

Why we Need Experts not Managers as Leaders: The Case Against Professionalizing Management Education

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Abstract

The call to professionalize management education has re-emerged since the financial crisis of 2008. With a particular focus on leadership, this paper questions the wisdom of that call. It argues that a leader first needs a deep understanding -- expert knowledge -- of the core business of the organization, holding constant managerial abilities. I demonstrate the significance of expert knowledge *within business schools themselves*, the very home of management education. The best schools are led by the best experts – i.e. distinguished scholars. I argue that management, unlike law or medicine, exists to support the core business not *be* the core business, and I conclude with a call for business schools to develop situation-specific management education.

Key words: Leadership, professionalizing managers, expert knowledge, business schools, deans, management education.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of leaders is an attractive subject for MBA students and executive-education program directors. It is less desirable to mainstream business school faculty. Over the last twenty years, leadership research has lost its shine (Khurana 2002).

This was the topic of a recent discussion I had with the dean of a top US business school. The dean summarized his school's approach to leadership research and teaching which had been the focus of an away-day. He then went on to explain the leadership training that a major investment bank had recently adopted. After some minutes I asked who got selected onto these schemes; do they pick the best investment bankers in the company or are they individuals who stopped investment banking early to go into management? He seemed surprised by the question.

Is it possible that work on leadership has struggled partially because too much emphasis has been placed on management? In this paper, I will argue that a leader should first be an expert in the core business of their organization, holding constant leadership and management skills. This approach diverges from current calls for management education to be professionalized (Giacalone, 2007; Khurana, 2007; Khurana & Nohria, 2008; Smith, 2007). It has been suggested (Khurana & Nohria, 2008) that some of the recent economic troubles may have been averted if managers had followed a professional code. In contrast, I will argue that part of the problem may have stemmed from the over promotion of professional managers -- that the lack of expert knowledge at the top of organizations may instead have contributed to their failure. Unlike law or medicine, management is not intrinsically a core business function, and, therefore, it is difficult to see how it could become a full profession. Importantly, as I will show, *even in the place we teach management education, it is experts who lead our top business schools.*

This paper is both conceptual and empirical. In the first section I will raise arguments that question the call for professionalizing management education – following a line of distinguished skeptics. Next I will present a simple correlation that demonstrates the significance of expert knowledge in business schools, the home of MBAs. The data will show that schools ranked highly in an international league table are led, on average, by individuals who have excelled in the core business of their organizations – namely scholarship. The top 100 business schools are identified using the Financial Times (FT) Global MBA ranking (2005). To determine a leader's level of expert knowledge, the one hundred deans' lifetime citations are counted. The same pattern is found, using a different performance measure, among UK business and management schools.

Drawing from interviews with university and business school heads, I go on to briefly address the question of why expert leaders might be preferable in business schools¹. Four

¹ This empirical work builds on two earlier studies: the first looks at the leaders of the world's top-100 universities. It shows that universities higher in a global ranking are led by presidents who are more distinguished researchers (Goodall 2006). The second study establishes a relationship between hiring scholar-leaders and improved research productivity a number of years later (Goodall 2009a,b) – suggestive of a causal association between expert-leaders and organizational performance.

possible explanations for the empirical patterns are raised. First, a noted scholar may have a deep understanding of the core business, that of research and teaching. It is suggested that this will shape the way in which a dean leads a business school. Second, a leader sets the quality threshold for their organization, and a scholar-leader will demand higher academic standards. Third, a dean who is a distinguished scholar will likely have greater credibility among their academic peers. Credibility enhances a leader's power and influence. Finally, the appointment of a scholar-leader sends a signal about the institution's priorities to internal and external stakeholders.

In the last section of the paper I will suggest that 'relevant' context-specific management education could come in the form of programs that are tailored to the requirements of different industries; they should be less generic than current MBAs, and be offered in smaller chunks -- little but often.

WHY IT'S *NOT* TIME TO MAKE MANAGEMENT A TRUE PROFESSION

The call to professionalize management has reemerged since the financial crash. In an article in *Harvard Business Review* (*It's Time to Make Management a True Profession*, HBR October 2008) by Rakesh Khurana and Nitin Nohria, it is suggested that professionalizing management will mark its coming of age, and, importantly, the authors argue that a rigorous code of ethics will raise standards. Others, such as Angel Cabrera, president of the Thunderbird School of Global Management, have supported the call.

Few will complain about efforts to improve the moral conduct of managers, in light of recent global events, albeit that enforcement of a code may be difficult. Many business schools have endorsed the mission of the 'Principles for Responsible Management Education' (PRME) sponsored by the UN, and the idea of a professional code is receiving much attention. There appears to be less debate, however, about the legitimacy of characterizing management as a profession. This seems surprising.

Disagreements about the classification of management as a profession are as long as the field itself². That the debate is still raging is testament to the analysis of Andrew Abbott, who argued in 1988 that if it were possible to make management a profession, it would have been professionalized long ago. Abbott argued that management is a broad church that encompasses many disciplines and a spectrum of ever-changing knowledge. To enforce a code of conduct with rigorous rules of entry and practice, professionalization would require the field of management to be ring-fenced and systematized, which history has shown to be unachievable (Whitley 1984, 1995; Abbott 1988; Kimball 1992). Furthermore, having a degree of autonomy is a distinctive feature of being a professional. This is a necessary condition if ethical codes of practice are to be protected from conflicts of interest that might arise between a professional and the demands of the organizations in which they reside. Managers, on the other hand, are integrated into bureaucracies and cannot by their nature act autonomously (Reed 1989). Thus, the idea that management is akin to a profession seems to misrepresent its purpose.

² For interesting accounts of the arguments, see Abbott 1988; Grey 1997; and Khurana 2008.

To professionalize management education is to promote the idea that management is not situation-specific (Grey 1997). This is misleading. Management might be viewed as the glue that holds organizations together -- the oil and petrol that keeps the car running, but not the car itself. The core business of any institution is, arguably, never management. Professionals, on the other hand, can be best defined as those offering a core business function. Occupations such as medicine, architecture or law require technical expertise of a genuine kind, such that failure to conform to the standards imposed by their professions could lead to loss of life or freedom. These professional enterprises still require management systems and managers in order to operate. Thus the two -- technical expertise and management expertise -- are not interchangeable.

Developing a code of conduct for managers is central to the current appeals to professionalize. Yet as Grey points out, "... by separating management from its context, it is also thereby separated from its moral and political implications" (1997, p. 711).

A further problem associated with professionalizing management that is not situation-specific is that it may lead to the over promotion of managers or non core-business functions. The elevation of managers may, arguably, have contributed to the 2008 financial collapse, because some CEOs lacked the expert knowledge necessary to fully understand the core business of their organizations. To illustrate this it is interesting to consider the case of one CEO, Andy Hornby, the former head of Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS) one of Europe's largest banks

HBOS was rescued from failure by the UK government in October 2008. A key fact is that relatively few years in Hornby's career were spent in banking. Prior to joining HBOS he was the Managing Director of Asda, a British retail grocery business owned by Wal-Mart. Hornby became MD of Asda when he was young -- at the age of 30. He then joined what was the Halifax prior to its merger with the Bank of Scotland, and eventually became CEO of the merged HBOS before he was 40.

After the failure of HBOS, the UK Parliament's Treasury Select Committee publicly interrogated three senior people from the bank. The parliamentarians asked Hornby if he had any banking qualifications. He replied: 'I do not have any formal banking qualifications. I have an MBA from Harvard where I specialized in all the finance courses, including financial services'.³ The former chairman of HBOS, Sir Tom McKillop, also had no banking qualifications and his career was mostly spent in the pharmaceutical industry.

It is unlikely that Hornby had expert knowledge of the core business of banking as he was in the sector for a small number of years -- he was only 38 years old when he became CEO -- and he had no banking qualifications. His comments to the Treasury Committee implied that he had a rite of passage in part because of his MBA. Hornby may have made mistakes but it is unlikely that he is an immoral person or a criminal (some might

³ Minutes of Evidence taken before House of Commons Treasury Committee on the banking crisis, Tuesday 10 February 2009 available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtreasy/317/1103001.htm>

disagree). Would a professionalized MBA accompanied by a version of the Hippocratic Oath have changed the way Hornby managed and led HBOS? Is it not possible that he was over promoted, and ‘under knowledgeable’ about the organization’s core business.

This is a single example only; however, in interviews with a small number of senior executives in British banks I have discovered that this view -- that some CEOs lacked the knowledge to fully understand what was going on in their banks -- is common⁴. Because of the complexity of large banks, it could be argued that an excellent manager, who may be a polymath, is what is needed. However, a CEO who lacks a deep understanding of the core business may be less able to predict where problems might arise, or deal with the crisis once it happens.

A final possible criticism of professionalization is raised by Khurana and Nohria when they ask, ‘will professionalism choke creativity?’ This point is central to the arguments made later about expert leaders. First, the authors ponder whether ‘we might choke off the creative genius of people like Bill Gates and Sam Walton, who were unschooled in management but have had more impact on economic progress than the vast majority of professional managers’ (p. 74). Khurana and Nohria answer their question by surmising that Gates and Walton could have ‘... complemented their entrepreneurial talents with professional management training’. However, it is difficult to imagine when these entrepreneurs would have completed their one or two year professional MBA. Before they made their discoveries (Gates famously left his university early), or maybe after they built their empires?

Steve Jobs, the co-founder and CEO of Apple is an entrepreneur, but, importantly, he is a technical expert. His business was and is driven by technical expertise. Arguably Jobs learned management and leadership later, and quite adequately as history has shown. A technical expert, or a professional such as a lawyer or architect, or academic, has little incentive to withdraw from their field for long periods of time, because it will hurt their main business pursuits and have a negative impact on their professional reputation (Goodall 2009b).

Finally, Khurana and Nohria review the many benefits that came to the field of medicine post professionalization. Medicine is an interesting example. In the past, hospitals were routinely led by doctors. That has changed. Currently most hospitals in the US and the UK are led by professional managers – not MDs. However, there are moves afoot in both countries, and beyond, to encourage physicians to become leaders, in the belief that hospital performance is improved when medics are CEOs (Falcone & Satiani, 2008; Darzi, 2009; Falcone & Satiani, 2008). A number of the very top hospitals openly promote clinician-leadership (Stoller et al., 2007) and in a working paper it has been shown that the best American hospitals are more likely to be led by physicians than managers⁵ (Goodall, 2010). Access to management programs designed specifically for

⁴ This data is included in a paper currently being written up. Interviewees have asked to remain anonymous.

⁵ Using US News and World Report ‘Best Hospitals’ data, the top 100 hospitals in three specialties are ranked and each hospital CEO is identified and classified as a ‘physician’ or ‘non-physician manager’. The

physicians and as part of general medical training have also become more common (Chaudry, 2008; Stoller, 2009).

The case of medicine serves to emphasize the point that management should exist to *support the core business*. Questions arise about organizational performance when managers take the lead, especially in institutions that are knowledge intensive such as in health care. The educational implications for business schools are discussed in the final section of the paper. Next the case of business schools is examined empirically.

THE CASE OF BUSINESS SCHOOL DEANS

Because of the academic and applied nature of business schools, the issue of whether to hire a non-academic dean from the business community is regularly discussed. In principle, every Dean Search Committee grapples with this question. Schools of medicine, law and business do have similarities, because they straddle the two communities of research and practice, unlike traditional academic departments. There are always a small number of non-academics acting as business school heads, but with rare exceptions (e.g. Robert L Joss at Stanford GSB) these kinds of hires often prove unsuccessful. At London Business School there is a recent example of a short-lived non-academic dean. Robin Buchanan, a management consultant, was dean of LBS for only 16 months. An academic then took over, and Buchanan was offered a newly created post of president, a position he also held for only a number of months.

Comments on this topic from three business school deans interviewed for this study are interesting:

“The primary business of a business school is the same as a university – teaching and research, and administration. But with a business school there are another two objectives. First, to have credibility with the profession and have a high external profile amongst the business world, and second, to facilitate a twin-track of publishing – academic journals and also applied publications.”

On the topic of whether non-academics should be hired, one dean was strongly opposed:

“Deans from industry are a disaster. I have seen much money burned through top-down attempts to lead faculty ... Unfortunately most MBA students want Jack Welch to be dean.”

“But one former dean of the school came from a consulting firm. For the academics to accept him the school had to introduce a new academic post of deputy dean – a system that is now the norm throughout most business schools. He was considered a good dean because he came from a consulting firm where the system was similar to managing and leading faculty - leading by mutual consent, building consensus within an organization not top down. Also they have a similar promotional structure.”

higher the hospital is in the ranking, the more likely it is to be led by a physician. The cross-sectional findings are statistically significant – and continue to be after controlling for hospital size..

A similar opinion was expressed by a former business school dean:

“Business people should not lead academic business schools. It is rarely successful. There are exceptions of course, for example Wharton was once led by a former consultant. Being from a professional service firm meant that he had a better understanding of the culture than someone from another part of the business sector. But he did not get involved in any academic decisions – they were taken by a deputy dean. In my experience, business people are usually terrible teachers and they are weak speakers.”

As suggested, the publications from business schools are expected to be both scholarly and relevant to the ‘real world’. Many scholars complain that management education continues to fail the relevance test because of factors such as being overly-scientific and producing MBA courses that are only partially useful to practicing managers (Dossabhoy & Berger, 2002; Stiles 2002, March, 2003; Mintzberg, 2004; Gosling & Mintzberg, 2004; Bennis, & O’Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; Zell, 2005; Khurana, 2007). This issue is arguably viewed as *the* major challenge for the field. Additional pressures on business school faculty come from the myriad of academic rankings which rate the quantity of articles in particular journals relative to article quality and relevance (Adler & Harzing 2009). Interestingly, Rubin and Dierdorff (2009) show that MBA programs housed in research intensive universities that provide doctoral training are likely to offer more relevant coursework when compared to institutions that offer only masters. The authors identified the managerial competencies that incumbent managers prioritize and mapped them against MBA programs offered in 373 business schools.

The overwhelming majority of business school faculty, staff, and board members I have talked to about my business school findings said they would not expect to find a relationship between a business school dean’s research success and the position of their school in an international ranking. A common argument takes the form: what the leader needs is primarily high managerial ability allied merely to some acceptable minimum level of technical ability. By contrast, what the data suggest is a fairly smooth relationship between research success and business school quality. In other words, the best schools show a preference empirically for employing an expert not just a manager.

METHOD

Expert Knowledge -- Citations Data on Deans

The primary mission of business schools is research and teaching. The MBA is normally the most expensive offering in a university (or stand alone school) and this is reflected in the attention paid to teaching quality. Nevertheless, tenure and promotion in a business school is gained through research and publishing, like most other academic departments. Thus, despite the somewhat more complex nature of applied schools, the core business remains that of generating ideas and disseminating them through publishing and teaching.

Academe is an interesting setting because a leader's technical ability can be measured reasonably objectively using research citations. The process of building academic knowledge is done in large part by referencing important work that has gone before. The citing of those earlier contributions is the cornerstone of academic research and 'the major determinant of reputation -- what is rewarded in this particular academic reputational market -- is the interest that a scholar's work generates among his/her peers' (Hamermesh 2009, p. 25).

Citation counts are a good predictor for academics' salaries (Hamermesh et al, 1982, Hamermesh 2009), and of Nobel Prize winners (Garfield & Welljams-Dorof 1992). Importantly, for the purposes of this study, most authors who use bibliometrics agree that citations are a fair measure of research success over a scholar's entire career⁶. An alternative approach is to count an author's published articles and weight by journal impact factors. However, this presents problems. First, the quality of a journal is a noisy measure of the future impact of individual articles (Starbuck 2005, Oswald 2006). For example, many highly cited papers were not published in 'Grade A' journals and vice versa. Also, journal rankings change over the years, and, what is more, rankings are usually generated through citations. Thus, citation scores are used here as a measure of how research-active and successful a dean has been in his or her academic career.

Most academics that go into administrative positions reduce their research output. This depends, somewhat, on their discipline.

The new data generated in this study establish that business school deans accumulate the overwhelming majority (approximately 90-95%) of their citations before they become institutional leaders. The international sample covers 100 deans, two of whom are acting-heads. Their scholarly backgrounds are exclusively in the social sciences. This is important because to compare across disciplines -- for example, to contrast the lifetime citations of a biologist with an economist or historian -- the different individuals' citations must be normalized. However, because of the disciplinary homogeneity across deans in this dataset, there is no need here to normalize citations. Therefore, I have used hand-counted bibliometric data. Citations to both journal articles and monographs have been counted. Data on the 100 deans were collected between June and July 2005, and only those deans in post during this period are included in the analysis⁷.

Citation information used in this study comes from the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), which is an on-line database comprising the Science Citation Index, Social Science Citation Index and the Arts and Humanities Citation Index. The other more recent source available for totaling citations is Google Scholar which is viewed as being less reliable because it picks up citations from unpublished papers as well as published ones. ISI only counts citations from published peer reviewed work.

⁶ For an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of using bibliometric data, see van Raan (1998, 2003), Norris and Oppenheim (2003) & Goodall (2009).

⁷ With the exception of one dean who was appointed two months after this period.

Financial Times Global MBA Ranking

Media-generated university league tables are ever-present and sometimes controversial. They may be helpful to students as heuristic devices, but as objective tools of quality assessment they can be unreliable. Rankings also exclude factors such as an institution's history, reputation and wealth. However, it could be argued that because business schools are relatively new additions to the academy, and they are small in comparison to universities, there is a greater possibility of movement within league tables or other performance measures⁸.

The Financial Times produces one of the more methodologically consistent league tables. The ranking began as a European survey of 49 business schools in 1998 and developed into a worldwide league table of 75 schools in 2000. The FT extended this number to 100 in 2001. I am using the 2005 Financial Times MBA ranking in this study⁹ (see Appendix 1 for list of 100 business schools).

To construct its 2005 table, the FT assigned 55% of weight to alumni survey returns, relying for this on criteria such as alumni salary and career progress. Twenty-five percent was put on business school characteristics -- for example, measuring diversity of staff and students, and the extent to which a school is internationally recognized. A final 20% was allocated for research quality: here 5% weight was for having faculty with PhDs; 5% weight on the number of doctoral grads taking a faculty position at one of the world's top-50 business schools; and 10% weight for the number of articles in 40 named academic journals.

The FT ranks institutions by assigning points; therefore, this can result in two or more institutions being given the same position.

Location of the 100 Business Schools

Of the business schools in the FT MBA ranking (2005), sixty-five of the one hundred are located in North America. Fifty-eight of these are in the United States (US), which is where most early business schools were first established. Seven schools are located further north in Canada. There are 26 schools in European countries. Of these the majority, 14, are located in the United Kingdom (UK). Three schools in the top-100 are in France and there is the same number in Spain. Ireland has 2 business schools in the FT table, and there is one each in Switzerland, Netherlands, Italy and Belgium.

Nine of the top-100 schools are spread across the rest of the world. There are 2 business schools each in Australia, Hong Kong and Mexico. Brazil, China, and South Africa each have one school in the FT ranking.

⁸ The Ecole Supérieure de Commerce of Paris (now ESCP-EAP) established in 1819, is said to be the first free-standing business school, and The Wharton School, founded in 1881 was the first School formed by a research university – the University of Pennsylvania. However, most business schools were established in the last 50 years.

⁹ Available from: www.rankings.ft.com

Deans of the Top-100 Business Schools

Only 11 deans in the FT Top-100 are women. Six of these are located in US schools, 3 in the UK, and one each in Canada and Brazil.

With regards to deans' backgrounds, 9 of the 100 have come from the business sector and not from academia, though two of the 9 have PhDs. Most of the business school leaders in the sample have had traditional academic careers. Over a quarter of deans define themselves as professors of management, business administration, strategy or entrepreneurship. In addition, there are 18 economists, 13 are from finance and 6 from accounting. Marketing professors account for 7, organizational behavior and industrial relations 6, and finally 7 in operations and information management, operational research and risk management.

Four deans running the FT 100 schools are Highly Cited (those, approximately, in the top-250 of their field), at Harvard, Wharton, Columbia and Warwick business schools¹⁰. Of interest and relevance to the claims in this book is that three of the Highly Cited deans run schools ranked in the FT table at positions 1, 2 and 3.

RESULTS

The individual lifetime citation scores of the 100 deans in this study lie in the range 0 – 3378. The figures presented in Table 1 show the distribution of citations. In this group of deans, the mean citation score is 355 and the median score is 103. There are three deans with scores of over 2500 lifetime citations. Twenty deans have a citation score of zero. It is useful to begin by splitting the group of deans in half.

Among those who run the world's top-fifty business schools, the deans' mean citation score is 447 and the median is 183. The mean citation score of the next 50 deans is 263 and the median is 52. These data are presented as averages in Figure 1. The bar chart shows that deans running business schools in the top half of the FT table collectively have just under double the citations of those running schools positioned in the second fifty group.

The next test is to try to establish whether the relationship shown in Figure 1 is statistically reliable. To do this, I use a calculation of Pearson's correlation coefficient (r)¹¹ where each dean's citation score is regressed against the position of their school, to try to establish whether there is a significant correlation between the position of a school in the FT table and the citation score of a dean. The results, presented in column (1) in

¹⁰ Patrick Harker at Wharton School and Kim Clark at Harvard have since moved on to become university presidents.

¹¹ The first test I apply is a calculation of Spearman's rho. It tests whether the ordering of one variable (the position of a business school) is correlated with the ordering of the second variable (a dean's life-time citations). The highest citation score is ranked 1 and the lowest is ranked 100. Using these data, Spearman's rho is 0.274. With 100 observations, the associated 5 per cent critical value for a two-tailed test is 0.195, and at 1 per cent it is 0.254. Hence the correlation between leader's rank and school's rank is statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

Table 2, establish statistical significance at conventional confidence levels; the position of a business school in the FT MBA ranking is associated with the number of lifetime citations accrued by its dean. Among these 100 deans there are three individuals with very high levels of citations. To check that the results presented here are not being driven by these outliers, I repeat the tests to without them. When the three outliers are removed from the data the correlation is in fact strengthened¹². This shows that the highly cited leaders are not overly influencing the results.

Isolating the Fifty-Eight US Business Schools

American business schools dominate the FT MBA ranking -- 58 are located there. In the top-20 group, 15 are American. US leaders have higher average lifetime citations than those heading schools in other parts of the world. The mean lifetime citation score of the fifty-eight US deans is 449 and the median score is 210. Therefore, US business schools are selecting, on average, heads who are more established scholars. Statistical results are presented in column (2) of Table 2. When Pearson's r is applied to the US group, we find the correlation is again statistically significant.

These tests show that among the whole group of business schools, the higher a school is in the league table, the more distinguished is its dean as a scholar. *On average, as an empirical association, 600 extra citations, at the mean values, moves a school from the bottom of the FT 100 ranking to the top.* The correlation holds for the full group of 100 deans and also for the sub-sample of 58 US deans.

Interestingly, when the Pearson's test is applied to the group of 43 non-American institutions only, there is no statistically significant correlation (see column (3) in Table 2). This non-US result -- or more strictly non-result -- raises a number of questions. Could it be a reflection of bias of English language or US journal publishing? Or do the top US business schools perhaps favor scholar-leaders more than the non-US institutions? It is not feasible to answer all these questions here. But it is possible to isolate a single country from the 100 sample and run the same test to identify whether a similar pattern exists, thereby creating another opportunity to check these findings.

Does the Same Correlation Hold in Different Data on a Sub-Sample of UK Business Schools?

After the United States, the United Kingdom, with 14, has the second-highest number of business schools in the FT Top-100 table in the year of my data. By isolating UK B-Schools, I can test whether a similar correlation exists in another dataset. The UK seems an appropriate nation to focus on because language parity with the US means that publishing and citations biases will be somewhat minimized. Also, the UK has a potentially useful objective measure of quality, namely the so-called Research Assessment Exercise. The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was set up by the UK

¹² Pearson's r increases to 0.351, which is now significant at $p < 0.001$. When the same test is applied, but this time to the logarithm of deans' citations, Pearson's r is 0.275 which is significant at $p < 0.01$.

Government in 1986 to assess, with the aid of expert peer review, the quality and quantity of research being generated in UK universities.

The RAE Unit of Assessment (UoA) for business school submissions is 'Business and Management Studies'¹³. The year used is 2001, which was the last time the RAE assessment panels reported. Each submission is of a whole university department¹⁴. I have included 38 business school RAE submissions in this test. Thirty-six of the 38 schools are located within comprehensive universities. Only two are stand-alone business schools.

The next step is to examine whether a similar correlation exists between the 38 UK business schools (or units of assessment) and the research history of those deans in place in 2001. Again the lifetime citations of the 38 leaders were counted. There is no official RAE league table, so I have used each institution's result to rank the position of their school. For example, London Business School, that achieved the highest RAE grade, is ranked 1; the two schools that received the second highest ratings, Lancaster Business School and Warwick Business School are ranked 2; and so on down to those schools rated lowest in the RAE scores included here.

The maximum recorded number of lifetime citations of a dean in this sample of 38 British schools is 1600 and the minimum is zero. The mean citation score of heads of submissions rated most highly in the RAE (graded in the 5s) is 379, and the mean citation score of those less highly graded (in the 4s) is 150. This implies that deans running departments in the former group are two-and-a-half times more cited than those in the second column of departments that scored in the 4s. This can be seen in Figure 2. Once again, a correlation exists in a second sample of deans and business schools.

When the relationship between a school's RAE success and its dean's level of citations is scrutinized statistically (using Pearson's correlation coefficient), the results reveal a significant correlation (see column (4) in Table 2). Specifically, an increase of 65 citations obtained by a dean is associated, in the cross-section, with a one-point move up in the RAE for a UK business school¹⁵.

¹³ RAE results available at www.hero.ac.uk/rae/Results/. For a review of UK management submissions to RAE 2001 see Bessant et al. (2003), and for a review of the journals cited in the business and management submissions in RAE see Bence & Oppenheim (2004) and Geary, Marriott & Rowlinson (2004).

¹⁴ Only those units of assessment that achieved a score above 4D in the 2001 RAE are included here. RAE scores range from '5A Star' at the very top end with the 'A' signifying that all staff in the field of business in a given university have been submitted for assessment. The scores go down to 1E, at the very lowest level, where E signifies that very few staff were submitted. The reason in the present study for drawing a line at RAE grade 4 is because a quality-threshold allows comparison with schools in the FT Top-100 (2005). Of the UK business schools that made it into the FT ranking in the equivalent RAE year of 2001, the lowest RAE grade of a UK school included was 4D. In 2001 there were 38 units of assessment in Business and Management Studies in UK universities rated 4D and above.

¹⁵ The correlations are robust to the exclusion of outliers. This was also the case with a logarithmic transformation of the variables.

In this paper, evidence is offered of a sort not previously documented in the research literature. It is shown that the better business schools are headed by more established scholars. The relationship is found among the international group of 100 business schools, it is repeated in the sub-sample of 58 US schools, and, in a different dataset, found too for 38 UK university business schools in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise.

DISCUSSION

The performance of a business school has not been shown here to be causally linked to the actions of a dean, whether highly cited or not. It may be that top business schools are more likely to seek out leaders with a strong publishing record -- a kind of reverse causality. A school becomes famous and then it can hire a top dean, and the best schools may be more attractive to better scholars. In a longitudinal study incorporating lags (Goodall 2009a&b) it has been shown that universities that improved the most in the UK's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) were more likely to have been led, some years earlier, by outstanding scholars. The three institutions that are shown in the study to have moved the most in the RAE were not, at the start of the study, among the most prestigious UK universities¹⁶.

Arguably, the best institutions have the widest choice of candidates. That they tend on average to hire scholar-leaders is interesting. Maybe these schools select top scholars because the hiring boards believe the performance of their business school will be maintained or improved.

It might seem plausible that candidates' research records play a part in their selection for headship of institutions with prominent research missions. But it is also conceivable that selection committees choose almost randomly across candidates' scholarly ability. Perhaps no decision is ever consciously made to select an accomplished scholar.

Who gets hired to the position of dean of a business school may be a factor of the universities that house them. Schools within universities that have a strong research focus may be more likely to conform to this culture by selecting a dean who is a distinguished academic (Bennis & O'Toole 2005). Among my sample of interviewees, Patrick Harker at the Wharton School and Kim Clark at Harvard Business School are good examples. Both are among the most cited in my sample of deans. Similarly, a leader who is a top researcher may select other top researchers into leadership positions.

The promotion of expert leaders should not mean the demotion of management proficiency. Scholarship is not a proxy for either management experience or leadership skills. In business schools, most academics in senior leadership positions have first gained management experience, by running research centers or heading up academic programs. Furthermore, in order to acquire management experience within academe, for example as a head of department, it is usually necessary to be a senior tenured academic

¹⁶ The top three universities that moved the most in the UK's Research Assessment between 1992-2001 in the longitudinal study Goodall (2009a&b), are Bristol, Cardiff and Southampton.

– positions acquired through publishing research and teaching. Thus scholarship is already a prerequisite of leadership in business schools.

These findings suggest that business schools at the top of the FT-100 ranking are behaving differently from those lower down. Better scholars are leading better business schools. As suggested, the results presented here are only cross-sectional; however, an earlier longitudinal study links improved university performance with scholar-leaders.

Why Might it Matter if a Dean has been a Distinguished Researcher?

Interviews were conducted with deans and university presidents to try to understand why, in the context of business schools, expert leaders may have a greater impact (see Table 3 for list of interviewees). Four possible explanations were raised¹⁷.

Credibility was the most common assertion made by interviewees. It was suggested that, in the context of a business school, an accomplished scholar communicates his or her credibility, and specifically, that he or she shares the same value system and priorities as those who are being led. This approach focuses on the social interactions between leaders and their followers (Bass 1985, Bennis & Nanus 1985). As suggested by one leader, credibility legitimizes authority.

“You have to know the game; if not you lack credibility. Being a distinguished researcher gives you legitimacy in either a business school or a university. And legitimacy gives you authority as a leader.”

Arguably, credibility and respect must in the long run be earned through a leader’s performance.

Being a top scholar provides a leader with a deep understanding or expert knowledge about the core business of universities, which informs a dean’s decision-making and strategic priorities. This was a second possible reason that was raised by interviewees. Expert knowledge about research and teaching has been learned throughout a scholar’s life, and this inherent knowledge may influence a leader’s preferences and strategies. This approach is evocative of Hambrick & Mason’s (1984) Upper Echelons Theory. UE theory argues that top managers make strategic choices that are reflections of their own values and cognitions and that members of the top management team will be influenced in their decision-making by individual and group demographic factors (such as age, education, functional track, TMT heterogeneity among others).

The third common theme raised by deans and university presidents was about establishing organizational standards. It is the dean’s responsibility to determine the quality threshold, or academic standards, in their business school. But, it was argued, if you have not originally met that standard yourself, this may be difficult to enforce.

One business school dean makes this point succinctly:

¹⁷ In Goodall 2009b extensive interview material is offered.

“Leaders are the final arbiters of quality. Therefore it is right to expect the standard bearer to first bear the standard.”

Finally, it was suggested that hiring a noted scholar to head a business school may send out a signal to internal and also external stakeholders about a school’s priorities. Internally, it conveys a message to faculty that research success in the institution is important. It may also be attractive to students and help with fundraising, alumni relations and general PR. Moreover, a governing body might wish to use the appointment to signal a change in institutional strategy.

Management Education that Supports Core Business

A failing of universities in comparison to many commercial businesses is the lack of good management and leadership training made available to scholars throughout their career. The evidence in this paper suggests that universities should be incentivizing inclusion onto concise management programs for their best research faculty early in their careers. Instead, ascent in the administration is often through a process of self-selection, which may not produce the best candidates.

The problem of attracting the best into management is replicated in other knowledge-intensive organizations, for example in law and architecture practices. In professional service firms, only those who have been successful in a professional capacity (i.e. they have excelled in law, consulting, accounting and so on) will be considered as firm leaders and managers. A key reason is that those with an excellent professional reputation will be more readily accepted by their peers (Maister 1993, Lowendahl 1997, Goodall 2009). Similarly, R&D project leaders tend to be selected for their technical expertise as much as for their leadership skills (Narayanan 2001).

This sentiment is articulated in the comments of the head of a large architecture firm¹⁸:

“To be a director or leader within an architecture practice you have to both maintain your competence as an expert, and importantly, be credible with both your peers and clients. This is difficult, especially when the practice is as big as ours. I think we are only now beginning to address this challenge – of having architects who can both keep up with their professional knowledge and expertise and also lead and manage a large practice.

My peers do not respect me because I am a good manager or leader; they respect me for my skills as an architect.”

Leaders in law firms must first become partners. This is explained by a lawyer in a major UK firm¹⁹.

¹⁸ Peter Oborn is Director of the London Office of Aedas, the fourth largest architecture practice in the world.

¹⁹ Maurice Dwyer is a partner in Wragge and Co., a large UK law firm.

“For a lawyer to become partner he or she has to be extremely good. They have to reach a minimum high standard that usually takes 8-10 years post qualification. Once you have proved your metal as a lawyer and made it to partner, then to become a senior partner you have to first, be interested in going down that route. Second, you have to be a good manager, have people skills and gain the right capabilities.”

“Leading or managing lawyers is like herding cats. You have to be one of them so that you gain their respect and understand the issues lawyers face. Our current leaders were both very successful practice lawyers.”

Situation-Specific Management Education

Are business schools asserting the eminence of MBAs and professional management at a cost of providing appropriate *relevant* management education? Might an alternative model focus instead on producing tailored (and concise) situation-specific (Grey 1997) management courses, for individuals planning to go into, or already working in, the professions, creative industries, high-tech firms, manufacturing, local government and so on? Tailored programs are available in business schools; nevertheless, most MBAs are generic. When an individual is asked what they do, it is rare for them to reply merely that they are a manager. Arguably, it is more common for responses to include mention of the industry type. Yet, in business schools, and in most journal articles, the term ‘manager’ is liberally used as if managers exist, ambiguously, outside of industries, trades or situations.

Management courses require generic material, but the credibility of business schools could be enhanced if we coordinate more closely with different industries and sectors to design courses that are closer to their needs. Also, a one or two year MBA may be suitable for some, but not everybody. As suggested above, for those who must first become experts in their field before any consideration of leadership or management, long courses are unsuitable. Short intense periods of education are preferable; for example, two of the interviewees from professional service firms attended a short Harvard course designed specifically for professionals such as lawyers and architects²⁰. Offering concise tailored courses at regular intervals throughout people’s careers (going beyond executive education) might be the way forward. Interestingly, in our own institutions – universities – rarely are there good quality courses available to educate scholars in management and leadership. Few business schools run short courses targeted at academics. This seems paradoxical.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In this paper I have raised two conceptual issues. I have argued that a leader should first be an expert in the core business of their organization, holding constant leadership and management skills; and, second, I have suggested that we have lost sight of the fact that management processes exist to support the core business, not to *be* the core business.

²⁰ See Appendix 1.

Thus professionalizing management education, for reasons beyond the creation of a codified statement of conduct, is problematic.

The case for professionalizing management or not has been debated since its inception early in the twentieth century. The issue has reemerged because of the recent financial crisis, and the apparently unethical behavior of some corporate managers and CEOs preceding the crash. Professionalizing management, it is suggested, will lead to greater self regulation and more principled behavior. In contrast, I have suggested that part of the failure at the top of financial organizations may have originated from the promotion of managers into leadership positions, where individuals had insufficient core business knowledge. An illustrative example from banking has been raised. Thus, professionalizing management may serve to further advance managerial processes over core business functions. Expert knowledge of the business and sector should, I have argued, be a priority requirement when hiring a head.

Expert leaders require management expertise, but being a good manager alone is not a sufficient condition. To illustrate the key point, I have shown this is the case in business schools, the home of management education. A reason why business schools are an interesting case is that their leaders' technical expertise can be measured objectively. The paper offered evidence that the higher a business school is in the FT Top-100 ranking the higher are the lifetime citations of its dean. In other words, better business schools hire better scholars as their heads. The correlation is found for an international group of 100 business schools, then for 58 US schools, and then, in a different data set, for 38 UK schools in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise.

Finally, I have concluded with the suggestion that business schools might overcome their 'crisis of relevance' if a more situation-specific approach to management education is adopted.

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TABLE 1
Distribution of 100 Deans' Lifetime Citations

	Lifetime citations	Top 50 B-schools	Lower 50 B-schools
Mean	355	447	263
Median	103	183	52

FIGURE 1
Deans in the Top-50 Business Schools as Ranked in the FT MBA League Table (2005) have Higher Lifetime Citations

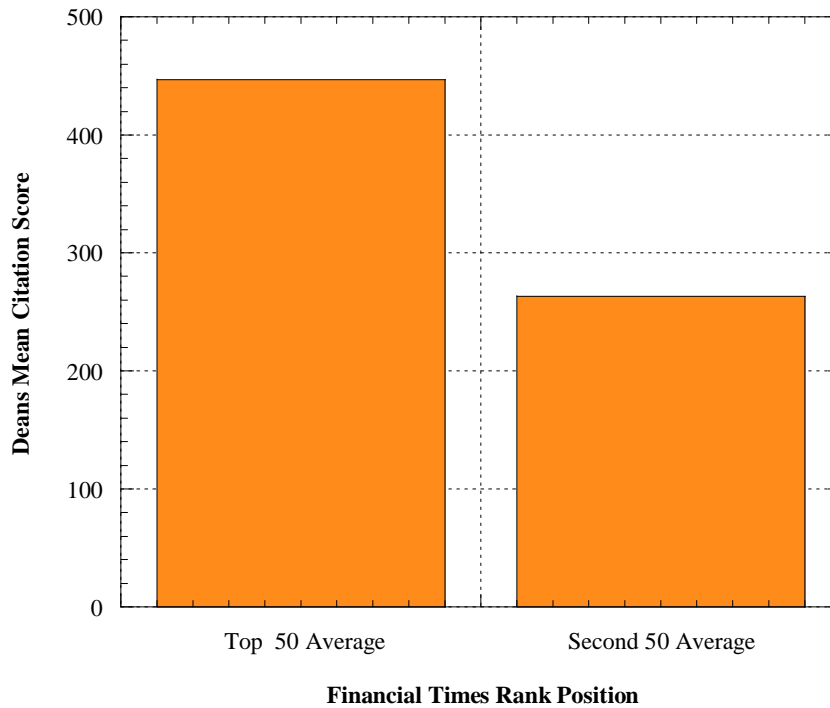


TABLE 2
Results of Cross-Sectional Correlations of Deans' Lifetime Citations by Business School Rank from Four Different Sub-Samples

<i>Pearson's Correlation Coefficient between Lifetime Citations and Rank</i>	(1) Deans of top 100 B-schools (n=100)	(2) US deans (n=58)	(3) Deans from the rest of the world (n=42)	(4) UK Deans and RAE rating (n=38)
	0.288**	0.419***	0.000	0.452**

***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01

FIGURE 2
Deans of UK Business Schools Rated Higher in the UK Research Assessment Exercise (2001) have Higher Lifetime Citations
(n=38)

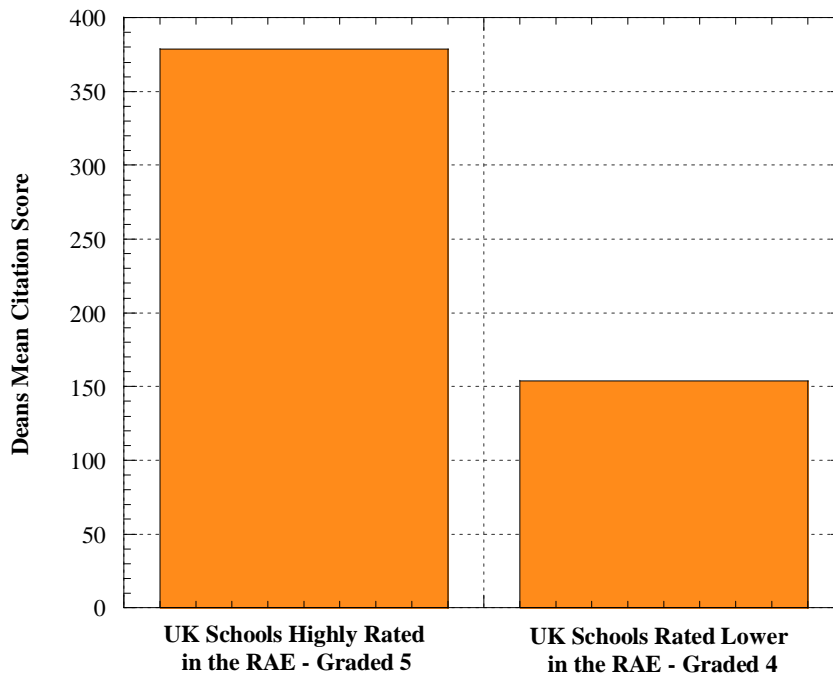


TABLE 3

US Interviews

Derek Bok, Former President, Harvard
Kim Clark, Dean, Harvard Business School
Amy Gutmann, President, U of Pennsylvania
Patrick Harker, Dean, Wharton School
John Heilbron, Former Vice Chancellor Berkeley
Jeremy Knowles, Former Dean, Harvard
Paul Nurse, President, Rockefeller U
Henry Rosovsky, Former Dean, Harvard
David Skorton, President, Cornell
Lawrence Summers, President, Harvard
Shirley Tilghman**, President, Princeton

UK Interviews

George Bain, Former Dean London Business School and
Warwick Business School, and Vice Chancellor, Queen's U, Belfast
Glynis Breakwell, Vice Chancellor, Bath U
Bob Burgess, Vice Chancellor, Leicester U
Yvonne Carter, Dean, Warwick Medical School
Ivor Crewe Vice Chancellor, Essex U
Howard Davies, Director, London School of Economics
Anthony Giddens, Former Director, London School of Economics
Alan Gilbert, President, Manchester U
David Grant, Vice Chancellor, Cardiff U
John Hood, Vice Chancellor, Oxford U
Andrew Pettigrew, Dean, Bath School of Management
Richard Sykes, Rector, Imperial
Eric Thomas, Vice Chancellor, Bristol
Nigel Thrift, Vice Chancellor, Warwick U
Bill Wakeham, Vice Chancellor, Southampton U

Professionals

Maurice Dwyer, Partner, Wragge & Co.
Peter Oborn, Director, London, Aedas
Kieran Poynter, Chairman, London, PriceWaterhouseCoopers
Graham Shuttleworth, Director, London, Nera Economic Consulting

* Interviews took place between 2005 and early 2008.

** I did not interview Shirley Tilghman; instead she was asked questions about my research by the *Princetonian* newspaper.

APPENDIX 1

Sample of 100 Business Schools in the FT MBA Ranking 2005

1	Harvard Business School	49	Michigan State University: Broad
1	University of Pennsylvania: Wharton	52	University of Minnesota: Carlson
3	Columbia Business School	53	Imperial College London: Tanaka
4	Stanford University GSB	53	Warwick Business School
5	London Business School	55	Pennsylvania State: Smeal
6	University of Chicago GSB	55	University of British Columbia: Sauder
7	Dartmouth College: Tuck	57	University of Texas at Austin: McCombs
8	Insead	58	Cranfield School of Management
9	New York University: Stern	58	Virginia Tech: Pamplin
9	Yale School of Management	60	City University: Cass
11	Northwestern University: Kellogg	60	SMU: Cox
12	Iese Business School	60	University of Arizona: Eller
13	IMD	63	Melbourne Business School
13	MIT: Sloan	64	Babson College: Olin
13	UC Berkeley: Haas	64	University of California at Irvine
16	University of Michigan: Ross	66	Arizona State University: Carey
17	U of North Carolina: Kenan-Flagler	66	Thunderbird: Garvin
18	Duke University: Fuqua	66	Washington University: Olin
19	Instituto de Empresa	69	Chinese University of Hong Kong
20	University of Virginia: Darden	70	University of Pittsburgh: Katz
21	University of Toronto: Rotman	71	Tulane University: Freeman
22	Ceibs	71	Wake Forest University: Babcock
22	York University: Schulich	73	College of William and Mary
24	Cornell University: Johnson	74	Temple University: Fox
25	University of Oxford: Said	75	Queen's School of Business
26	UCLA: Anderson	76	Bradford School of Management/Nimbas
27	Emory University: Goizueta	76	University of California, Davis
27	University of Rochester: Simon	78	University of South Carolina: Moore
29	Rotterdam School of Management	79	Ipade
30	University of Maryland: Smith	79	Ohio State University: Fisher
31	Vanderbilt University: Owen	81	Concordia University: Molson
32	Carnegie Mellon: Tepper	82	University of Cape Town
32	Georgetown University: McDonough	82	University of Georgia: Terry
34	University of Western Ontario: Ivey	84	Australian Graduate School of Management
35	Esade Business School	84	Georgia Institute of Technology
36	University of Iowa: Tippie	86	Coppead
37	HEC Paris	86	University College Dublin: Smurfit
37	USC Marshall School	88	Texas A & M University: Mays
39	Lancaster U Management School	89	Tec de Monterrey - Egade
39	McGill University	90	Solvay Business School
39	University of Notre Dame: Mendoza	91	University of Durham Business School
42	SDA Bocconi	92	Pepperdine University: Graziadio
42	University of Cambridge: Judge	93	Birmingham Business School
44	Boston U Management School	93	Edinburgh University Management School
44	Hong Kong UST Business School	93	University of Washington Business School
44	Manchester Business School	96	University of Bath School of Management
47	Rice University: Jones	97	George Washington University
48	U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	98	Trinity College Dublin
49	Brigham Young University: Marriott	99	Monterey Inst. of International Studies: Fisher
49	Case Western Reserve: Weatherhead	100	ESCP-EAP

