# Interweaving Scholarship and Practice: A Pathway to Scholarly Impact

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**Interweaving Scholarship and Practice: A Pathway to Scholarly Impact**

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**ABSTRACT**

We contribute to debates on the nature of scholarly impact and question the largely uncontested framing of impact that posits a gap between the research outputs of academics and their effect on management practice. We examine how, by distancing ourselves from this concept of a "relevance gap" to be crossed by academics translating their research outputs for practice, additional modes of scholarship may lead to impact. We present the findings of a multi-method qualitative study of the management practices of DBA graduates and add to an understanding of scholarly impact, proposing that through teaching, academics can develop managers who generate impact without requiring a translation of original research or without an academic working alongside them. Our theoretical contribution is a processual view of the interweaving of scholarship and practice, drawing on the ontological stance taken by Follett (1924). This conceptualization of interweaving leads to a new understanding of the scholar-practitioner that eschews current dualist framings of scholarship *plus* practice to one of scholarship *with* practice. We also add to the literature on the DBA by showing that graduates of the program have the potential to be these scholar-practitioners

Key words: Scholarly impact: interweaving; Follett; scholar-practitioner; DBA.

## INTRODUCTION

The extensive writing in academic journals aimed at solving the problem of the relevance of management research is testament both to its importance and intractability. The existing literature is centered firstly, around the notion of a gap between the research outputs of academics and their effect on management practice (Hodgkinson et al., 2009; Rynes, 2007; Shapiro et al., 2007) and secondly, around the positioning of academics and practitioners into two camps, namely "management science and its external constituencies" (Kieser, Nicolai & Seidl, 2015: 214). Bouwmeester, Heusinkveld and Tjemkes (2021: 2) acknowledge this 'two party view', as the primary way in which to problematize the issue of why management scholarship appears to have little currency in organizations and therefore does not impact practice. We take a different approach in this paper, building on the pluralist view of impact put forward by Aguinis et al. (2014). Using the definition offered by Haley et al. (2017) that scholarly impact is an 'auditable or recordable occasion of influence' arising out of research, we examine how, by distancing ourselves from the concept of a "relevance gap" to be crossed by academics translating their research outputs for practice (e.g., Pettigrew, 1997), additional modes of scholarship may be mobilized in the pursuit of impact. Specifically, we explore the potential of management education to develop scholar-practitioners who do not need an academic to translate research outputs to make them intelligible, nor do they require the presence of an academic working alongside them, to foster impact. In adopting this approach, our contention is that "scholarly impact" is not exactly the same thing as "research impact" which the academic literature cited above and policy interventions (e.g., The UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF)) take as their starting point in terms of an academic's own research outputs. Rather, we argue that the whole gamut of an academic's scholarship (cf. Boyer, 1990), and not just the

generation of original research, should inform how 'scholarly impact' is conceptualized. We add to existing conceptualizations of how scholarly impact is realized by illustrating how the scholarly activity of teaching leads to impact by enhancing practitioners' capabilities to mobilize both extant academic research and to create original management research. To do so, we focus on the DBA, a program that has previously been found to hold the potential to develop such scholar-practitioners (e.g., Banerjee & Morley 2013; Hay, 2021; Ungureanu & Bertolotti, 2018).

These 'scholar-practitioners' are managers who are able to draw on practices typically associated with scholarship in their everyday working lives. This notion of the 'everyday' allows us to appreciate a decentralized view of impact, one that does not necessitate direct, top-down, involvement of the traditional academic researcher, but instead views scholar-practitioners as capable of fostering impact in their specific contexts. Our resulting conceptualization of scholarly impact adds to, rather than replaces, existing frameworks that incorporate a 'chain of impact' starting with a research paper and ending with a change in policy or in society (e.g., Thorpe et al., 2011). In our empirical research we illustrate the scholarly practices that managers, having completed a DBA, enact in order to engage with organizational problems or aspirations that lead to impact in their localized contexts, and sometimes, beyond.

We present the findings of a multi-method qualitative study of the management practices of DBA graduates. Specifically, we draw on in-depth interviews and diaries to illustrate how scholarly practices are mobilized in the everyday working lives of these senior managers. Informed by the process philosophy of Mary Parker Follet (1924) we illustrate how these senior managers *interweave* the 'scholar' and 'practitioner' within their contexts without requiring an academic's translation of their own research, and in so doing generate impact.

We make four contributions. We add to an understanding of 'scholarly impact' and propose that through teaching, academics are able to develop managers who can generate impact without requiring the translation of original research or without an academic working alongside them to investigate and resolve organizational issues. Our theoretical contribution is a processual view of the interweaving of scholarship and practice, drawing on the ontological stance taken by Follett (1924). In turn, this Follettian conceptualization of interweaving leads to a new understanding of the scholar-practitioner that eschews current dualist framings of scholarship *plus* practice to one of scholarship *with* practice. Fourth, we add to the literature on the DBA by showing that graduates of the program become these scholar-practitioners.

Our article unfolds as follows: In the literature review we examine the academic debates covering scholarly impact. Here, we argue that its reliance on academics' own translation of original research risks sidelining the potential of management education to generate impact and treats practitioners as mere consumers of academics' translations of our own research. Drawing on Follettian process philosophy we introduce "interweaving" (of scholarship and practice) as an additional means for realizing scholarly impact. Our empirical work follows practitioners after their graduation from a DBA program. In the discussion section we theorize from these data and explain how practitioners 'interweave' research and practice and go onto generate impact in their local context. We conclude with a call to widen our understanding of scholarly impact to include our teaching, to integrate this into the design of learning in business schools and for an acknowledgement of practitioners as agents of impact.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Whilst the realization that scholarly impact is central to what we do as management scholars and educators, both the nature of impact and the means of achieving it remain highly

contested in the literature. Academy of Management presidential addresses (e.g., Hambrick, 1994; Huff, 2000; Van de Ven, 2002) and a number of special issues (e.g., Hodgkinson, 2001; MacIntosh et al., 2017; Pettigrew & Starkey, 2016; Rynes, 2007) have both probed and lamented the relevance of management research to those beyond the academy. This widely accepted "research-practice gap" has generated a wealth of literature and subsequent policy recommendations wherein research has been the point of departure in the pursuit of demonstrating impact (e.g., AACSB, 2012; Haley et al., 2017).

With research as the departure point, the debate has progressed with two dominant strands that suggest the research-practice gap may be overcome by either: (1) knowledge transfer from original scientific research into forms that are more easily understood by practitioners, or (2) re-designing the knowledge production method to incorporate practitioner concerns (Shapiro, Kirkman & Courtney, 2007). The first of these frames the gap in terms of how management research is consumed by practitioners, that is how the knowledge found in management research may be made actionable in practice. Keleman and Bansal (2002) view this research-practice gap as a product of academic publishing conventions that obfuscate the seeming utility of management research for practitioners. As such, it is proposed that the gap may be resolved by more effective dissemination and translation practices that make research more accessible and/or more intelligible to practitioners, e.g., the production of implications for practice statements, publishing in practitioner orientated outlets, and/or companion pieces that supplement traditional academic articles (e.g., Bartunek & Rynes, 2010; Birkinshaw, Lecuona & Barwise, 2016; see also Ren & Bartunek, 2020). In support of these suggestions, a number of authors have conceptualized the knowledge transfer process as one of *translation* of original research papers into forms that can be taken up by practitioners. For example, Thorpe et al. (2011: 425) advance

a "knowledge translation value chain" wherein part of the chain involves research output being designed to "construct meaning for practice". Equally, proponents of evidence-based management (e.g., Briner, Denyer & Rousseau, 2009) retain a focus on knowledge transfer by proposing systematic reviews as a means through which prior management research may be synthesized and thereby translated for practice.

Much of the discussion motivating translation approaches hinges on the idea of incommensurable logics (cf. Kieser & Leiner, 2009). The underlying assumption of the knowledge transfer approach is therefore that practitioners *need* simplified versions of theory in the form of digestible models and that they have a narrow scope of interest. Anderson et al. (2017: 16) propose that managers are portrayed in this literature as being "stupid" or "naïve" and needing help from "wise but irrelevant academics", and Ungureanu and Bertolotti (2018) report an inherent tension wherein each party views the other in a complementary or subordinate role. This positioning of the two parties as having incommensurable motives and knowledge leads to a number of positions taken by academics to improve their translations. For example, Carton and Mouricou, (2017: 173) propose a 'gatekeepers' orthodoxy' and an 'orientation to collaboration' although both emphasize the primacy of research and the researcher. Joullié and Gould (2021), building on the work of Bartunek and Rynes (2010), propose that more precise language may enhance the practical utility of management research. However, it is arguable that any attempt at translation through practitioner-directed sections in journals suggests that academics are paying lip-service to the need to be relevant and that most practitioners find academic writing impenetrable (Keleman & Bansal, 2002).

In contrast to the emphasis on various explicit translation practices, writing within the second strand argues that knowledge *production* is the driver of the theory-practice gap. In

particular, the basic critique leveraged at the transfer mechanism is that if the knowledge lacks

relevance, any translations thereof may remain meaningless for practice, e.g., 'lost before

translation' (Shapiro et al., 2007). More simply, the issue is one of substance, and not merely

stylistic and/or semantic. In line with this, a number of approaches have been proposed as a

means to produce relevant research with varying degrees of practitioner involvement. For

example, engaged scholarship (e.g., Van de Ven, 2007) which Cunliffe and Scaratti (2017)

extend to include *dialogical sensemaking* for surfacing multiple meanings and imaginaries in

researcher-practitioner conversations. These approaches position practitioners as active co-

*creators* of knowledge, rather than simply consumers as presumed in the knowledge transfer

approach.

The co-creation model of academics working alongside practitioners is argued to

transform knowledge production and thereby dispense with the need for translation (Bartunek,

2007). However, implementing recommendations for co-creation practice (e.g., Huff & Huff,

2001) has not proved straightforward. For example, Ungureanu and Bertolotti (2020) conclude

that the formality of traditional executive education precludes co-creation. An assumed

superiority on the part of academic knowledge and the need to impart it is also evident in Bansal

et al.'s (2012: 85) claim that researchers aim for objectivity, accuracy and generalizability whilst

managerial work aims for simplicity; something easy to communicate and understand, and

relevant to a specific situation (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). All of this implies that even when

co-creation is attempted, the outcomes and the modus operandi sought by each party are at best

incompatible (Kieser & Leiner, 2009) and at worst, counterproductive. Career and reward

outcomes for academics suggest that true engagement with practitioners is not an aspiration as

the most prolific academic researchers tend to be more concerned with gaining the approval of

their peers rather than producing research that has an impact on practice (Shapiro et al., 2007).

Thus, while co-creation overcomes some of the limitations of translation approaches, they still

position the practitioner as dependent upon academics, and arguably imply that there is still a

need for the academic to translate the subtleties of theories and analytical details for their

practitioner co-researchers.

More recently, Sharma and Bansal (2020) have challenged the incommensurability thesis

(Kieser & Leiner, 2009) by adopting a strong process ontology in their longitudinal study of two

business sustainability projects in which researchers and managers sought to co-create

knowledge. A process ontology allowed these authors to theorize co-creation as the imbrication

of academic research and practitioner knowledge (Sharma & Bansal, 2020). They place less

emphasis on the outputs of particular episodes of engagement but rather on managers'

recognition of the ongoing process of co-creation and how rigorous and relevant knowledge

emerges over multiple engagements. In our examination of how research and practical

knowledge are interwoven by DBA graduates, we are influenced by Sharma and Bansal's (2020)

theorization of co-creation where they explain how scholarly impact unfolds over time as

researchers and managers work together on a project.

**The DBA and the scholar-practitioner**

Our study focuses on graduates of a DBA who have engaged with a form of management

education that combines research, professional development and knowledge, and thereby has the

potential to bridge the academic-industry divide and to develop reflective practitioners (Banerjee

& Morley, 2013). Given the relative newness of this route to doctoral status, research on how it

could impact practice is quite limited (Boud et al., 2018), although its effects on how

practitioners engage with research (Rigg et al., 2021) and on personal effectiveness (Boud et al.,

2018; Creaton & Anderson, 2021) have been studied. Hay and Samra-Fredericks (2019) also consider the impact of collaborative inquiry (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006) on DBA students. They found increased openness, humility and empathy and a shift in language from certainty to inquiry (Yanow, 2009). Hay (2021) uncovered a developing attitude of wisdom amongst DBA students, prompted by this orientation to inquiry.

These studies of the DBA point to the development of a questioning approach to both practice and research. Other studies have also investigated how practitioners can engage with theory in order to make it useable and invoke the notion of the scholar-practitioner, standing with a "foot in both worlds" (Tenkasi & Hay, 2004: 178). The scholar-practitioner personifies one means of addressing the theory-practice gap and the potential of such individuals has been discussed for almost 30 years, with Astley and Zammuto (1993) proposing an intermediate cadre of professionals who could act as semiotic brokers. Wasserman and Kram (2009) report on managers who identified themselves as scholar-practitioners or 'researcher-practitioners' (e.g., Lynham, 2002), 'scientist-practitioners' (e.g., Brewerton & Milward, 2001) and 'scholarly-practitioners' (e.g., Ruona, 1999). Their categorization placed the respondents as primarily scholars *or* practitioners and included a number of 'boundary crossers' all of whom sought to "bridge the world of practice … and scholarship" (p.19).

In a similar vein, Huff and Huff (2001) point to executive doctoral graduates as 'boundary-spanning researchers' who, through their training, can contribute new knowledge and new modes of producing it. Tenkasi and Hay (2004: 178) describe scholar-practitioners as "interested in advancing the causes of both theory and practice" and as the solution to bridging knowledge and action. They use activity theory to show how theory-practice linkages act as mediating devices and, in doing so, highlight that the locus of action is a uniting force to

integrate practice and theory. Rasche and Behnam (2009: 252) further highlight the role of the 'consumer' of management knowledge in making knowledge actionable and useful. They focus on the manager rather than placing the onus of producing actionable knowledge on scholars and therefore propose that practitioners have just as much responsibility to make knowledge relevant as scholars do to produce relevant knowledge.

Many of these ways of framing the scholar practitioner are narratively constructed to explain how the 'chasm' between the production and dissemination of research (Rynes, 2007) can be bridged by a person. Therefore, a linear model of knowledge transfer (Rasche & Behnam, 2009) is assumed that has knowledge moving in a chain from the producer to the user. In this way, the emphasis is often upon practitioners using knowledge to 'apply' to a problem in order to fix it rather than acknowledging that this process in itself leads to the generation of new knowledge (Coghlan & Shani, 2009). The language and the images used to describe scholar-practitioners thereby position them as translators and as being either 'predominantly scholars' or 'predominantly practitioners', inviting us to imagine research and practice as quite separate; thereby reinforcing the gap between them. As with Van de Ven's (2007) ideas of co-production, Antonacopoulou's (2009) practice-relevant scholarship and Bartunek's (2007) relational scholarship, these ideas support the need for close integration between researchers and practitioners. However, none propose an approach, as we do here, whereby practitioners build extant research into their practice without a translation from an academic and conduct original research of their own without guidance or academic involvement. Thus, in order to progress beyond these dyadic framings in which research and practice are characterized as separate and distinct, we draw upon the relational process ontology of Mary Parker Follett (1924), which we discuss next.

**Interweaving scholarship and practice**

Follett's work has featured widely within management and organizational research, percolating domains such as negotiation, organizational justice and public administration (see Fry & Thomas, 1996; Héon et al., 2017), yet has remained curiously absent from the domain of management education (cf. McCabe et al., 2021). This may be a result of the dominance of her 'practice-orientated' theories (Stout & Love, 2015) notably the conception of 'power-with' and approach to conflict resolution (e.g., Carlsen et al., 2020; Contu, 2019). Her contributions cover not only pedagogical works (e.g., Follet, 1970), relational epistemology (e.g., Follet, 1924) and, particularly pertinent to this special issue, her reflections on the integration of research and practice: "Our problem is to find a way by which the specialist's kind of knowledge and the executive's kind of knowledge can be joined. And that method, I think, should be one I have already advocated, that of integration" (Follett, 1924: 70).

For Follett, integration goes beyond simple aggregation of parts and is conceptualized in her process ontology of 'interweaving' (cf. Banerjee, 2008), predicated on the principles of holism, dynamic becoming, relation and relativity and co-creation (Stout & Love, 2015). For Follett, individuals and the situation within which they interact are co-created in an ongoing process of relational becoming through unconscious circular response, and conscious integration (Stout & Love, 2015: 190). Key to Follett's thinking is an understanding of what is meant by 'the situation', and the nature of *becoming* through 'circular response' and 'integration'.

Follett rejects dualism and instead advocates a principle of holism. In this conceptualization, 'the situation' reflects the context in which people are engaged, thereby the environment and all its qualities, inclusive of physical, institutional and human aspects (Stout & Love, 2015). Yet as Follett's ontology is equally predicated on dynamic becoming, she is careful

to frame 'the situation' as in a constant state of flux, often referring to it as the 'whole a-making'. The foregrounding of the 'wholeness' of the situation (e.g., individuals engaging in a given context) implicates 'composing' rather than encompassing – "whole and parts in... active and continuous relation to each other" (Follett, 1924: 102). More simply, "the parts [individuals, environment; physical, institutional and human aspects] all together constitute a certain situation, but they constitute that situation through their relation to one another, they do not form a total situation merely by existing side by side...all the factors in the situation are going through this process of reciprocal relating" (Follet 1924: 79).

In this study, we draw on Follett's ontology of interweaving to understand how 'scholarship' and 'practice' may relate as an individual engages in 'the situation' and then takes action to create impact. We therefore ask: *In what ways do managers integrate scholarship and practice?* and, *What impacts may emerge from this integrative process?*

## METHODS

### Study context and sample

To address our research questions, we draw on an abductive and in-depth qualitative multi-method study of 25 practicing senior managers who were recent graduates of a UK DBA program. This DBA is a large, globally diverse, program with over 200 graduates since its inception in 2010. In order to be admitted to the program, applicants must have over 5 years senior management experience and hold a Master's degree.

The pedagogy and philosophy of the program advocates an engagement with theory to inform practice and vice-versa, reflexive questioning and action modes of inquiry (Raelin, 2017). A relational approach emerges from the interaction of learners with the research itself, with academics in the classroom and between learners themselves to create a community of inquiry.

The first, taught stage, of the DBA is based on Raelin's (2007) epistemology of practice and his premise that 'by merging theory and practice we end up with better theory' (2007: 495). Following the successful completion of taught researcher development modules (see appendix A), they progress onto the thesis stage of the program. Here, they adopt an action research methodology and an on-going emphasis on their development as a reflexive insider researcher (Coghlan, 2019). Completion of the program requires the production of a doctoral thesis that is defended at a viva voce. A more detailed account the pedagogy and underpinning philosophy of this program can be found in Rigg et al. (2021). The action orientation of the DBA and this program in particular make it a promising site of study to examine how practitioners engage in impactful interventions through an engagement with scholarship.

Two of the three authors had extensive involvement in the program, including development, supervision and examination, whereas the third member of the authorial team was not involved in the program. However, all three authors took part in the research design, data collection and analysis. The study received full ethical (IRB) approval and the position of the researchers vis-à-vis the participants was made clear in that documentation. As should be expected by those who teach students how to become reflexive researchers, we strive to model this stance by ensuring that we discussed potential biases and assumptions amongst ourselves and we also "question the way we position ourselves in relation to others in our methodology, interactions and research accounts" (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013: 385) and we acknowledge and emphasize the intersubjectivity of the development of research accounts (Cunliffe, 2003) with our participants.

Owing to this involvement, and as per the study's ethical (IRB) approval, we pursued a purposive sampling strategy (Saunders & Townsend, 2018) drawing on an alumni database in

which all recent graduates[1] (2017/2018 and 2018/2019 cohorts) were emailed with an invitation

to participate in the research. In addition to the baseline criteria of being a DBA graduate, to

cohere with our research questions, we restricted participation in the project to those who were

still *practicing* managers. This strategy yielded a total sample of 25 practicing managers who had

successfully completed the DBA program, thereby in line with the sample sizes of comparable

studies (Carton & Ungureanu, 2018; Hay & Samra-Fredricks, 2019). Our sample was comprised

of 10 females and 15 males, and reflective of the global reach of the DBA program, included

practicing managers in a diversity of locations, industries and organizational roles, detailed

below in table 1.

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**Data collection**

To understand the ways in which managers integrate scholarship into their everyday

practice and the subsequent unfolding of impact, our study used two qualitative data collection

methods; semi-structured interviews and diaries. Our rationale for this combination is twofold.

Firstly, while there is growing literature on the types of impact that may emerge from having

completed a professional doctorate (e.g., Boud et al., 2018; 2021; Creaton & Anderson, 2021),

these studies have tended toward an 'output' view of impact, e.g., personal and professional

development. In contrast, our research sought insight into the 'how' of this impact (cf. Hay,

2021), i.e., what these DBA graduates *do* in their everyday practice that fosters impact in a given

context. Secondly, while the use of diaries is evident in nascent research on DBA graduates (e.g.,

Hay & Samra-Fredricks, 2016; 2019; Hay, 2021), these are limited to reflective accounts

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[1] Including a small number of graduates supervised or examined by the two authors involved in the program, in line with the study's ethical (IRB) approval.

recorded *during* the completion of their respective DBA. To our knowledge, there are no studies

that have utilized diaries to explore the experiences of managers *post*-graduation. Accordingly,

our use of qualitative diaries in combination with interviews was a means through which to

enrich understanding of senior managers' practices in-situ and over time thereby overcoming

retrospective and static, "birds' eye", accounts that are typically garnered through interviews

(Radcliffe, 2018).

Reflective of our abductive approach, both interview and diary materials (see appendix

C) were informed by engagement with contemporary academic debates on evidence-based

management (Barends, Rousseau & Briner, 2014; Briner et al., 2009; Rousseau, 2012).

Specifically, by drawing on the four categories of managerial evidence espoused in this

literature, namely *'using good quality scientific evidence', 'using practitioner judgement',*

*'understanding the managerial context'* and *'using insights from different stakeholders'* (e.g.,

Barends et al., 2014), we sought to explore the associated scholarship practices of each;

*research/literature usage', 'critical reflexivity' and 'data collection and synthesis'* respectively[2],

and how these may be drawn upon to inform an understanding of a practical problem, and aid the

generation of practical solutions. As our data collection strategy followed a sequential interview-

diary approach we describe the particulars and process of each method below:

*Interviews.* Given our focus, our schedule of semi-structured interviews sought to elicit

participants' use of specific scholarly practices in their everyday management practice as well as

instances of impact that may have emerged as a result. Interviews were conducted between

November 2019 and August 2020; owing to the global diversity of the sample and coinciding

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[2] In our study, the latter two practices, 'understanding the managerial context' and 'using insights from different stakeholders' are reflected, and subsumed, in the third scholarly practice '*data collection and synthesis*'.

COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews took place using video conferencing software (i.e., Zoom),

recorded with consent, and lasted an average 51 minutes (range 38-74min). While initiated by

the semi-structured protocol (see appendix B), in practice, interviews were loosely structured,

allowing emergent areas of interest to be explored without constraint. The typical interview

followed a trajectory of context-setting questions such as their organizational role, thesis topic

and motivations for undertaking a DBA before progressing to the substantive content pertaining

to practices and associated impacts. Specifically, starting with the scholarly practices of

*'academic research/literature usage', 'data collection and synthesis'* and *'critical reflexivity'* we

asked participants to reflect on how, if at all, these practices featured in their daily practice as a

senior manager. To explore the potential impact emerging from these practices and aid

participant reflection, we adopted the logic of the Critical Incident Technique (Chell, 1998), and

asked participants to ground their reflections in particular problems/events they had experienced,

probing participants to provide an example of when and how they made use of scholarly

practices and to what end. Finally, to conclude the interviews, we asked participants to reflect on

the professional impact of having completed the DBA and how they perceived their management

practice to have been impacted more broadly.

Once the interview schedule and emergent areas of interest were exhausted, participants

were introduced to the option of keeping a monthly diary. When doing so, we explained that the

diary was a means to explore how the scholarly practices they discussed in the interview were

mobilized in their everyday practice as they grappled with organizational problems. As such,

owing to the enhanced commitments of qualitative diaries, for both researcher and researched

(Radcliffe, 2018), we opted to screen participants for suitability before formalizing the invitation,

restricting participation to those who were in the midst of dealing with a complex organizational

problem. The rationale for doing so was to enable us to explore the ways in which scholarly

practices were drawn upon in the everyday context of managers as they work to resolve said

problem, and in turn provide potential insight into how these scholarly practices may be

impactful.

*Monthly Diaries.* Key to our use of qualitative diaries are the affordances they offer in

garnering important contextual and relational details (Radcliffe, 2018). For example, while

interviewees may have reported engagement with academic literature as part of their practice,

diaries would enable important details such as what specific literatures were drawn upon and

how these informed practice, and importantly the resultant impacts. The diaries were therefore a

means through which to garner a richer understanding of how the managers integrate scholarly

practices into their everyday practice, and to what end.

To cohere with interview materials, ensure consistency across participants, and aid

participant completion, we followed a structured text-based diary format (Radcliffe, 2018).

Selected participants were provided detailed completion instructions, invited to complete their

diary electronically once a month and return completed entries via email. We requested that

diaries were completed for a minimum term of 3 months, but there was significant variability in

diary keeping periods. While attrition is highly common with qualitative diaries (Radcliffe,

2018), it is noteworthy that part of our data collection period for this study coincided with the

early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such we observed a tendency for these participants

to drop out of diary keeping following 1-2 entries citing increased workload. Interestingly

however, among those who continued with diary keeping, organizational problems reported were

not all 'COVID-19 centric', instead reflecting a diversity of organizational issues, from planned

organizational change(s) to more emergent issues, such as team conflicts and staff turnover. A total of 10 participants completed diaries for an average term of 4 months.

Diaries were prepared electronically and comprised of three main sections, with each section containing detailed prompts to enable effective completion in lieu of the presence of the researcher (see appendix C). The first section of the diaries asked participants to describe the management issue/problem they were currently dealing with, inclusive of prompts to 'be as detailed as possible' and 'how long have you been working through this problem'. The second section, consisted of a 5x4 table that prompted participants to reflect on four predefined scholarly practices[3] they engaged in, as they grappled with the problem described in part 1. The first two columns acted solely as completion prompts, by defining the management evidence category (cf. Barends et al., 2014) and relevant scholarly practices learnt during their doctoral studies; for example, 'using good quality scientific evidence' (column 1) and 'critical reading and synthesis of academic studies' (column 2). In populating column 3 they were instructed to describe what happened in each case and, how the evidence and/or their own scholarship affected the practice and the outcomes. In column 4, they were asked to reflect on why they engaged in this practice, e.g., did they actively seek literature or did it happen serendipitously.

Owing to the potential limitations of structured diaries confining participants' accounts (Radcliffe, 2018), the final third part of the diary offered participants a space to 'free flow' any additional information or reflections they deemed relevant. Following receipt of the first completed diary from participants, in subsequent diaries, the first question was adapted to

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[3] In the diaries, the latter two practices (rows 4 & 5 'understanding the managerial context' and 'using insights from different stakeholders') reflected the third scholarly practice '*data collection and synthesis*' as defined in the interview and subsequent analysis.

include an additional prompt, *"Is this the same problem you described in your last entry or a new problem?"*. All other content remained as described above.

## Data analysis

Our analytical strategy is typified by an abductive approach, specifically retroductive reasoning (Fotaki, 2013), which sees the intertwining of both deductive (theory-inspired) and inductive (data-inspired) analyses. This approach is suitable given our interest in the predefined practices (as informed by Barends et al., 2014) that featured in both interviews and diary materials, and our conceptual grounding in Follettian thinking, notably the concept of interweaving. Yet equally, we did not wish to preclude emergent findings by restricting our analysis to a wholly deductive schema. We therefore align with the idea that abduction rejects the dualism of deductive or inductive research, and instead fosters a highly iterative process between theory and data (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017; Gatrell, 2019).

To facilitate abductive analyses of our data, we followed the procedures of thematic template analysis (TA hereinafter), as proposed by King (2004). TA is a generic form of thematic analysis, predicated on hierarchical coding of data, yet does not specify or restrict coding levels, or distinguish themes on the basis of descriptive vs interpretative (King, 2004). Instead, the process emphasizes the clustering of codes to produce more general higher order themes, thereby enabling broad overarching themes to be succeeded by narrower dimensions of said theme (King, 2004). More simply, in TA, a higher order, 'first-level' theme reflects an area of interest in the data that is elaborated by a number of sub-themes (e.g., second-, third-level etc.) that explicate dimensions of that theme. TA is a highly iterative process and commensurate with our abductive approach as it enables both deductive and inductive coding, but equally different sources of data, such as diaries and interviews, to be integrated into a single analytic template

(King, 2004; Radcliffe, 2018). Following the procedures of TA our analyses unfolded in four

main stages:

  ***Stage 1: Developing an initial thematic template (deductive coding).*** In the first instance

all interview transcripts (transcribed verbatim, 319pgs, single spaced) were read to aid

familiarization and immersion and enable initial areas of interest to be identified. Following this,

all transcripts were uploaded into NVivo to facilitate thematic coding. Drawing on the logic of

TA (King, 2004) an initial template was developed to reflect a-priori, deductive areas of interest.

In line with the research questions, this initial template reflected the two key areas of interest,

'scholarly practices' and 'impact occasions' (cf. Haley et al., 2017) as first-level themes. In line

with the hierarchical logic of TA, 'scholarly practices' was succeeded by three second-level

codes ' *'academic research/literature usage', 'data collection and synthesis'* and *'critical*

*reflexivity'* as informed by our data. Following creation of this initial template, the full set of

transcripts was worked through systematically, coding all relevant text to this predefined schema.

TA is particularly useful for this initial coding process as it allows parallel coding of text,

enabling the same segment of text to be coded at several different codes at the same level (King,

2004). This ensured that our initial deductive coding was done in manner that would not preclude

emergent insights in the inductive analysis that followed in the second stage.

  ***Stage 2: Refining the thematic template (inductive coding).*** Once all transcripts had

been coded to the initial template, we then progressed to inductive coding within our initial

schema. For example, following stage 1 the second-level code *'academic research/literature*

*usage'* contained all data wherein participants reflected on any usage of academic literature in

their practice. Here in stage 2, by coding inductively, attention now focused to the specific ways

in which literatures were mobilized, enabling us to identify the different motivations and

dimensions of literature usage. Once more in line with the hierarchical structuring of template

analysis (King, 2004), these dimensions were reflected in three third-level codes (i.e., *'Keeping*

*up' with the literature*, *focused literature searching* & *promoting divergent thinking*). We

followed this process of inductive coding for the full template, working systematically through

the remaining scholarly practices (i.e., *'data collection and synthesis'* and *'critical reflexivity'*)

and similarly for the first level code 'impact occasions'. Here, in relation to impact, we began the

process of inductive coding by teasing out moments of impact, e.g., 'occasions of influence'

(Haley et al., 2017), paying particular attention to how their education through the DBA changed

their approach to problems, but equally instances of more 'tangible' impacts such as professional

and organizational outcomes. As such, this code was succeeded by two subthemes to reflect

different impact dimensions in our data: *'personal and professional domain'* and *'organizational*

*and societal domain'*. The latter reflects how impacts within an organization may spill over to

have broader social impact, e.g., prevention of COVID-19 deaths in UK care homes as described

by participant NB.

     ***Stage 3: Integrating diary data to the thematic template.*** Once all interview data were

codified, we progressed to integrating the diary data to the thematic template. Once more we

followed the process of familiarization and immersion, reading all diary entries pertaining to

each participant before uploading into NVivo for formal coding according to the analytical

template developed in stages 1 and 2 of the analysis. This enabled us to effectively integrate the

two data sources, with the diary data adding depth to our thematic template. Once all diary data

were coded to the thematic template, in line with the iterative nature of our abductive strategy

and qualitative research more broadly (e.g., Locke et al., 2020), we progressed to the fourth stage

of the analysis by returning to the literature to aid our comprehension and conceptualization of

patterns in the data to finalize our study template.

       ***Stage 4: Finalizing the thematic template and analytical narrative.*** Following

codification of all study data to the thematic template, the final stage of the analysis initially

involved ensuring the hierarchical arrangement of the template cohered by subsuming and

deleting any superfluous codes (King, 2004). To do so we revisited Follett's theory of integration

as a means to interrogate the thematic template and craft the analytical narrative. Owing to

Follett's centrality of the situation and, reciprocal relating in and to the context, we revisited our

coding to explore how participants' situations and contexts enabled and/or constrained any

integration of scholarly practices. Here, once more reflective of the iterative nature of TA, by

collaboratively crafting the analytical narrative and prompted by the review process to think

more deeply as to 'how interweaving happens', it became evident that within our data there were

two mechanisms central to the process of integrating scholarly practices. We termed these

*'Integrative threads'* to reflect centrality in the process, but equally how they are integrative

themes in our data (King, 2004). More simply these mechanisms threaded *through* the themes

*'Mobilizing research literature in the workplace'* and *'Generating and evaluating research*

*data'*, occurring with, and enabling these practices, rather than standalone processes. Firstly,

significant within our data was *how* participants approached and framed organizational problems.

For example, participants often reported treating problems as 'research' and emphasized

understanding rather attempting to fix said problems. We therefore initially codified all relevant

data to the theme 'approach to problems'. However, sensitized by Marshall's (1999) 'living life

as inquiry', in further iterations of our analysis, we identified that the data coded to 'approach to

problems' had broader reach. For example, we noted that excerpts weren't solely centered on

problems, but instead how they described their managerial practice more broadly and were

therefore more appropriately captured as 'Managing as inquiry'. Secondly, while initially

positioned as a standalone scholarly practice, we identified that 'critical reflexivity' was equally

central in participants' integration of the other scholarly practices, rather than a standalone

practice as we had initially conceptualized. As a result, the themes *'Critical reflexivity'* and

*'Managing as inquiry'* were subsumed as second level-themes of the new first-level theme

*'Integrative threads'*. The finalized thematic template and representative quotes are presented in

table 2 below.

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Insert table 2 about here
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## FINDINGS

In address of our research questions, *in what ways do managers integrate scholarship

and practice?* and *, what impacts may emerge from this integrative process?,* here we illustrate

how our sample of senior managers (hereinafter referred to solely as 'managers') drew on

scholarly practices to tackle organizational issues and foster impact in their given contexts.

Throughout, where relevant, we report on their accounts of impact in their organizations and

broader societal contexts, including but not limited to the creation of a new gender and diversity

policy in a multinational corporation, the development of new modes of communicating with key

stakeholders in a major food security technology-transfer program in Mozambique, the rapid

development of a North American city's COVID-19 response strategy and the avoidance of

COVID-related deaths in a chain of UK care homes. To elucidate how these impacts emerged,

drawing upon our reading of Follett (1924) we then show the ways in which these managers

interweave scholarly capabilities learnt during their DBA program into their daily practice of

management after graduation, by illustrating the capabilities that enable this interweaving to unfold, and in turn, impacts to emerge.

**Generating and evaluating research data**

Across our sample the managers discussed drawing upon the research skills developed during the DBA, reflecting a strong reliance on data to inform both practice and decision making, as RL reflected in their interview, "You know, it seems natural if you have a problem you're addressing, then do the research. You can't just fly off at the seat of your pants and do something without data before or data afterward". Yet by delving further into the managers' accounts to explore how they drew on their empirical research skills in their organizations, we identified two dominant ways in which this scholarly practice was enacted:

*Qualitative research techniques.* Reflective of the action research approach in the DBA program, many of the managers remarked on how they had experienced paradigm shifts. Indeed, when asked to reflect on the greatest personal impact of having completed the DBA they frequently reported having experienced a change in their epistemic beliefs:

> It sounds weird, but I'm always reminded of 'The Matrix' film and the quote, are you going to take the red pill or the blue pill and if you take the blue pill, nothing changes and if you take the red pill, your life's never going to be the same. And for me, the DBA was very much like that. It completely shifted me from a true positivist. (IZ - interview)

Many of the managers reflected how prior to completing the DBA, if adopting data driven decision making at all, they tended to rely on quantitative data. Yet following the DBA this shifted markedly to an appreciation and reliance upon qualitative data:

> As an engineer, qualitative data was something that was forbidden in my primary education. If I can't measure it, then it doesn't exist. So, in one module I hear that from a social and postmodernist perspective, that my feelings are valid. What the heck? How can your feelings be valid? But over time I came to recognize that, this information is valid in a different way. (MN - interview)

This newfound appreciation of qualitative data further manifested within their daily practice with

many of the managers reflecting how they continued to make use of qualitative data collection

techniques, notably the everyday use of interviewing skills:

> When people stop talking [during interviews], the DBA taught me to stop and let them,
> and wait until they start talking again. It's a very practical and very small thing. But it
> works if you let the person follow their own pace. You kind of push them somehow a
> little bit by not doing anything. This is an example of the little skills that I'm still using.
> And phrasing the questions, of course. How you use open questions, or closed questions.
> These were very useful. (LF - interview)

But equally, in how they approached complex situations in their organizations we see a more

exploratory approach akin to conducting qualitative research:

> If I do not know the situation, if I do not know the complexities involved, I can't promise
> anything. That is the whole thing. In the old way you generalize, in the new way you look
> into particularities (MT - interview)

While these excerpts provide insight into how specific research capabilities (e.g.,

interviewing techniques) are integrated into practice, our analysis further illustrates how these

scholar-practitioners actively conduct original management research in their contexts:

*Insider research.* Significant in the managers' accounts were instances of collecting and

synthesizing primary data in their organizations (cf. Coghlan & Brannick, 2004), as BS

exemplifies:

> I am doing a new study now, we are interested how leadership has changed during
> COVID-19 and part of that we are doing interviews. And this shows how the DBA has
> changed my mind and practice, so looking into the theory to understand how leadership
> may have changed during these times, but then combining the interviews and seeing what
> we can use, what we can adopt for our daily practice. (BS – Interview)

This tendency to draw on the data synthesis skills developed through the DBA further led

to a significant impact in the case of NB, an owner of several elderly care homes in the UK.

Through his proactive research in the incipient stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, he was able to

justify a refusal to accept patients as part of the NHS (National Health Service) ward-clearing

strategy in the UK's first infection wave, which led to significant COVID outbreaks and deaths

among existing residents at other elderly care homes, as NB recounts:

> Well, in fact, I think we probably spotted Coronavirus coming earlier than most. And that is another thing I put down to the DBA. So, we were doing research into COVID-19 and how it might impact; and, how we could defend against it. And this empowered us to say no to the NHS who are trying to foist untested and COVID positive patients on us. So, it put us in a stronger position, because we were informed. (NB - interview)

While NB initially received backlash from shareholders for this refusal and subsequent loss of

funding, his decision to do so, grounded in his own research of the situation, enabled his care

homes to remain COVID free and protect the residents. This illustration shows how the

integration of the scholarly practice of collecting and synthesizing primary data within the

organization led to tangible impact. We contend that the learning these managers gain through

the DBA fosters a disposition towards original research that then informs new action

possibilities, which in turn enables the impact observed.

Further reflective of this was managers' continued application of an action research

approach within their organizations. This was evident in accounts of a continuous process of

action inquiry in collaboration with others rather than bounded data-driven decision making

(Simon, 1972). LA for example, discussed a process akin to experimentation aimed at learning

what may be most effective in the organization that draws directly on the pedagogy of the DBA:

> I'm trying utilize the same learning sets that we had on the DBA. So, what could happen if we do this, and what could their reaction be if we went in that way and so on. […] You can take from the learning of being together with the team and say Ok, let's send out a Trojan horse, then they will not discover. And then it became, Ok, maybe we should sneak in instead and try to figure out what it is to start on and send in Trojan 'mice' instead, and then try to see what comes out of it. So, I think that is a good example of the approach to learning that we see in our organization. (LA - interview)

**Mobilizing research literature in the workplace**

In addition to generating and evaluating research data in their given contexts, further

apparent in our data was the managers' mobilization of academic literature in their everyday

practice. Here we illustrate three ways in which these individuals engaged with original research

articles (i.e., not papers 'translated' by academics for a practitioner audience) and the diversity of

ways in which this is manifested in their contexts.

*'Keeping up' with the literature.* Evident in our data was how engagement with

academic literature was perceived to be a fundamental part of their enactment of being a scholar

practitioner, and for many this engagement remained ingrained, at times routinized, in their daily

practice, as AMI reflects:

> I have been reading almost on the scale of when I was doing the DBA because while I
> was doing the DBA, I was working almost three hours, three hours a day on the DBA.
> And since I've left I still read about two hours every day up to now […] I have lots of
> folders set up I'm sure it has impacted my thinking on a permanent basis now. (AMI –
> interview)

Sustaining such engagement enabled managers to build their own repositories of literature, to

which they could refer as and when deemed necessary:

> I just keep a running Notepad. Anytime that I see something that stands out, I make a
> note of it, and save the document to a folder. So, when I'm going back, I'm building my
> running list of notes and the source data in the folder. (RL - interview)

For others, this habitual engagement was a means through which to 'future-proof' by building up

knowledge to pre-emptively understand future problems:

> I just read on interesting things, and then I come up with interesting questions, and then I
> keep going, going further. Then while reading, I write notes and keep them, knowing that
> sometime in the future they're going to be useful to my work. And they actually do. It
> saves time when you have lots of problems always being repeated, but requiring different
> answers. (AMI - interview)

The managers also reflected on their motivations for habitual reading of the literature. As

would be expected, given the length of the DBA program (4-7 years) and high level of reading

required in both module and thesis stages, engagement with the literature was often discussed as

something that the DBA had 'molded', as MTR reflected at interview, "Because you see the

DBA is transformational. You're not the same person before. It's a considerable time, so it has a

capability to mold your habit". Indeed, as the program is designed to specifically foster

'scholarliness' in practitioners, this seemingly percolates through their practice post-graduation

by fostering scholarly curiosity:

> So, every time I have things coming up, that I'm curious about, then I'm starting in
> Google Scholar, when you want to go a little bit broad on things. And when I want to go
> more into specific things that I cannot maybe access from Google Scholar. […] And then
> of course, when I read articles, then I check the references. So, I read a couple of articles
> a week, at least. (LA - interview)

Evident here is that when posed with novelty and/or lack of existing understanding, the managers

are motivated to engage with the literature to garner an *understanding* of the situation. Of

particular significance here is that this reflects habitual engagement in that, as indicated by LA,

practitioner curiosities are met with a scholarly response as was the intention of the DBA

program. In this way, these managers keep up with the literature in the same habitual manner as

traditional scholars.

*Focused literature searching.* As well as keeping up with the literature as a matter of

habit and/or curiosity our data reveal instances of more focused literature searching. Specifically,

we identified a dominant thread of instrumental engagement with the literature motivated by

specific organizational problems and change initiatives. Both these realms of instrumental

engagement reflected the managers' impetus to be evidence-based in their practice, for example

as AMI reports, "I use scientific evidence-based information before I make my judgments on

certain things, of course", and as CB elaborates:

> I consult the literature anytime I'm going to do a change. So, we have a library here and
> they'll get the articles for me. So yes, if I'm going to make a change, or if I'm struggling
> to understand something, I do go to literature. (CB - interview)

In approaching their practice in this way, our data further reveal a shift from relying

solely on experience to instead having a sound evidence base built upon the literature, for

example when asked whether they engage with literature in their practice, OJ reports:

> Yes, most definitely. I would say the biggest change for me at work is asking the
> question, do we have any data? It's just become the way I think now. You said this, this is
> what's going on, based on what? Because, experience is useful, but after you've been
> working for so long, it becomes a bit of second nature. So, I feel that data-driven
> behavior is something you have to consciously try to get. (OJ – interview)

Of unexpected interest, however, were their actions to promote the use of literature among other

organizational members. At times this occurred through them translating academic research for

others, "Academic reading is tough. And so, what I basically do is I try to summarize it for them.

If I do a newsletter, if I send somebody an email, I will take excerpts from certain articles" (RP -

interview), thereby bridging the theory-practice divide (cf. Sorensen, 2004). This also led to the

creation of dedicated forums wherein organizational members were required to engage with

literature as part of an organizational initiative, such as a planned change or policy review. This

was most striking within participant diaries, where we observed different approaches to

introducing ideas from the research literature into conversations within organizations:

> We have been applying "learning set" principles to drive a discussion on the themes
> [gender & ethnic diversity] across the organization. It started with me nudging the
> conversation by circulating articles. It has now become a group discussion where the
> senior management team (Algeria, Russia, Iran and Denmark) input new knowledge
> themselves. New articles and perspectives are constantly added to the discussion. A
> common picture regarding the need for diversity seems to crystalize – also that it is
> possible to "level the playing field" even though the national culture does not seem to
> support gender diversity. The work on the topic is supported by articles from where we
> actively try to understand the landscape around us and who are contributing to debate.
> (LA – Diary 1)

Collectively, the findings documenting the managers' purposeful use of literature indicate

the centrality of academic research and literature in informing their practice. Of particular

significance here is how they are able to independently engage with the literature to make sense

of their organizational problems, but equally as a means to inform particular organizational

initiatives. The development of dedicated forums in their organizations further illustrates how

these managers are able to become both the in-house translators of research, but equally foster

scholarliness within their organizations.

***Promoting divergent thinking.*** In the above instances reading academic literature was

motivated by a particular problem or planned initiative, thereby 'targeted' and directly relevant

to the situation at hand. In contrast, many of the managers reflected on how engagement with

theory and/or literature enabled them to foster different perspectives or be inspired in some way,

as AM reports, "Oftentimes you will find [from an article] there's a different way of looking at

this now. Or you might find that it being something that can spark an idea of what else could be

done through reading research" (AM – interview).

Of further interest is managers' more spontaneous engagement with academic literature

(cf. purposeful engagement) and how they were often attracted to seemingly 'irrelevant' theory

and/or ideas. For example, BR, likely influenced by the then novelty of the COVID-19

pandemic, was drawn into engaging with literature on the genesis of 'viral marketing' as an

offshoot of virus replication in biological studies, reflecting in turn on the value stepping outside

of typical literature in his work with organizational clients:

> There's a huge body of knowledge out there that organizations rarely leverage in order to
> make better business decisions. So, it is about leveraging an insight that you would not
> otherwise find in that system to make the system better, or to change it completely and do
> it a completely different way (BR – interview).

In a similar vein, LM reflected on how they were able to draw on seemingly irrelevant

theoretical ideas advantageously in their practice:

> If you're reading one set of literature on something that doesn't feel relevant, it's super
> hard to say, well, I read this bunch of literature on Chaos Theory, let me explain how it

works? But I totally did use it in that way. And I think people do enjoy when someone is pushing forward a bit of a creative agenda or a way to analyze a subject they hadn't heard of. (LM - interview)

What these accounts illustrate is that far from the need for 'accessible' summaries of management research, as translated by academics, these managers are motivated to engage with management literature independently to enrich their understanding (e.g., by exploring different perspectives), but are equally willing to stray beyond traditional management theory, engage with the 'obscure' and make it relevant to their practice.

**Integrative threads**

Whilst our presentation of the data so far is structured to explore each scholarly practice in turn, our managers did not deploy them independently of each other. Here we delve further into the relationship between their scholarship and their management practice to illustrate *how* these were integrated. In particular, whilst these managers, as noted above, were capable of translating extant literature to their context (cf. the linear knowledge translation chain of Thorpe et al., 2011), this mechanism does not fully capture their on-going co-creation of knowledge with others in relation to their organizational context. In the language of Follettian process theory, the DBA graduates were engaged in "circular response" with their evolving situation: an ontological condition in which related individuals interact with one another and the environment that surrounds them in a co-creative process. Our analysis reveals two salient co-creative mechanisms, here termed integrative threads, namely 'managing as inquiry' and 'critical reflexivity':

*Managing as inquiry.* Our managers, particularly within their diary entries, revealed their adoption of multiple scholarly means in the pursuit of organizational impacts. These longitudinal data suggest they were doing more than simply *applying* original or extant scholarship to a

particular organizational context. Rather there was an on-going process of enacting management

through inquiry into the context with which they are engaged (cf. Marshall, 1999). As developed

through the learning in the DBA, this becomes most salient when exploring how these managers

frame and approach organizational problems:

> Firstly, I don't try to solve it. I'm happy to nibble around the edges. I'm comfortable with
> more uncertainty, and that emergence will occur. Because that is the nature of the beast.
> As you become more familiar with it and engage it, it reveals itself. (MN - interview)

Similarly, the organization of one manager (MTR) had recently been taken over by a larger

company who then proceeded to impose their management processes. Observing the resulting

tensions employees in the two companies, MTR resisted the impulse to respond to his own

interpretation of the situation and rather acted to ground his understanding with the research

literature touching upon culture change:

> Initially, research on this issue is conducted by me through observation and reflections.
> This observation was done to understand the motivation and impact of the organization
> culture. A literature review needs to be done to gain more understanding of this aspect.
> (MTR – Diary 1)

In these accounts we therefore see how the learning through the DBA enables a shift in

the managers from a reactive response that sets the changing context in opposition to either

previous practical experience or extant research literature. Reflexively, they are conscious of an

urge to solve a problem, but also realize that this problem is more complex that it seems at first

(cf. Schön, 1983). Their response is to treat the situation that confronts them as an object of

inquiry:

> Stop, look at it, turn it around, you know, flip it upside down, break it apart, and put back
> together and think, how, how am I actually experiencing this process? Am I just making a
> decision? Because that's a decision that's expected of me? Or does it make good sense
> backed up by literature? (BR - interview)

We argue that an important consequence of their scholarly training through the DBA was

thereby the development of a disposition toward inquiry (cf. Marshall, 1999) as part of their

practice of management, as CB exemplifies:

> I see potential research with every question we ask as there is no easy solution to
> anything we do. That right there leads to 'why?' I find that I interject research into the
> language of everyday as there are so many great gems we could undercover if we were
> able to take a breath and take the time to do things in a structured and methodical manner.
> (CB – Diary 3)

Expressed in terms of Follett's process terminology "managing by inquiry" is a mechanism by

which our managers are engaged in reciprocal relating to an evolving situation. Follett's

ontological assumptions view reality as a relational process of becoming in which the process is

emphasized rather than the (organizational) outputs. The mechanism of "managing by inquiry"

operates continuously with the managers engaged in on-going acts of construction and de-

construction of the organizational whole (individual plus their environment). The continuous

nature of this processual mechanism means that organizational outputs (e.g. scholarly impact

occasions) are not the result *of* process, but rather moments *in* process that are noticed by

organizational actors and ascribed some significance.

*Critical reflexivity*. Our first mechanism of integrating scholarship and practice,

managing as inquiry, makes a virtue of extant empirical research and organizational theories,

along with new findings and analysis that our managers generated. However, our empirical

analysis identified a second mechanism that is a necessary for a complete understanding of

interweaving. The development of reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2003) that formed the pedagogical basis

of the DBA, was viewed by a significant proportion of our sample as the most important and

impactful practice they developed during the program:

> It changed me as a person. I started looking back and thinking not only about the subject,
> but also why I acted this way already. I started questioning myself which was not the case

before. I come from the background where we were taught to do what is written and not to question it. And this is what I learned, I guess. To question and to reflect on, on things that what I have done and why I've done this. (LF - interview)

Particularly noteworthy was the potential for these reflexive practices to be taken up and

adopted by other organizational members. For example, BS describes how the implementation of

reflexivity among his staff has resulted in his organization becoming what he terms, a learning

organization (cf. Örtenblad, 2004) and in turn, improving patient care:

> I have done extensive work and invested substantial time in the last 3 years to implement this reflexivity practice among everybody. So, at the beginning of every day everyone had to write down one or two things that they have learned and improve that day, it's now our daily business. And step by step we are developing into a learning organization, so that if I discuss a concept or anything like that in the team, everyone comes with their ideas of what we could do better or ways to be better. And that was a journey of 2-3 years getting us to that point. (BS - interview)

Our managers' practice of critical reflexivity is integral to their managing as inquiry, but equally,

in enabling the integration of scholarly practices, for example, significant in our data, was not

only the co-occurrence of these, but how critical reflexivity and managing as inquiry were

fundamental to said integration:

> At the junction of theory and practice, there's that element of reflexivity. So, I think that kind of makes it, smoothing that a little bit. Smoothen the divide a little bit or bridge the divide a little bit and bring it a little bit closer. So, to me, it's about, okay, understanding the theory and understanding the practice, but understanding where the theory stops, and how then you bring it into the practice. (PG – interview)

IZ further illustrates how this critical reflexivity in combination with theory enables

understanding, but equally how critical reflexivity prompts 'noticing' and in turn engagement

with theory:

> I think it is, for me it means a practitioner that can kind of have a meta position, that can take a hovering position and find times during your practice where you reflect on why am I doing what I'm doing, based on your understanding of theory. Or at times when I realize there's something happening here, just noticing when something's happening that's not feeling great or it didn't go so well and then saying, I wonder what that is and where can I find what might help me, and then go back and read an article or find something that helps me unlock what I've noticed what's happened. (IZ – interview)

This was further evident in NB's interview, where once again, critical reflexivity prompts engagement with the literature, "It's that kind of not jumping in, but standing back and thinking first, and you know, if you don't know something about it, go and read something to become more expert on it". However, the thread of 'managing as inquiry' is equally implicated in how the problem is approached, "I'm more reflective about everything and trying to see the tectonic plates, rather than, than what's moving on, on the surface." (NB – interview).

This integration of scholarly practices in their managerial practice, threaded and enabled through critical reflexivity and managing as inquiry, was particularly evident in those instances of tangible scholarly impact. We show how these mechanisms operate continuously to interweave scholarship and practice with an extended illustration that demonstrates how scholarly impact is realized in an evolving situation in which a manager was faced with an extreme change in the external environment: an increasing incidence of wildfires that RL confronted when working in local government in the US. Setting the scene, she reflected "It was just unprecedented. It happened literally overnight. Imagine in a movie scene where you're driving up to a municipal building, and the sky is just red, and there's clouds, and its silence, and it just stinks like wildfire smoke". She goes onto to discuss how the education on the DBA had enabled her to relate to the situation:

> I just remember having such a sense of dread and fear and uncertainty but I think, okay, we're going to take this one step at a time, and we're going to solve this one problem at a time. That's one of the fundamental things that the DBA program did.

Further evidence of this and as expressed in other participant accounts (e.g., BR, MN), RL described breaking the problem down, engaging in a slower and more reflexive process:

> And if you think about the big, wicked problem all at once, of course, you're going to get scared and you're not going to be able to progress forwards. But if you break it down and you just take it that one step at a time, and then eventually you get to your goal.

This in turn enabled RL to deal with the ambiguity of the problem and progress with a recovery strategy, "Being able to strategize out that entire plan, prioritize your resources whilst keeping your eye on the things that have to happen at the end. So, you're not surprised and caught unaware by them." Importantly, RL acknowledges not just how the DBA enabled them to deal with ambiguity, but equally how approaching the response through management inquiry afforded an effective strategy;

> The rigor of the approach: the note taking, the structuring the problem-solving strategy, the analysis that I learned through my DBA program set me far ahead of everyone else in keeping all those complex recovery activities straight and lined out and everyone on the same page.

In due course, RL was recognized for the effectiveness of their approach, "Because of how I could structure and strategize and set forth recovery initiatives, they put me second in charge of all the recovery activities for those natural and other disasters".

In RL's account we observe how the DBA leads to an orientation of managing as inquiry and a critical reflexive approach to their context, enables the integration of scholarship and practice. But equally how such integration may foster multiple impact occasions, e.g., professional (recognition in the organization), organizational (effective disaster management strategies), and arguably society more broadly (a local government that is able to strategize and manage crisis situations).

**Towards a conceptual framework of interweaving**

From the above findings, in drawing the threads of our thematic analysis together, we draw on Follett (1924) to conceptualize how the interweaving of scholarship and practice unfolds and, in turn, how impacts may emerge. Rather than representing the relationships between the

key themes in our findings as static, yet interrelated concepts, our visualization in Figure 1

provides a conception of our themes and theoretical relations as a process model of interweaving.

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Insert figure 1 about here
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As expressed in figure 1, we theorize interweaving as constituting four ongoing activities

that were enacted by our managers: scholarship, management practice, managing as inquiry and

critical reflexivity. These four categories of activity are implicated in the study of the whole and

parts of an organizational situation in their active and continuous relation to each other (Follett,

1924). The relations between these four activities and the 'situation' (Follett 1924) to which they

all relate, are expressed visually in within Figure 1 in two ways.

Firstly, the four activities are represented as intertwining threads, as is the evolving

organizational situation that commands the manager's attention, here represented by the

intersecting blue line. Reflecting the relational dynamics of organizational life and the scholarly

practice of management, this blue line undergoes twists and turns, indicative of the situation as

one in flux. By these visual means we seek to express that interweaving is constant, unfolds

through the relating of the four activities to the situation, but equally how said situation is both

generative in and constituted, through ongoing relation. More simply, the relating of scholarship

and practice, as underpinned by critical reflexivity and managing as inquiry, occurs in relation to

the situation but equally becomes part of the situation. In this way the integration of scholarship

and practice is to be understood as ongoing; part of the managers' everyday professional life, and

yet as indicated in the findings, there are moments within this process that this integration

becomes perceptible.

We conceive these moments in the process as 'relational instantiations' of interweaving, which form the second visualized expression of the interweaving process, indicated here in figure 1 as an orthogonal cut through this on-going process of interweaving. Following Follet (1924) we contend that these four activities exist as a dynamic whole; the parts are always in relation and therefore the relation itself has ontological status. Consequently, there are no arrows in the diagram: not even double-headed ones. The framework forms a relational total: a total where each part has been permeated by every other part, but equally this relating occurs in time and context, inclusive of all actors in a given moment (e.g., what is happening in the organization). Taken together, the four categories of activity constitute a certain situation through their relation to one another. Importantly, within this process there is no particular arrangement (e.g. through aggregating a distinct contribution of each), nor is there an idealized way in which these activities should/could relate. One consequence of this is that, in contrast to established notions of scholarly impact (e.g., UK's REF), scholarship and practice exert a mutual influence over each other.

These relational moments, the instantiations of interweaving, sensitize us to appreciate impact as having the potential to occur in each of these relational moments, e.g., impact *occasions*, rather than viewing impact as outcomes. However, as each of these relational moments (e.g., relational instantiations) become part of the ongoing situation (i.e., the situation as an ongoing accomplishment) they equally have the potential to 'accumulate' over time and generate longer term impact, more akin to traditional outcome views of impact. In this way, as evinced in our findings, we observe a diversity of impact occasions, occurring in different domains, but equally of varying magnitude – from professional development (e.g., LF, KY) introduction of new organizational initiatives and/or improved organizational functioning (e.g.,

BS, LA, BR, CB), to effective crisis management/prevention (e.g., RL, NB) (see also table 2). We now turn to discussing the contributions and implications of interweaving and our findings more broadly.

## DISCUSSION

In this study, we set out to examine scholarly impact. Our starting point was to problematize positions that view this concept as being synonymous with research impact that is realized by purposeful translation and/or co-production activities led by academics to gather 'auditable or recordable occasion of influence' (Haley et al., 2017). In contrast, we offer an alternative approach that is predicated on the role of DBA education in developing scholar-practitioners who are capable of fostering scholarly impact independently and in their own contexts. Our study is therefore additive to established conceptualizations of scholarly impact and offers four contributions:

Our primary contribution is to add to understanding of the term 'scholarly impact'. We contend that through teaching, specifically here through a DBA, we are able to develop capabilities in practitioners to generate impact from research without any intermediary role of academics in the practice environment. Whilst this is in contrast to the dominant ways of generating impact in the literature, notably translation (e.g., Thorpe et al., 2011) and co-production approaches (e.g., Van de Ven, 2007), our explication of interweaving offers a complimentary mechanism for realising scholarly impact. Our findings problematize the implicit assumptions of practitioners needing translations of academic research or the collaboration of academics in order to generate knowledge about a given organizational problem. Understandings of how scholarly impact may be fostered should therefore incorporate teaching as well as research, but equally, shift from positioning managers as mere consumers of our research.

Instead, through management education, managers may be impactful and generators of impact in their own right. This widens the scope of debates about scholarly impact and affords managers and educators a contribution to those debates.

Linking this to our next contribution, the managers in our study are fulfilling both roles of researcher and practitioner by interweaving theory with context-specific knowledge leading to actionable knowledge. This repositions the place of extant research or more tangibly, the research paper, as part of the fabric of scholarly impact rather than its unique starting point. It also means that these managers will not always need the intervention of academics to help in the process of translating academic papers for practice. This goes beyond using knowledge to 'apply' it to a problem in the way suggested by Rasche and Behnam (2009).

Our second major contribution is theoretical and explicates a processual view of the interweaving of scholarship and practice, drawing on the ontological stance taken by Follett (1924). This interweaving offers an additional means through which the research-practice gap may be reconciled and impact achieved. As illustrated in our findings, our sample of managers detailed different ways of mobilizing original academic research and literature, but equally how they collected and synthesized primary data when met with organizational problems and initiatives. Drawing on Follett's (1924) central thesis of reciprocally relating to the situation, our findings enabled us to theorize how this interweaving unfolded through a process of "circular response" with the evolving situation. As such, our findings do not show managers adopting a piece of extant research uncritically and applying it to their context. Instead, we illustrate new working practices involving the use of either scholarly research techniques and/or evaluating data in a way that would be expected of a scholar. This in turn enables the interweaving of the

research literature and organizational practice to understand the nature of the situation and

working with others to create actionable strategies that lead to impacts.

Dialogical sensemaking is at the heart of this process (Beech, MacIntosh & MacLean,

2010; Cunliffe & Scaratti, 2017). A research paper will inform this dialogue but is not always

applied in its pure form and it may be unrecognizable as an artefact in itself when it is

interwoven with context-specific knowledge in order to frame problems and design

interventions. In the case of our managers, the dialogue was not with academics but with

themselves and their organizational colleagues. In Sharma and Bansal's (2020) study, knowledge

was shown to be co-created when researchers asked managers questions and when both parties

connected present events to the past. Similarly in our findings, we see how managers interrogate

the literature in relation to the unfolding situation, also looking both backwards and forwards.

This temporal dimension to an engagement with knowledge (MacIntosh et al., 2017) is both

explicitly and implicitly accessed as the situation demands or prompts. The process methodology

that we used shows that knowledge is in a constant state of becoming (Sharma & Bansal, 2020)

and that managers create actionable knowledge that often leads to impact. This synthesis of

knowledge and knowing, coupled with a disposition toward questioning can result in action,

impact and the production of new knowledge. This echoes Bartunek's (2020) analysis of the

performativity of theory, but in our data, managers enact theory that leads to impact not

alongside academics but through reading, reflection and dialogue.

Our third contribution is how a Follettian conceptualization of interweaving offers a

generative addition to the literature on the scholar-practitioner. Rather than positioning the

scholar-practitioner as scholarship *plus* practice, we present and enable an understanding of

scholarship *with* practice (cf. Ellwood, 2018). By doing so, our conception of scholar-

practitioners here eschews idealized categorizations that invariably categorize them as either

primarily 'scholars' or 'practitioners'. Instead, it proffers a view that foregrounds the situation

(cf. Follett, 1924) and how the scholar-practitioner relates to it is central to how scholarship and

practice may be interwoven. As indicated in our findings, the scholar-practitioners in our sample

demonstrated a diversity of ways in which scholarship was mobilized to meet practitioner ends,

from focused literature searching and targeted primary data collection to informing decision

making, but equally more immanent interweaving through habitual literature usage and drawing

inspiration from the seemingly obscure. Interweaving therefore offers a means to understand the

scholar-practitioner that advances dualist framings, which arguably emphasize the 'chasm'

between the production and dissemination of research (Rynes, 2007) and how this may be

bridged by a person. The emphasis is often upon practitioners using knowledge to 'apply' to a

problem in order to fix it rather than acknowledging that this process in itself leads to the

generation of new knowledge (Coghlan & Shani, 2009), and in turn impact. Interweaving

therefore offers a way to understand scholar-practitioners without positioning them as translators,

or as predominantly either scholars *or* practitioners.

Finally, we contribute to and synthesize the literature on the DBA by showing how

graduates can become scholar-practitioners. Given that DBA is a form of management education

that combines research, professional development and knowledge, it has been previously

espoused as a means to bridge the academic-industry divide (e.g., Banerjee & Morley, 2013).

Our findings cohere with previous studies that show how managers undertaking the DBA

program engage with research (Rigg et al., 2021) develop personal effectiveness skills (Boud et

al., 2018; Creaton & Anderson, 2021) and humility and openness (Hay & Samra-Fredericks,

2019). To these we add a significant contribution to our understanding of the impact of the DBA

post-graduation. In particular, we draw attention to how the learning on the DBA continues to

feature in everyday practice as these managers enact the scholarliness developed during their

studies and the impacts that arise from this. We also articulate how the relating to the situation

was underpinned by the two key mechanisms of critical reflexivity and managing as inquiry;

both of which are premised on concepts and practices learnt during the DBA program (e.g.,

Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017; Coghlan & Coughlan, 2010; Cunliffe, 2003; Marshall, 1999;

Schön, 1983; Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009).

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In this study we have shown why an understanding of scholarly impact should be

widened to include an academic's teaching as well as their research. Although this has been

proposed before (Anderson et al., 2017; Antonacopoulou, 2009) this, to our knowledge, is the

first empirical study to illustrate how it might happen. Having shown the potential in the DBA,

we would like to see a future in which the practice of scholarship is not the sole purview of

academics and where all management education programs can equip our graduates with the

capabilities to generate their own scholarship. Where we in the main use scholarly means to

achieve scholarly ends, our graduates have far more opportunities to deploy those same scholarly

means to achieve practitioner ends. This form of scholarly impact has so far been neglected

relative to impact which starts with an academic's own research and whilst our findings relate to

a doctoral program, this notion of developing managers capable of creating impactful scholarship

could be extended to masters and even undergraduate programs. We encourage future research

that examines how graduates at all levels deploy an orientation to inquiry and critical reflexivity

in their workplace practice. Such research might adopt a process methodology that examines

how impact unfolds across the whole pathway from the building of new scholarly capabilities to

the realization of societal and organizational benefits. We would also like to see further research that examines how the pedagogical and epistemological philosophy of a management education program can influence the practice of management both intentionally as in our study, and unintentionally.

Our results also suggest that management education could be positioned as a precursor to impact in research assessment exercises such as the UK REF, alongside existing means of achieving impact. An independent review of the REF (Stern, 2016: 17) proposed that impact case studies could show how research has had an impact on university teaching and on curricula and pedagogy. We conclude that a further measure could provide evidence of how practitioners are enabled to use research through their education to make an impact in their organization and beyond.

Finally, it is our hunch that this mode of scholarly impact, starting as it does within a DBA, holds far more potential for societal benefit than the transfer our own research outputs into practice. This would have implications for the practice of educators in terms of the design of not only professional doctorate programs in management, but the whole range of executive education in business schools. We propose that an engagement with the extant scholarship of a subject or discipline and the development of research skills should be integral to such programs, not simply with an eye on a student's final assessment and degree award but also their future practice. There could also be a stronger emphasis on the development of critical reflexivity, the capacity to deal with ambiguity and an orientation to inquiry. Whilst these may have been seen as 'soft' skills in the past, we have presented evidence here to show that the development of scholar-practitioners who can cope with complexity and ambiguity results in impact and tangible results for organizations. There have been papers that argue for a mode of teaching and learning

that encourages students to develop their own scholarship (e.g., Chia & Holt, 2008), and future studies might explore other approaches. Such research would naturally be complemented by the actual design of more programs founded upon the interweaving of students' own scholarship and practice to achieve organizational and societal impacts.

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**TABLE 1**
**Participant demographics**

| | Identifier | Sex | Country | Graduation year | Industry | Organizational role |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | AM | M | Botswana | 2019 | Private/public advisory | Leadership consultant |
| 2 | AMI | M | Nigeria | 2019 | Engineering and manufacturing | Leadership and project consultant |
| 3 | AU | M | Mozambique | 2017 | Agriculture | Chairman of the board of directors |
| 4 | BR | M | United States | 2019 | Human Resources | Strategy consultant |
| 5 | BS | M | Switzerland | 2019 | Healthcare | MD and practice owner |
| 6 | CB | F | Canada | 2019 | Healthcare | Director of oncology care teams |
| 7 | CM | F | Canada | 2018 | Healthcare | Principle consultant |
| 8 | EW | F | Australia | 2019 | Higher Education | Faculty member |
| 9 | IZ | F | United Kingdom | 2019 | Higher Education | Faculty member |
| 10 | KG | F | United Kingdom | 2019 | Building conservation/ manufacturing | Start-up owner/consultant |
| 11 | KY | F | Canada | 2019 | Finance/banking | Financial advisory |
| 12 | LA | M | Denmark | 2019 | Pharmaceutical | Corporate vice president |
| 13 | LF | F | Italy | 2019 | Intergovernmental/ agriculture | UN Program officer |
| 14 | LM | F | Canada | 2019 | Local government | City Manager |
| 15 | MM | M | Germany | 2016 | Government/IT | Software test manager |
| 16 | MN | M | United Kingdom | 2019 | Finance/sustainability | Consultant |
| 17 | MT | M | Germany | 2019 | IT/telecommunications | Project manager |
| 18 | MTR | M | Oman | 2019 | Financial service | Company director/ Consultant |
| 19 | NB | M | United Kingdom | 2019 | Social care | Owner/ director |
| 20 | OJ | F | Nigeria | 2019 | Financial services | Chief Operating Office |
| 21 | PF | M | Mauritius | 2019 | Global logistics | Finance manager |
| 22 | PG | F | United states | 2019 | Government/ intergovernmental | Business Development Executive |
| 23 | RL | M | United States | 2018 | IT | Employee experience lead |
| 24 | RP | M | United States | 2018 | Financial services | Private wealth and investment manager |
| 25 | SD | M | Ghana | 2019 | Engineering | Chief operating officer |

**TABLE 2**
**Thematic structure and representative quotes**

| Major themes | Sub-themes: Constitutive elements | Evidence |
|---|---|---|
| **SCHOLARLY PRACTICES** | | |
| | **Generating and evaluating research data (34)** | |
| | *Using qualitative research techniques (8)* | • We wanted for example to change the working hours for our workers to make it a little bit easier for them to work with us. So, we conducted some interviews with patients so it amounted to patients, what they thought it about and what they would prefer so that we had the information of what the patients thought about it and we collected information from our workers to understand what they thought about it so that we could manage this relatively easily at the end (BS – interview)<br>• I start pulling out all of the bits of information and clustering them into like things and even if it came from this question over here, but it talked about this topic, bringing it over, and then bringing analysis back up. this is the same as any kind of coding that you've seen from King or anyone else, where we're just trying to understand to get these emerging themes. And then you test those themes against the literature. (BR – interview) |
| | *Insider research (26)* | • I co-host co-inquiry. And we've, I've designed that with a colleague and it's a process that we're going to go through over five weeks where we then share back our best practice and our learning to the rest of the organization. As the intervention to help bring our colleagues up to speed and you know, improve best practice or drive best practice in the business. So that is definitely practitioner adopting a scholarly approach. […] it's like an action research. It is called a strategic project that they are using my tools, and I'm driving them to look, go and look at theory and see what else is out there. (IZ – interview)<br>• I'm gathering some information, looking at observations, meetings, whatever the people talk about, and you know, trying to look at how things are being decided on. So yes, I'm using a mesh of these things to collect the data. So, I'm collecting the data inside, not outside. (SD – interview) |
| | **Mobilizing research literature (71)** | |
| | *Keeping up with the literature (14)* | • I want to just keep myself well, well versed in what's, what's happening in, in the world because I think, you know, our company operates within the world and actually to see trends happening, I think is very helpful. (NB – interview)<br>• I mean, then yes, I mean, every day, even now as I'm talking, I've got some of the literature open. OK, every day, I make sure that I go over all the literature that I already have but also see if I can also get funds to get some of the new published articles. (SD – interview)<br>• I still get email notifications on different keywords for different studies that come out so I'm always looking at those (KG – interview) |

*Focused literature searching (39)*

- DBA gave me they habit of making sure that I know the subject before I talk about it. That's more than just going and doing, it's, it's a, it's kind of, it became part of my life and career. (LF – interview)

- Sometimes I go to meetings and I get certain questions asked that I don't have the immediate, immediate answers that I have to go back and refer to literature. […] I try to get as information as I can like from various sources from data from scientific based from experts from so I try to combine a lot of information and try to synthesise and see what is the best solution to what is best pathway to take and going further. So, I think that alone is a mixture of so scholarship and practice at the same time. (AMI – interview)

- To always make sure it's well supported. I like, I tend not to just go with, here's my experience. I tend to go with, this is what I understand the literature says. I do that all the time. You've got to move and then later reacquaint yourself. So, I think it's really depending on the subject matter, but the big noodley stuff I do. So, anything financial, anything around like economic strategy? I do. (LM – interview)

- DBA gave me they habit of making sure that I know the subject before I talk about it. That's more than just going and doing, it's, it's a, it's kind of, it became part of my life and career. (LF – interview)

*Promoting divergent thinking (18)*

- I'm using literature a lot, and I'm doing it also the way that I'm reading it. And then I'm kind of, taking the essence from it and apply it to my daily life in the way that I also then write to all my directors and say, I've read this article that I have attached and they, I find these and these elements interesting in here, what do you think about it? So, in that way, I'm trying to create a dialogue, altering the virtual space here about the different things, because that, that also helps us to build this, say, synchronize the way of operating and also see things from different angles, so I have been sending things out where we are still discussing different topics, sending things back and forth. (LA – interview)

- We discuss together the literature or discuss what would work best for daily practice. (BS – Interview)

- So, you're reading something, it's totally nothing to do with what you're reading while you find yourself able to get around a problem, because someone else inspired you in a quite offhanded way. […] So, you have to have a bit of, um, if you're reading one set of literature on something that doesn't feel relevant, it's super hard to say, Well, I read this bunch of literature on Chaos Theory, let me explain how it works right? But I totally, I totally did use it in that way. And I think people do enjoy when someone is, you know, pushing forward a bit of a creative agenda or a way to analyze a subject they hadn't heard of. (LM – interview)

### INTEGRATIVE THREADS

**Managing as inquiry** (65)

- If you can be guided by a science that is available and also your own appreciation of what is taking place, particularly if you can be able to open up your eyes and not become too confident about anything and just seek to understand not just in your own your own in fact for that matter with others and I think that's the scholarly practice. As a scholar practitioner. I must always be wary and say, it depends on the problem at hand. (AM – interview)

- Yes, but come into this problem so that the problems were more... knowing they require more deeply an understanding of the situation that had to do with uncertainties and challenges. So, like now whatever problem it is, I don't... I just come with an open mind and try to understand it and then go through the process. Of course, I have this understanding that has been embedded in me that I'm not getting an answer. I'm sure you might not get this but whatever situation is going to be better. (AMI – interview)

- And I think, you know, it's just a matter of thinking in more detail. And it's almost a matter of, you know, as you write your thesis and rewrite and rewrite and come from different angles, that actually you, you note that actually each time, time you do it, it becomes notably better. It's that kind of not jumping in, but standing back and thinking first, and you know, if you don't know something about it, go and read something to become more expert on it. (NB – interview)

| | **Critical reflexivity** (65) | <ul><li>So what tools does one have? To me? I think the biggest tool, yeah, the biggest tool that I got, from my own research was to understand that you just need to learn. And you also need to let go of certain insights that you think you have. It's like you've fallen in love with your own ideas. [...] reflexivity for me is important because it highlights the fact that whatever you're doing you need to always be constantly thinking and saying, what am I missing? Where am I coming from? Even as a group? What are we missing as a result of who we are? (AM – interview)</li><li>It certainly changed the way... I'm far more multiple, multi-dimensional in how I approach things in terms of, you know, considering and seeing unintended consequences before they started, you know, where they were likely to be. I am far better, I believe, at putting myself in other people's shoes. So, before I actually would approach something, I'd have great empathy for the other people involved. (NB – interview)</li><li>So, prior to DBA my focus was on corrective action. So, the now the issue is, are we able to do the preventive action? Are we surfacing the unknown unknowns? And are we looking at our beliefs and action in a much better way in the context of literature. Some of the assumptions, and see, another thing is, I am now more confident to, if there is a team meeting, then I will verbalize the assumptions and say is this correct? Which I Learned from DBA. So, I say this is what I feel, and this is I feel, and sometimes even I go to the extent and say, you are assuming this. Is it correct? So, we were with the DBA helped me to do both. One is surfacing the assumption and asking for a validation. Is it true or not? So, it brings a common understanding much faster, and then the frictions all the relations become better. (MTR – interview)</li></ul> |
|---|---|---|
| **IMPACT OCCASIONS** | | |
| | **Personal and professional domain** (23) | <ul><li>It was a very high impact, I would say, because I had the time to, to learn or go deeper into some topics, aided first by the modules on of course and, and by the thesis itself and I also learned during the thesis phase I would say because it is there was practical aspect and in it, how to implement theories or ideas into practice in daily practice. I would say I knew the "things", but didn't have a lot of experience to implement things. So, during this time I have developed towards a senior manager or towards an executive position, in this direction I would say, because I have learned to use the theory to develop all the things or make a start to implement things (BS – interview)</li><li>It changed me as a person, but it also made me more visible, but it's a combination of DBA and my personality, where I brought forward, I started writing about various issues in the organization. And that made me visible. But also, I started approaching managers and staff with questions while doing the research. So, making sure that we do the research in our own organization is a very good thing, and it's has to be kind of very strict, because it promotes us in the organization. It gives us, if we do it in a way to really push for things to happen. We get a lot of visibility, and, and career development. And that's what happened with me. (LF – interview)</li><li>By doing this program, it's allowed me to be given the risk. Because being a young female, especially in manufacturing, and then going over to construction, which is just as bad, it has given me the ability to say things and be a little bit more forward with my ideas and my opinions and say, Well, this is because these are</li></ul> |

the books. I've read that back it up. This is the experience I have that backs it up. You know, it's just it gives me a little bit more. What's the proper word? authority? (KG – interview)

**Organizational and societal domain**
(20)

- *Increased organizational performance -* But what was really interesting about the organization is I joined on year two of a, actually the end of year one of a five-year goal setting program. And we achieved all of our goals for five years at the end of our third year. And yes, there was a lot of other variables, the leaders that, you know, we rebuilt the culture, we rebuilt the brand, but this was the only system we use to communicate goals, track performance, and for promotion and sustainability and succession planning. And so, what I liked about the impact, what it did for that organization, was it transformed what they believe to be what they're capable of. More tangibly, the relationship of expense and revenue increased as far as we made more money for the dollar that we spent on behalf of our members because it was a membership organization. (BR – interview)
- *Introduction of new tool -* What I have done differently with the DBA, I also designed a, it's not a psychometric tool, well, it is a psychometric, but it's an index and assessment index based on my research. So, it, it's an assessment tool that we use either at an organizational level to do a check a 180 degree with the leaders and the employee layers to see how they, how they rank in terms of three levels of leadership on the themes from my research. And we've used that to sell and develop client interventions. (IZ – interview)
- *Improved organizational functioning -* So, I think it [creation of literature learning sets] has been improving the way our organization works here. And, and I'm pretty sure if you ask my colleagues here, they will say that our organization has changed dramatically over the last three to four years. Right, I started in this organization here four years ago. And they will say that it has changed dramatically. They often come and tell me that they yeah, but if you think about what is was before and now we have reached this point and so on. So, there's a constant change ongoing and a constantly change in the way we work with, with knowledge just to get to the point where we talk about the, the, the, say the virtual factory also, a little bit like an organizational brain and say how is it that we increase our, our intelligence by working closer together and exchanging information. (LA – interview)
- *Introduced organization initiative -* One thing I learned from my DBA was, organizational intrapreneurship, where you come up with something, and you try to push for this idea, and you use your, you smartly address, because you cannot go directly and say you are not doing your job. You need to find a way to push for it to raise awareness. And this is how I did. I started with the highest presidential level, and went on, who authorized me to go to very different layers and committees and push for at least first raise awareness. But then I became part of the change team, and to, to make these kinds of recommendations happen. And in fact, many of them were taken on board and things started happening in the organization that were very much in line with my recommendations. So, to move the huge UN structure towards something you came up as an individual, that scholarly practitioner, kind of, it's, it's interesting to see two years in retrospect how things are changing. (LF – interview)

*Numbers denote coding frequency

# FIGURE 1
## Conceptual illustration of interweaving scholarship and practice
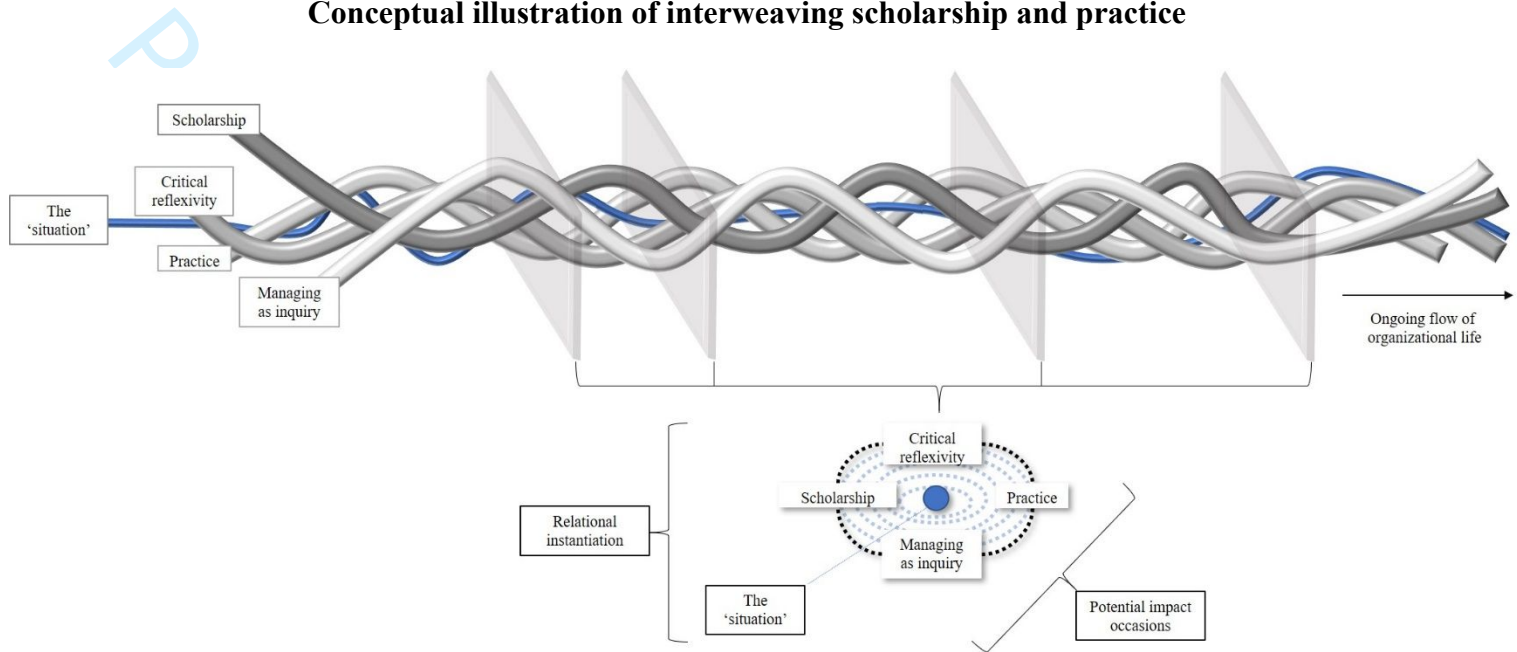


# SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

**Appendix A.**

## TABLE A1
### DBA program content

| Course module | Purpose/overview | Philosophy/Pedagogy |
|---|---|---|
| The Doctoral Practitioner | Introduction to the program and the development so scholarly practice. | Critical action learning. |
| Change and Crisis Management | Context setting. | Critical action learning. |
| Knowledge Creation | Philosophy of knowledge. | Critical action learning. |
| Management Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods | Methods and methodology. | Critical action learning. |
| Leadership and Community | Leadership and leadership development. | Critical action learning. |
| Action Research and the AR thesis | The philosophy and operation of action research. | Action research |
| Complex Adaptive Systems* | Debates in theory and practice. | Action research |
| Decision Making with Risk and Uncertainty* | Debates in theory and practice. | Action research |
| Ethics, Sustainability and Social Impact* | Debates in theory and practice. | Action research |
| 2 x 3-day residencies | Optional residencies. (Can replace any of the modules marked with an asterisk) | Collaborative work and experience-sharing. |

| Doctoral Development Plan | Reflective on development as a doctoral researcher and practitioner. | Developing reflexivity. Progress to thesis stage assessed. |
| Action Research Thesis | Research intervention and reporting. | Scholar practitioner development. |

**Appendix B: Interview schedule**

1. Tell me about your work

2. Some reflections on your time on the DBA - what do you consider to have had, from those studies, the most impact on your professional practice?

3. What was your doctoral thesis about?

4. Have you moved on your thesis project since you completed?

5. We are interested how people work with wicked problems, these complex problems that defy simple definitions and people can't even agree on what the issue is where finding a solution is not straightforward. These are the sort of problems where we think scholarship may add to the repertoire of professional managers, so when you think of those sorts of wicked problems, looking beyond your thesis and thinking of the skills and capabilities you developed how has that aspect of the DBA experience influenced how you have dealt with the wicked problems that you have encountered post-graduation?

6. In this study we are exploring what use is made of different categories of evidence, and what stops it from happening, so taking literature as the first one, for sure conducting a thorough literature review as you did in the thesis work, I would imagine that won't be possible in most settings but is there any sense in which you could say, good research becomes accessible or, even if it is in the form of executive summaries, is there any rout that you have encountered that gets good research into your in-tray?

7. Do you find your reading of such literature is different in any way that it was before, is it more critical I guess, have you noticed that or any other difference in how you use the material?

8. The next category of evidence was critical reflective analysis, is that practice of critical reflection and reflexivity something that is just happening for you now in your practice or do you have to consciously work at it?

9. The next category which is perhaps most explicit in the thesis is the original findings you come up with by following certain methods of data collection and analysis so you tried to gather original data or information in a rigorous way and you have tried to handle it in a rigorous way, is that forming any part of your management practice?

10. Wrapping up this first conversation, you have a sense of what we are trying to do, to explore some of the core capabilities we tried to foster on the program. A core capability of working with literature and method to generate original evidence and a capability of reflective analysis, are there other capabilities that you feel were developed through the program that we haven't touched on here?

11. In drawing our conversation to a close, I would like you to reflect on your identity and management practice post-DBA, for example, if we consider the idea of the 'scholar-practitioner', how do you define yourself and relate to this?

### Appendix C: Diary proforma

**Scholarly Practice Diary**
We would like to find out about how you engage with research and scholarship in your day-to-day practice and especially when you are dealing with wicked problems – those issues that do not have an obvious solution and might appear intractable. You may be aware of the influence of scholarship as you engage in your practice or it may be implicit in what you do and we would like you to use examples of both if possible.

<u>**Date of entry:**</u>

1. **The management issue/ problem**
   What was the issue/ problem you were dealing with? Give a description in the box below, please be as detailed as possible. Pease consider: Is it a wicked issue or not, why do you think so? How long have you been working through this issue/ problem?

   |  |
   |---|
   |  |

2. In the box below, **record the type of evidence, research or cognitive insight that influenced your practice**. There are 4 types of evidence and 4 related types of scholarship practice, these are described in the first two columns. In column 3, please describe what happened in each case and, if possible, how the evidence and/or your own scholarship affected the practice and the outcomes. In column 4, please reflect on why you engaged in this practice, e.g. did you actively seek literature or did it happen serendipitously?

| Management evidence category | Associated scholarship practice | What happened? What were the outcomes? | What prompted this engagement? (e.g. by chance or intentional, why?) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Using good quality scientific evidence. e.g. a research paper or report | Critical reading and synthesis of academic studies. |  |  |
| Using practitioner judgement. e.g. your own experience; discussing with colleagues | Critical reflexive analysis of managerial action. e.g. on your own or with others in a formal or informal setting |  |  |
| Understanding the managerial context | Evaluation of organizational evidence e.g. carrying out your own formal or informal research in the organization |  |  |

| Using insights from different stakeholders | Conducting research to generate evidence from stakeholders | | |
|---|---|---|---|

3. Please use this space 'free flow' to add additional thoughts/ reflections you think are relevant: