutions were listed. Eight institutions were responsible for awarded more than 70% of the D.B.A. degrees: Harvard University, Nova Southeastern University, Argosy University, Boston University, Louisiana Tech University, Indiana University, Mississippi State University, and Kent State University.



**Figure 2. Institutions With and Without D.B.A.-Holding Faculty (n=427)**

## Discussion

During the past two decades, several authors have sought to distinguish the “professional” D.B.A. from the “research” Ph.D. (e.g., Banerjee & Morley, 2013; Bareham, Bourner & Ruggeri-Stevens, 2000; Gill & Hoppe, 2009). Most have found the two degrees to be more similar than different. Our own recent study of the curriculum and academic requirements of doctoral programs in management found little difference in the preparation of those receiving the D.B.A. and Ph.D. degrees (Piña et al., 2016).

The present study both affirms and expands upon our previous work and the works of other scholars by looking at the employment patterns of graduate programs in business and management in order to determine whether the D.B.A. can be considered a viable credential for those wishing to teach at the university level. The results of our analysis of 6,159 faculty at AACSB, IACBE, and ACBSP accredited programs in management and general business found listings for 372 faculty with the D.B.A. as their terminal degree. Over 40 percent of the graduate schools included in our study employed one or more business/management faculty with D.B.A.s. Although IACBE and ACBSP institutions were more likely to have faculty with D.B.A.s on their roster, the fact that AACSB institutions had well over 200 D.B.A.-holding faculty concurs with the view that “the purpose and organization of the [D.B.A.] degree is more closely aligned with that of a traditional academic Ph.D” (Gill & Hoppe, 2009, p. 32).

Moreover, our analysis of accreditation standards and requirements of the six regional accrediting agencies and the three programmatic accrediting agencies for business schools revealed that none of these bodies distinguish between the D.B.A. and Ph.D. for purposes of program or institutional accreditation. It was further shown that faculty members possessing the D.B.A. are considered by AACSB, IACBE, and ACBSP to be academically-qualified/doctorally-qualified to serve as business faculty and that the D.B.A. is classified as an inside-the-discipline degree for business teaching. This is in agreement with the observation of Lockhart and Stablein (2002) that, “the terms PhD and DBA are used synonymously in the United States” (p. 193).

This study’s analysis was limited to the Ph.D. and D.B.A. in general business and management; however, data were gathered for all terminal degrees held by program faculty. The Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree was held by 312 faculty, while 190 possessed the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.). There were much smaller numbers of Doctor of Management (D.M., D.Mgt.), Doctor of Public Administration (D.P.A.), and Doctor of Science (D.Sc.) degrees. Further study can identify the roles played by faculty with these “out of discipline” doctorates.

Doctor of Business Administration degrees in accounting, operation/supply chain management, and information technology management programs were not included in this study; however, during the process of data collection, the research team members noted that these disciplines tended to have higher numbers of faculty possessing the D.B.A. than did the management faculty. No attempt was made in this study to determine the prevalence of the D.B.A. among adjunct versus full-time faculty, nor upon its prevalence among baccalaureate-only institutions or community colleges. Future research can focus upon gathering and analyses of data on D.B.A.-holding faculty in other disciplines and at other types and levels of institutions.

## Conclusion

Is the D.B.A. a viable degree option for those wishing a career in academe? The results of this study affirm, without ambiguity, that the answer is “yes.” The evidence from the six regional accrediting agencies and from the AACSB, IACBE, and ACBSP indicates that each of these bodies treats holders of D.B.A. and Ph.D. degrees in business to be identically qualified as business faculty. The Ph.D. continues to be the doctoral degree offered most frequently by U.S. graduate schools of business. Not surprisingly, this study found that there is a greater prevalence of Ph.D.s among business and management faculty. This study also found that a significant number of graduate programs in business employ faculty whose terminal degree is the D.B.A., indicating a wide acceptance of the D.B.A. as a credential for business faculty. The growing number of D.B.A. programs, many of which now feature online and hybrid delivery modes, flexible schedules, and a wider range of dissertation and project options, offer new and exciting choices for those wishing to enhance their skills and careers, either in industry or academe.

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## D.B.A. as a Viable Faculty Credential

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