

The Rise of the Executive-Scholar

More executives are deciding that an MBA may not give them all the skills they need to tackle the intricate web of interrelated problems that businesses face today. Many view a doctoral degree in business as their path to a deeper understanding of business problems and the research skills required to solve them.

The model of executive doctoral education has long been the norm in French *écoles* and other business schools in Europe. However, its prevalence is now growing in other regions in the world. In Latin America, for instance, regional and global trends have pushed many corporations in both private and public sectors to send their high- and mid-level managers to pursue their doctorates. Fernando D'Alessio of CENTRUM Católica notes that the school's DBA program was designed to be both flexible and in-depth to meet the needs of the working professional.

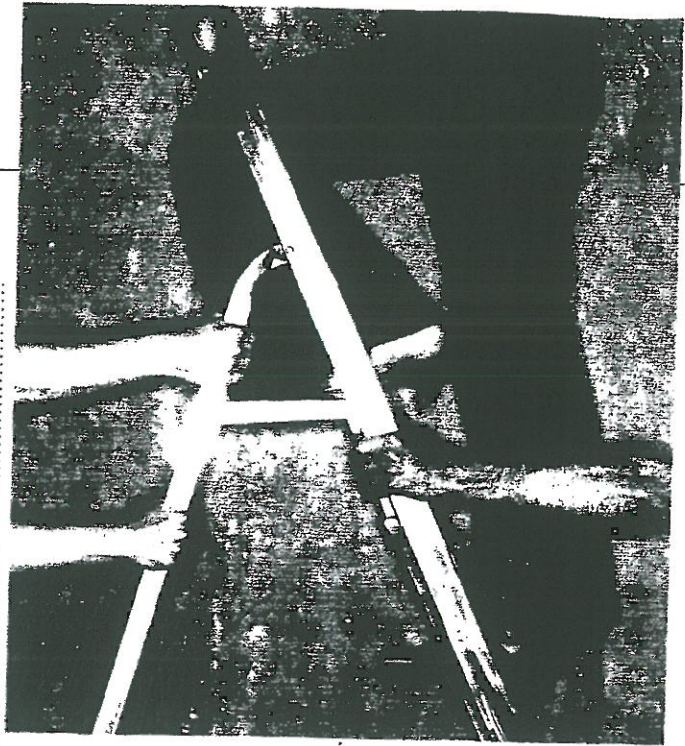
In the European market, where more people are earning their bachelor's and master's degrees, the doctorate is seen as the big credential to add to their resumes, says Marko Pahor of the University of Ljubljana. "The pool of candidates is increasing,

as the doctoral degree becomes an important signal of differentiation in the labor market."

Demand for programs aimed at the executive-scholar is growing, says Neal Mero of Kennesaw State University. His school received 400 inquiries to fill 15 spots in its DBA program. "Why aren't there more programs in the U.S. that allow professionals to pursue quality doctorate degrees?" he asks. "There is clearly demand for it, and the business community is telling us that students trained to conduct research can add value to their organizations."

By staying wedded to the traditional PhD model, many business schools don't provide an option for professionals who aren't going to give up their careers to attend a full-time residency PhD program. It's a "sweet spot" in the market, says Mero, that many business schools have yet to tap.

Eon Smit, director of the University of Stellenbosch Business School, agrees that executives comprise a growing segment of students pursuing doctoral qualifications. "Of particular interest," he says, "is that large conglomerates, like South African national electric-



ity supplier ESKOM, now enter cohorts of senior managers to participate in our doctoral program as part of their information management strategy."

Because executives often pursue their doctorates while working full-time, they do not provide the advantage of traditional PhD students: research assistance to faculty. That may concern some professors who rely on the help of doctoral students to conduct research. But faculty should not underestimate the power of executives' connections, says Bo Carlsson of Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management. By working with executive-scholars, faculty may have access to thousands of data points within their students' companies—and a wealth of opportunities for their own scholar-

ship. "This is an exciting set of individuals whose perspectives and competencies may fall outside our individual disciplines," says Carlsson. "We can learn a lot from them."

The trend toward executive scholarship promises to come full circle, say these educators. Not only are more companies choosing to send their executives to receive doctoral education—more are hiring academically qualified business PhDs who are trained to make sense of the deluge of information business generates every day. That means that business schools with robust doctoral programs will be ideally positioned to assist these companies in their hiring. More and more, even traditionally trained PhDs may have a host of career options not just in academia, but in industry.