3-1-2013

Progress and Regress in the MBA Curriculum: The Career and Practice Skills Gap

Robert R. Laud
William Paterson University

Matthew S. Johnson
Columbia University

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Progress and Regress in the MBA Curriculum: The Career and Practice Skills Gap

Robert L. Laud[1] and Matthew S. Johnson[2]

[1]Department of Marketing and Management Sciences, Cotsakos College of Business, William Paterson University of New Jersey, Wayne, New Jersey, USA
[2]Department of Statistics and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, New York, USA

The question of MBA (master of business administration) curriculum relevancy has extended over many years, but surprisingly there has been little cohesive effort on the part of business schools to modify their approach in preparing students for successful practice management. Our research provides support to the growing concern that managerial and behavioral skills education has been overshadowed by the quantitative orientation emphasized in most MBA programs, despite the weak relationship found between MBA curricula and career success. The results of our study, based upon the perceptions of successful executives, revealed a set of prioritized managerial advancement skills as essential to their business success. However, these skills have not been widely embraced by business schools facing well-entrenched structural impediments to curricula change. We offer some prescriptive measures to help address these issues, with the intention of elevating the relevancy of the MBA curriculum. *Organization Management Journal*, 10: 24–35, 2013. doi: 10.1080/15416518.2013.781398

Keywords MBA curriculum; managerial skills; soft skills; career success; advancement

The question of the relevancy of the MBA (master of business administration) has been approached from several directions, most of which have left little doubt that business students, faculty, universities, businesses, and even the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) all have unique and often competing goals. Unfortunately, the degree of goal similarity among these groups appears to be rather minimal, and what helps one constituency to succeed is often only possible through the diminishing of another group's objectives. Although many of these criticisms have been widely acknowledged and debated (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; Mintzberg, 2004; Navarro, 2008; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002), the upshot seems to be an entrenching of the opposing viewpoints, rather than a synergistic blending of potentially common goals. One could argue that this is simply part of the MBA curriculum evolution, but considering these same issues and debates have existed for some 25 years (Porter & McKibben, 1988) to 50 years, perhaps it is time to rethink a more pragmatic solution set and move forward.

The literature offers a rich array and sound arguments in identifying opportunity for MBA curriculum redesign. Navarro (2008) has summarized these areas into multidisciplinary education, experiential learning, soft-skill development, globalization and information technology, and ethics and social responsibility. Although this prescriptive list is not meant to be exhaustive, it generally reflects the results of our own study. However, rather than review the curriculum at 50 major business schools as did Navarro, we interviewed 187 successful senior executives who offered some additional constructs. We broadened the review to include a ranking of skills and categories to determine whether certain skills sets were perceived as more valuable by the actual practitioners with regard to their career advancement. In particular, we were interested in exploring skill sets recommended for or required during the early careers of MBA recipients (MBAs), as this group is regarded as particularly concerned with gaining upward mobility advantage.

OVERVIEW OF MBA CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

In order to understand the range and often contested priority of MBA reform and its relevancy to upward mobility, the following curriculum-related information is presented. This brief synopsis will provide an evolutionary perspective and context for our findings and suggestions, but it is meant to be only a high-level illustrative overview as the literature in MBA curriculum design is extensive.

Roots of Academic and Practice Reform

We can trace the origins of business programs to the radical thinking of Joseph Wharton, an independent industrialist, who in 1881 founded the Wharton School of Finance and Business

Address correspondence to Robert L. Laud, Department of Marketing and Management Sciences, Cotsakos College of Business, William Paterson University of New Jersey, 300 Pompton Road, Wayne, NJ 07470, USA. E-mail: laudr@wpunj.edu

at the University of Pennsylvania (The Wharton School, in Murray, 2010, p. 17). It was also at this time that the first critics of business schools proclaimed that the subject matter was not at a university level and did not have the proper academic orientation. Moreover, the focus on commerce did not have any scientific pedigree or academic foundation upon which to build. Indeed, practical business training was a daring idea at this time. But the program content proved of interest to students who were looking to enter a rapidly industrializing economy. Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration offered what is considered the first MBA degree to a small number of students, 59, in 1908 (Herrington, 2010). Other eminent schools including New York University, Dartmouth University, the University of Chicago, and the California state universities soon followed with their own programs in commerce and administration (Murray, 2010). Nonetheless, criticisms also expanded in kind, challenging schools to defend the business curriculum on its contribution to academia. A more emphatic defense of applied research, relevancy, student values, and ethics was yet to emerge.

As with other disciplines, MBA education has undergone a series of foundational changes, each with its own focus and ensuing criticism precipitating the next series of revisions. The early MBA programs of the mid 1950s produced an extremely small number of graduates, approximately 3,200 (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). The early programs were a dramatic shift from liberal arts and sciences and could not escape reproach for appearing to look like advanced vocational training that lacked the more refined scientific orientation of mainstream academics. Nonetheless, programs in finance, operations, and accounting attracted students interested in employment, but fell short of traditional scholarly decorum. The business schools began then what became a long-term response by enriching their quantitative and statistical analysis capability that had roots in the academic field of mathematics and engineering. Over time, the scientific study of decision making gained importance as schools began to take on a social science demeanor that included more traditional venues of applied science, hypothesis testing and model building. By the late 1950s, these mainstream efforts caught the attention of the Carnegie Council and the Ford Foundation, who sponsored additional improvements in the development of business school research capability (Gordon & Howell, 1959).

As business schools made strides in academic acceptance, the enrollment growth of business programs also progressed. By 2002, graduating MBA students in the United States numbered 119,725. Between 2002 and 2008, MBA programs experienced an average growth rate of 4.7%. Today there are approximately 1,136 graduate business programs producing an estimated 160,529 MBAs per year with total global enrollments somewhat doubling this figure at 300,000. The Graduate Management Admissions Council (GMAC) 2008 ATS data reported that schools that offer MBA degrees also offer an average of three alternative business degrees such as an MS (master of science degree) in marketing, accounting, or human resources. The average MBA class size in 2008 was 104 students within an MBA program of approximately 210 overall. Of the 4,605 universities in the United States, slightly more than 20% offer the MBA degree (Murray, 2010).

Academic Orientation: Quantitative Versus Leadership Mind Set

Despite the tremendous growth and acceptance, or at least tolerance, of MBA programs in academia and related executive development education as prime sources of revenue generation, business school curricula have suffered ongoing criticism. For example, although schools sought and gained academic approval and even praise for their focus on analytics, they were then chastised for a lack of emphasis on problem-solving skills. In addition, the lack of sufficient integration across the functional business silos further hampered a more complete approach to business problem solving, rendering the MBA graduate a good analyst, but perhaps a poor leader who lacked a holistic perspective. This particular criticism has persisted for more than a decade, as do the roots of broader integration issues (Gallos, 2009). Specifically, if the functional business areas exist largely in silos, then the majority of the business school curriculum may have grown even further from social science integration. Pfeffer and Wong (2002) assert that deep analysis has come at the expense of wisdom, leadership development, and interpersonal skills and ethics for a conflagration of failures: "teaching the wrong things in the wrong ways (and perhaps to the wrong people, or at least the at the wrong time in their careers)." Others, including Mintzberg and Gosling (2002), have been harsh critics of MBA programs, and Harold Leavitt has termed the MBA rubrics "weird" and said that the MBA experience produces individuals who are misshapened with "icy hearts, and shrunken souls" (in Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, p. 80).

MBA as Practice

Business management is first and foremost a practice incorporating action, responsiveness, and organization leadership. Yet much of the curriculum is taught as an academic subject distantly removed of the milieu of business. The clinical aspects of managing, that is, learning by doing, are generally absent or given only short shrift in most business programs (Kolb, 1976). The focus appears to be on the academic orientation or scientific method, which is indeed useful for the study of business, but rather less effective for the teaching of business as a dynamic practice. The very real vagaries of business are not apparent in the classroom and, for the most part, are not taught through experiential learning. It may be partially this neglected area of experiential learning that explains why consulting firms and their consultants often say that three weeks in practice can duplicate two years in b-school (business school).

There is an interesting contradiction or illogicality here, in that the emphasis upon which most business schools concentrate appears not to be what many students and others consider most beneficial. The focus of most business schools is on the quantitative analysis specific to business functions more than the skills development required in the practice of management. Management practice requires deep skills in leadership, organization behavior, communications, and interpersonal capability (Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002; Navarro, 2008). These same concerns have been voiced by the GMAC, but the success of learning these skills through readings and analysis is not sufficient for what business schools claim as success. It is one thing to discuss ethics, for example, and quite another to practice it under real-world conditions when potentially winning a significant promotion or losing a major bonus is at stake. Social skills, ethics, and leadership are based upon a different type of reasoning and learning than quantitative analysis, one that is more integrated, experiential, and difficult to transfer from professors to others. Hence, the "soulless MBA" does not initially appear to be a likely candidate for self-awareness and interpersonal prowess. However, it is these soft skills that become the key differentiators for leadership positions, regardless of the difficulty to learn or master them.

Business School Research and the Curriculum

Research has been cited as a primary factor in establishing the reputation of business schools, and reputation as the strongest determinant of student earnings (Armstrong & Perry, 1994). However, the relationship between the nature of the research and its practical use by either students or industry is less impressive. Barley, Meyer, and Gash (1988) concluded from their research on academic and practitioner constructs that information basically flows from practitioners to academics, rather than the reverse. This suggests that academics have little impact upon industry except for the efforts of a faction of scholar-practitioners.

There are several issues that detract from the meaningful generation and dissemination of relevant business research. First, much of academic research is oriented around theoretical constructs mostly of interest to academics and, perhaps, to some small number of technical employees in industry who would not be considered part of management. As most academics are aware, "big picture thinking" research is much more difficult to publish in high-quality journals where the purity of incremental academic research and methodology is paramount. Thus, there are few, if any, practice ideas of interest to business leadership that are generated from top academic journals. The second issue is that the vast amount of academic research is based upon an analytical review of existing management practices with the goal of teasing theory from subject matter that is already historic. Thus, deep academic research with its extensive lag time from inception through design, conduct, writing, and approval to its final publication will add significant time delays, rendering any relevant contribution to application even less probable.

One might argue that theoretical research is exempt from time-based limitations, as there is little focus on actual practice or breakthrough discovery of interest to academics. Scholarly research of this nature has received harsh criticism, with some individuals labeling it a "vast wasteland" of insignificance (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005). Other eminent scholars have also decried this fascination for rigor with inconsequential inquiry at the expense of meaningful contribution to practice and society. Pfeffer and Fong (2002) in their study of management practice stated that "only a very small fraction of business books that presumably influence management are actually written by academics." With regard to scholarly research articles read by business practitioners the criticisms are even more severe, underscoring the diminishing connection between business schools and the practice of management.

What are the roots of this imbalance and limited impact of research on business leadership? One answer may lie in the institutional gravity of academic research. At present, business schools seem to have conveniently avoided the central meaning of their existence. Are they providing information that is useful and is it actually being used by practitioners? According to Lawrence (1992, p. 141), this "is the first quality test." Most schools would fail on this measure, as it is the practitioners who provide substance to the academics' success rather than the other way around, as noted. Many academics eagerly engage methodological restrictions at the expense of practical problem solving or usefulness. They appear to write for themselves and their cohorts in arcane publications of little or no use to practitioners, who are put off by the language, irrelevant content, and obtuseness (Hughes, Bence, Grisoni, O'Regan & Wornham, 2011). If this trend of irrelevance continues, business schools may lose much of their acceptability as prime sources of knowledge-creation institutions. This is especially poignant given their position as learning centers for advancing the practice of management, as opposed to a research cloister for personal scholarly indulgence.

This concept is honed by Van Aken (2004) in noting the distinction between explanatory sciences and design sciences. Explanatory research concentrates on providing a theoretical understanding of what already exists. This is the predominant focus of most business research. By contrast, design research, which is reflected in the fields of medicine and engineering, emphasizes what should be from a practice perspective of usefulness. This orientation provides solutions to pressing problems of interest to both practitioners and end users, as opposed to an elite faculty model serving personal interests. Hence, a design science approach would be prescriptive, solution-oriented, and implementable (Huff, Tranfield, & Van Aken, 2006). Ghoshal (2005) and others press the argument further by maintaining that there is a moral obligation for academics to provide value in the form of positive impact upon the community they ultimately serve. However, few academics

actually have the credibility, practical experience, connections, or interest to invest in meeting the criteria of either design research or direct consultancy (Hughes et al., 2011). Bennis and O'Toole (2005) go further and point out that many professors are more knowledgeable and experienced in the process of publishing than in understanding the issues in the world of business. These individuals have been trained in theoretical research and, ironically, find it difficult to relate to the pace, pressure, complexity, and problems of the business world. This is not to say that there aren't some very highly respected scholar-practitioners that can transcend boundaries, but there is a noticeable and unhealthy degree of separation between business schools and practice that is relatively uncommon in most other professional training, including medicine, law, teaching, engineering, nursing, physical therapy, and architecture (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). A stronger orientation toward research relevancy without any diminution of rigor would at least contribute to usefulness and perhaps make theory more thought-provoking and appealing. This would not only benefit MBA students and the business community, but would be of interest to deans, provosts, presidents, and others involved in external relations, advancement, and fund-raising.

The MBA Practice Skills Gap

Business schools have come under fire for what some outspoken critics describe as an overemphasis on "relatively easy-to-quantify business outcomes" (McTiernan & Flynn, 2011, p. 324) at the expense of ideation, critical thinking, ethics, change, values, and leadership (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002). Business schools have also been harshly reproached of late as contributing to the volume of problems at such companies as Enron, Monsanto, Merrill Lynch, Lehman Brothers, Occidental Petroleum, and Phillip Morris, to name just a few, instead of leading efforts to improve our society and environment. This gap in leadership direction and education within business schools may be partially due to what appears to be an oversimplification of soft skills training when in reality it is these multifaceted and intangible capabilities that are needed to deal with the complexities in running modern organizations, especially within a global context (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). The cognitive understanding of the importance of these skills is not in question, but rather the application. For example, it is not hard to comprehend the benefit of the concept of maintaining an air of control or confidence; however, it is quite another to display these characteristics when under actual stress or exceptionally anxiety-provoking situations. Without practical application, repetition and feedback, and modification of pedagogy, students are more likely to exhibit what Clark (1999) refers to as procedural knowledge whereby individuals fall back on unconscious decision making or past behavior under certain conditions, especially stress. Benjamin and O'Reilly (2011) note that leadership, in particular, requires creativity and resourcefulness, traits that are

not easily taught. This type of complex thinking, referred to as declarative knowledge, may be difficult to articulate even by those who seem to perform it well. Over time, declarative approaches may become more automatic, but expecting students to consciously apply complex psychological theories without meaningful context and within short time frames is unrealistic.

Because students comprehend and may test well on their understanding of soft or behavioral skills, there is little assurance that they can apply the principles and concepts successfully. And even if they do apply the concepts in class or in controlled exercises, whether they can extend this to real-world encounters and explain how and why things occurred is rather doubtful. The development of many of these skills may require long periods of time and broad exposure to multiple challenges. Hence, the limited opportunity to practice what is covered in the classroom may cause students and some faculty alike to underestimate both the significance and complexity of those skills, which gain in importance and differentiate the organization leaders in the years to come.

Summary of Practice Skills Issues and Leadership Success

The literature search underscores several persistent issues with MBA curricula that have existed for 25 to 50 years or longer. Researchers and other critics have placed harsh evaluations on business schools for various concerns, including the long-standing question of the relevancy of the MBA degree, a lack of a more rigorous behavioral skills education as opposed to deep quantitative emphasis, the need for a more structured strategy for the practice of management and the career success of individuals within the profession, and the growing concern with self-inflicted structural and institutional impediments to necessary change.

We sought to investigate these issues from the perspective of executives who have attained leadership positions to determine what factors they perceived as important to their upward mobility and what MBA program reforms might be realistic. In particular, we were interested in exploring what Benjamin and O'Reilly (2011) disturbingly concluded: MBA programs focus on general management, but are largely devoid of specific skills education, differentiators, and experiences that are needed by graduates to succeed, especially in their early careers. The issue is succinctly, if not rhetorically, captured by these researchers (2011, p. 453): "An unanswered question is do we know what our students need to know [in order to be successful]?" Our interest is not in revisiting the many insightful models of managerial skills (Golman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Luthans, Rosenkrantz, & Hennessey, 1985; Mintzberg, 1975; Shapira & Dunbar, 1980; Whetten & Cameron, 1984), but in identifying skills or categories of skills as perceived by successful respondents as essential to their advancement. This aspect of skills has been of interest to researchers, MBA students, advisors and coaches, and organizations for many years. We do not make the assumption that the mastery of conventional or functional

job-related skills is, by itself, sufficient for career success. Our interest was to help address Benjamin and O'Reilly's specific query: What do our graduates need to know to be successful in their careers, especially at the beginning stages? However, what constitutes success and how to measure it are central to our inquiry, and present additional challenges that also must be addressed.

Gunz and Heslin (2005) noted that an agreed-upon definition of success has been elusive, with multiple interpretations put forth by scholars. Empirically measured success data, which are generally tangible or observable, may include compensation, promotion, career route, scope of responsibility, and title. The growing emergence of subjective measures may include work–life balance, sense of enjoyment or accomplishment, or realization of any number of self-defined personal goals (Ballou, 2010; Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2009, Siebert, Kramer, & Liden, 2001). Other contemporary thought underscores the added complexity of interdependencies between objective and subjective success criteria, the influence of cultural bias, options within evolving career models, and the scaling challenges of measuring such phenomena (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005). Thus, we are faced with a wide range of subjective data based upon personal preference and self-selected aspects of work that various individuals may value. Further, scoring these data may be problematic. For example, some individuals may value the "unregimented time" that some flex-time positions afford, while others may value a firm's commitment to community service. Success, then, could be measured by some form of objective criteria (amount of community service time) or subjective criteria (how important is this to an individual), as well as by a combination of the two. It appears that a range of success criteria exists on a scale that extends from objective measures on one end to subjective measures on the other and combinations of the two in between. For example, it is highly conceivable that an individual may value the personal associations made at work (subjective criteria), but be disappointed with the low pay (objective criteria). In addition to this issue, success criteria are also subject to spillover effects and causality whereby subjective satisfaction levels may be influenced by objective criteria. For example, an individual may "feel" more satisfied (subjective success) with a job the person generally dislikes if the individual receives additional compensation (objective success) or some other ameliorating reward. Due to the variability and complexity of success criteria, we chose to use job title and position descriptions as objective success criteria.

Our research interest was to identify which tactics or skills areas were recognized by successful executives as key in achieving the objective criteria of hierarchical title and position description. We found that these specific success factors rarely appear in MBA curricula, with most programs limited to offering superficial managerial skills training related to work performance and only minor, if any, attention paid to critical hierarchical advancement. There is a growing concern that most researchers are focusing on personal interests of what

they studied and know, and not on what practicing managers and future leaders required to be efficacious in their careers (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; Kerr, 2004; Tushman & O'Reilly, 2007). We sought to help address this issue by first identifying and expanding our understanding of success factors and, second, by bringing to light those barriers that negatively impact MBA reform.

METHODS

Research Design

Our research design was comprised of two major parts. First, we sought to examine those factors that were recognized as important by executives on their upward journeys; second, we wanted to understand more thoroughly the impact of MBA program structural elements on the development of these required skills. With regard to the required skills, we were more interested in the informants' perspectives, as opposed to additional analysis of established constructs that focus on well-known predeterminants of career success, such as age, race, education, gender, and personality (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Kelan & Jones, 2010; Tharenou, 2001). For this reason, we chose *consensual qualitative research* (CQR) for our approach, as it is considered especially useful in investigations where interaction is fluid and dynamic, such as career strategy (Cohen, Duberly, & Mallon, 2004; Polkinghorne, 2005). This more holistic approach concentrates on exploring the interviewee's viewpoint as opposed to the researcher's interests in specific hypotheses testing (Churchill, 1999; Gilcrest, 1992; Miller & Crabtree, 1992).

A semistructured interview protocol was developed that allowed the researchers to investigate a broad range of career success topics including advancement philosophies, strategic actions, differentiators, turning points, and impediments. The interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes and were conducted by MBA students from an advanced management course who were trained in the use of the instrument. Notes were taken during the interview and then immediately transcribed into detail reports.

Each data set from the 187 interviews was reviewed for common themes and domains by a group of three researchers who were provided with domain definitions. The domain areas were then reviewed by a small group of PhD program faculty members who compared the groupings and collapsed the results into 15 skills areas and four major categories based upon consensus (100% interrater reliability). The data was then coded, permitting descriptive and inferential tests that helped to reveal less noticeable results and shape emerging ideas that contributed to the overall conclusions.

The second aim of this study was a detailed review of the MBA program literature specific to the issues of relevancy and structural impediments to career success. We conducted a broad literature search focused on identifying and exploring the interests of obvious and not-so-obvious MBA stakeholder groups

to improve our understanding of MBA program reform and its relationship to soft skill curriculum development. This approach enabled us to study more thoroughly particular populations in relation to the findings and examine fit against the literature (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Sample

To identify the career tactics of successful individuals, we gathered information from specific position levels across a wide variety of organizations. Our sample base was limited to include senior-level executives with titles such as CEO (chief executive officer), president, or managing partner to mid-level positions with titles including AVP (assistant vice-president), associate director, or military officer. The sample base included 187 interviews from 136 organizations. Of these, 51% were industrial (96), 12% educational (28), 9% governmental (16), 9% nonprofit (16), and 6% military (12). Representative industrial/service organizations included companies such ING, Coca Cola, and Goldman Sachs; government, educational, and nonprofits included the U.S. Army and Navy, City University of New York, and various museums. Our interviewees included 149 males and 38 females, all holding a BA/BS (bachelor of arts/bachelor of science) degree or above, with ages ranging from 22 to 65 years and 48% of respondents (91) between 36 and 50 years old and 39% (73) between 51 and 65 years.

Data Analysis Summary

Respondents were asked to identify and rank up to eight career tactics that they considered instrumental to their upward mobility success. Following CQR procedures including discussion and definitional review, the items were collapsed into 15 career tactic categories (see Table 1). Variation based upon percentages was observable with spreads from 6% to 50% (see Figure 1).

From this finding, we hypothesized that the 15 career tactics could be quantitatively grouped into four strategic categories, which we called Foundation Strategies, Building Self-Brand, Being Centered, and Seizing Opportunity. The p values in comparing any of the four categories demonstrated strong evidence (all p values $< .005$) enabling us to conclude that percentages of mentions across the four categories were, indeed, distinct. The first of these categories, Foundation Strategies, refers to the career aspirant's overall capability to interface and work well with others, leadership style, work orientation, and innate need to achieve. The second grouping of tactics that our sample identified, Building Self-Brand, underscores the career seeker's intention to develop a personal image or "brand" that distinguishes the person from the competition in a positive manner. The third strategic category, Being Centered, includes those tactics that influence the capacity of the individual to maintain a healthy outlook, interact well with others, and balance work and nonwork activities. Respondents noted

that tactics in this category were essential in enabling accurate, ethical, and sustained decision making within today's stressful high-pressure work environment. The fourth category, Seizing Opportunity, refers to chance or providence as key factors influencing success, as opposed to self-generated opportunity. In the former, chance or luck is viewed as outside the control of the individual and success is, therefore, largely dependent upon "good fortune." Alternatively, other career aspirants were keen to point out that their career success was the result of opportunity creation that was only made possible through hard work, readiness, and planning over long periods of time.

What was most interesting to us in this analysis and the formulation of the four categories was that we found strong empirical evidence demonstrated by the large number and high rankings of soft or behavioral skills compared to functional or technical skills as perceived by those who had succeeded in their upward mobility climb. The emerging typology that was identified suggests that the current MBA curriculum design for practicing managers may benefit from additional behavioral skill curriculum reform, based upon our sample group of successful leaders.

DISCUSSION

The vast amount of evidence indicates that the current MBA curriculum plays a marginal role in contributing to what is required to be successful in business (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011; Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). There is a deep concern that MBA education is often myopic, is quantitatively oriented, and lacks a broad view of social responsibility. Critics have highlighted several areas of educational and career concern, including interpersonal skills, preparation for leadership, practice of managing people, communication, and integrated thinking. The traditional overemphasis on hard science and analytics over the expanse of soft skills has contributed to the labeling of business programs as often irrelevant to real-world problem solving. Our research, which was based upon unaided feedback from successful leaders, identified a continuum of 15 key skills or tactics required for business success. Interestingly, all these skills areas referred to specific soft-skills capabilities with only one item, work quality (ranked 13), that overlapped with functional competency excellence, but still relied upon communication skills to underscore or make known the performance. In addition, we found these tactics grouped into four categories contributing to our understanding of the priorities and thought processes by which these soft skills have been exploited (see Figure 2). Yet an overarching question remains unresolved: Why haven't business schools responded to the need for curricula reform, especially with regard to behavioral skills education?

Barriers to MBA Curricula Reform

It would seem apparent from the stream of business school research and criticism that curricula reform would be

TABLE 1
Top 15 career tactic categories by rank order (highest to lowest)

Tactic categories	Examples
1. Interpersonal	People interaction, social astuteness, emotional intelligence
2. Motivation	Aggressiveness, ambition, challenge, drive
3. Planning	Goal directed, preparation, strategizing
4. Leadership style	Influence process, motivational style, personality traits
5. Training and education	Formal schooling, experiential, executive development
6. Networking	Relationships, mentors, visibility, sponsorship
7. Reputation and integrity	Honesty, trust, accountability, credibility
8. Politics	Diplomacy, involvement, influence
9. Confidence	Courage, assertiveness, initiative
10. Risk taking	Speculation, taking leaps, negotiating uncertainty
11. Balance	Work–life balance, centeredness, knowing limits
12. Communications	Persuasiveness, positioning, oral and written capability
13. Work quality	Effectiveness, competency level, results
14. Luck	Unforeseen circumstance, chance, unplanned occurrence
15. Opportunity	Seizing situations, creating advantage, insight

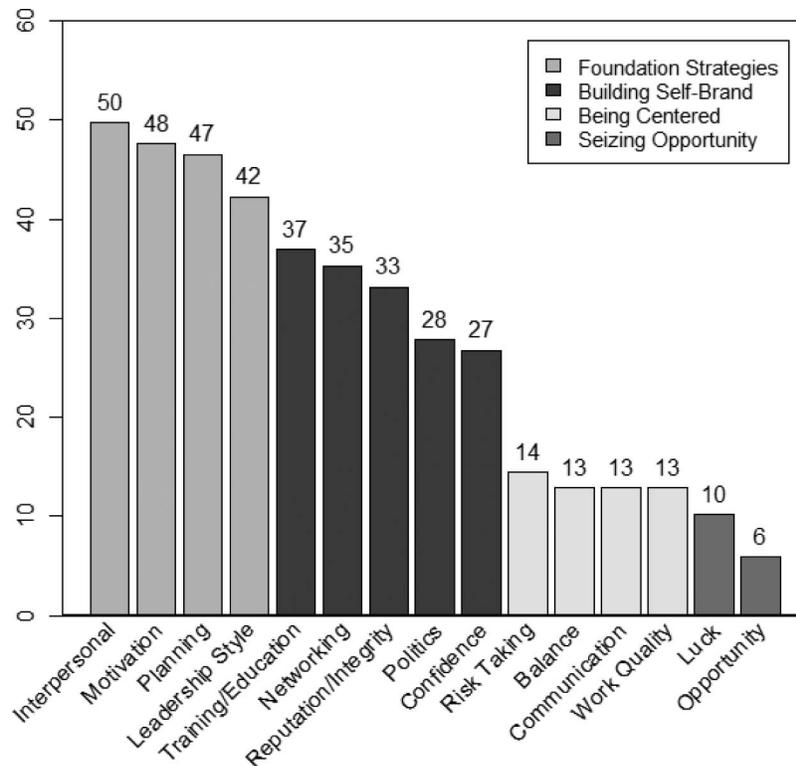*Note*. Adapted from Laud and Johnson (2012).

FIG. 1.   Total sample percentage of subjects mentioning tactic items within grouping categories (*N* = 187). *Note*. Adapted from Laud and Johnson (2012).

a top priority, but little progress is evident (Mintzberg, 2004; Navarro, 2008). Understanding the set of circumstances that prevent change may help to formulate new solutions or at least recognize the barriers that need to be surmounted. Our interview findings in conjunction with a review of the literature for our selected population and its fit against theory (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) revealed several areas of institutional resistance to soft-skill curricula change (see Figure 3).
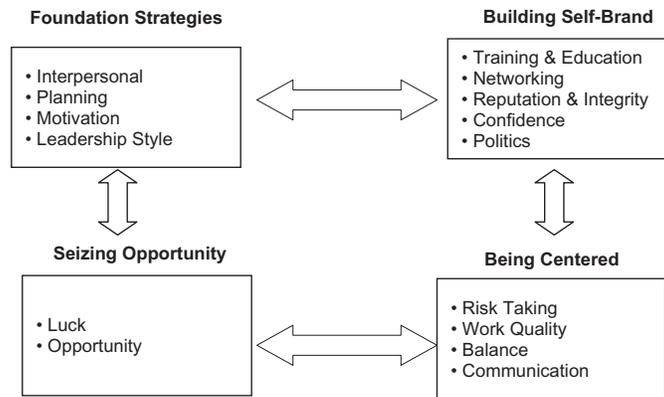
Foundation Strategies

- Interpersonal
- Planning
- Motivation
- Leadership Style

Building Self-Brand

- Training & Education
- Networking
- Reputation & Integrity
- Confidence
- Politics

Seizing Opportunity

- Luck
- Opportunity

Being Centered

- Risk Taking
- Work Quality
- Balance
- Communication

FIG. 2. Framework of groupings of the 15 upward mobility tactics. *Note.* Adapted from Laud and Johnson (2012).

Opposing Forces

Current Curriculum
- MBA bias towards quantitative analysis
- Theoretical and functional focus

School Reputation & Status
- Difficult to change MBA rankings by modifying curriculum
- Top schools already attract top students and best MBA job offers

Faculty & Research
- Centrality of explanatory research over practice application

Accreditation & Administration
- AACSB curriculum and research neutrality
- Complex university issues and procedures for curriculum reform

MBA Curriculum

Supporting Forces for Soft Skills

MBA Program Relevancy
- Criticism of historic MBA direction
- Recognized gap between current MBA curriculum and student success

Leadership Differentiator
- Soft skills critical for integrating thinking and managing people

Career Advancement
- Most cited skill set for upward mobility
- Organization soft skills needs for creativity, ideation and ethics

Management Practice Skills
- Need for design research contributions for solution generation, prescriptive direction and real-world planning
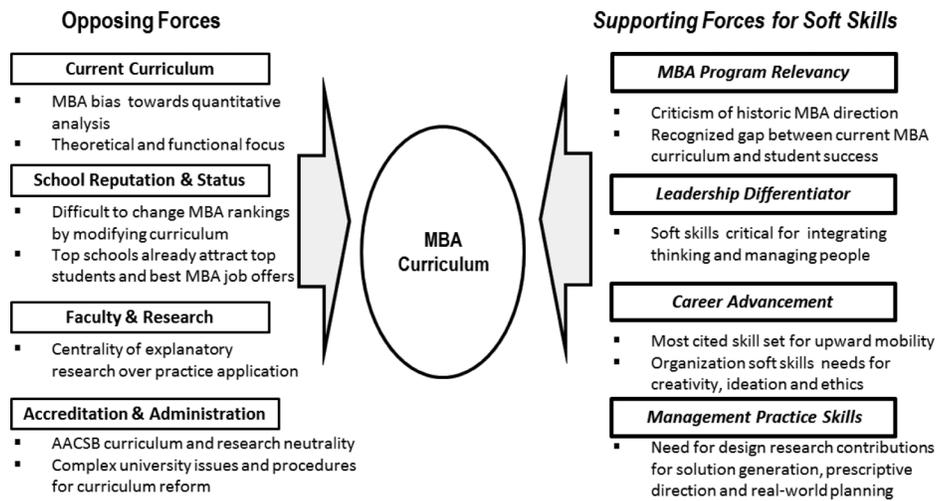
FIG. 3. Forces impacting inclusion of soft skills in the MBA curriculum.

School Reputation and Status

Reputation plays a broad and critical role in the ability of business schools to attract students, faculty, corporate recruiters, alumni donations, and research grants. Although sometimes downplayed by schools, the rankings from *U.S. News and World Report*, *The Princeton Review*, and the *Bloomberg Business Week Guide to the Best Business Schools* are key indicators of reputational capital and are taken seriously—at least by those at the top and who want to remain there. Accordingly, these schools have little motivation to change the rules of the current system and generally set the trend. One of the strongest assets safeguarded by these schools is their ability to attract top-quality students who then obtain the most prestigious opportunities and best salaries. However, what is interesting is that research has shown that higher salary differentials for MBAs are associated with the top-ranked or elite business schools such as Chicago, Stanford, Northwestern, MIT, Columbia, Michigan, Dartmouth, and Harvard, and that several years after graduation MBA graduates from less competitive universities did not fare any better than those students who did not have a business degree (Dugan,

Grady, Payne, & Johnson, 1999). Ironically, even as salary differentials are apparent, examination has also shown that the programs of study across schools of varying caliber are intriguingly similar. Researchers concluded that what appears to be assessed then is not the quality of the education offered, but rather the quality of the student body that comes with strong intellectual and motivational traits at top schools.

The successful career informants in our study, as noted, underscored the value of behavioral skills as the key differentiators in reaching their goals, but did not assign a similar weight to either strong quantitative skills or the reputation of the school. Thus, we see an opportunity for both high-ranking schools and especially less competitive schools to differentiate their graduates by strengthening their MBAs' behavioral skills capability. These results support Mintzberg's (2004) assertion that overall management success is conditional upon behavioral or soft skills proficiency. It would seem then that these skill sets would be eagerly attended to, but this is generally not the case. For example, the strong student placement and prestige-contributing structure of the elite MBA programs at institutions

such as Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, Dartmouth, and Chicago provide little reason to change what already works so well. Less competitive schools may have more incentive to change, but frequently only follow a path of fire-fighting, moving from one niche play to another every few years or locking onto less desirable niches that will condemn them to limited success and long-term lower prestige. Although there may be merit to innovative programs, the market for reputation and prestige is not gained easily or quickly, and the diminution of criticism of MBA programs, especially at lower ranked schools without improving the managerial or behavioral skills capability of their graduates, is doubtful.

Faculty and Research

The second area of institutional resistance lies in the faculties' academic orientation and research interests, which are at the heart of the MBA relevancy criticisms. There is no scarcity of research, including investigations by renowned business professors, deans from the most elite universities, and comments from leaders of major corporations, who have individually and collectively recognized that there is a discrediting and embarrassing gap that divorces academic research from the interests of the business community. It would seem surprising that business schools do not excel at perhaps the most important skills areas within their purview, that is, behavioral skills, as identified by the plethora of academic research, business reports, and the AACSB statements. However, some faculty members appear to be more in touch with esoteric and insular academic communities and are proud of their separation from business. The past dean at New York University's prestigious Stern School of Business, Richard West, however, was less impressed with this community and disparaged academic research as self-serving, superfluous, and disconnected from the management of business (Gaddis, 2000). Why then would faculty follow this path of generally extraneous research while critical documented and well-researched behavioral areas receive rather minimal attention in many MBA programs? Further, our research regarding required skills for advancement identifies a critical gap in MBA education.

One answer may lie in the institutional barrier of faculty structure and tenure. Shaw and Maidment (2010) made this point clear, noting that tenured faculty can expect lifetime employment with the right to pursue self-interests. This point of view is diametrically opposite to that of free-market capitalism that wouldn't tolerate work activity that doesn't contribute to customer value. The question then becomes, who is the end customer for MBA programs and research? Previous exploration posited that esoteric and irrelevant business research was of little or no value to business executives, government officials, consultants, students, and donors, thereby excluding these groups as true end customers. However, from an institutional perspective the customer is quite clear, namely, the university, which is the prime beneficiary of research. Traditionally, research has been the most important criterion linked to a school's reputation.

Practical application, however, is not a metric within business schools, nor within AACSB requirements, and is frequently downplayed, undervalued, or scorned in academic circles. Following the maxim "If it is not measured, it is not done," it is not surprising then that practitioners see little immediate value in much university research (McKelvey, 2006). At best, this is an odd outcome if we return to the key purpose of business schools, which is specifically to produce research that advances practice (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). Many other observers have also concluded that this mission has failed, including Beer (2001), Bennis and O'Toole (2005), Gohoshal (2005), Hogkinson, Herriot, and Anderson (2001), Martin de Holan and Mintzberg (2004), and Pfeffer and Fong (2002), to name a few It becomes apparent that attempting to transition more applied research and instruction into the development of hard-to-measure behavioral areas within managerial and leadership capability including visioning, communication, networking, ethics, and politics has been challenging. These are all areas that the respondents in this study identified as essential to advancement.

Mintzberg claims that business schools train analysts in functional areas and call them managers or leaders, but they are not trained for success in either. He posits, "Anybody who graduates from an MBA program should have a skull and crossbones stamped on their foreheads saying, 'Warning, not prepared to manage'" (Martin de Holan & Mintzberg, 2004, p. 210). He goes on to note that organizational skills have attracted much attention in the Academy of Management and in various research circles. However, these organizational and leadership skills have not transferred into MBA programs to the extent we see economics, accounting, operations research, or other hard sciences or disciplines. It is not that there is a void of organization, behavioral, managerial, or career research. All of these disciplines are well researched, deeply entrenched, and supported by a wide variety of prestigious professional and academic organizations, including the American Psychological Association and the Academy of Management. However, related practice research and application have not been embraced or exploited as a visible and central theme within most MBA programs.

Many journals have also avoided the relevancy criticism by simply having mission statements that emphasize theoretical research. Although we recognize the invaluable contribution these academically focused journals provide, if we asked the obvious question of how many practitioners and MBA students read these articles, we might not be so comfortable. It appears that this closed or internally focused publishing system has evolved whereby researchers within this system determine what each other should publish. In order to meet the relevancy test, Mintzberg suggested many years ago that all articles in peer-reviewed journals should be reviewed by qualified practitioners before being accepted (Martin de Holan & Mintzberg, 2004). This would help ensure the direction of any research toward the eventual creation of useful knowledge as determined by

professional individuals who have both appropriate experience and credentials to review practice and theoretical insights.

This institutional publishing barrier may also prevent some younger business faculty from venturing into emerging areas that are not yet part of their school's or department mainstream disciplines. Tenure is a difficult process for most academics, and risk of denial is significantly heightened if one chooses research or pedagogical change in areas that aren't consistent with existing norms or political biases of the institution. This is not to say that breakthrough or controversial research by junior faculty is nonexistent, but it is seldom encouraged in today's market for anyone seeking tenure (Shaw & Maidment, 2010). Finally, the behavioral skills areas have historically been undervalued and may be the least familiar or useful to those researchers who have not needed these skills in their independent or autonomous roles of academicians. As critics have observed, we teach what we know, and this appears consistent with the divide between behavioral skills required for business success and what many business schools have embraced.

Accreditation and Administration

A third area of institutional resistance hindering a more widespread education of behavioral skills is the lack of proactive support on the part of the AACSB. The AACSB appears to be struggling with its own sense of relevancy and tenuous position as it is neither a sanctioned nor legal body for professional oversight nor an activist group capable of driving curriculum reform. As such, it has been reluctant to take a leadership role in setting certain standards, thereby creating a void in curriculum guidance as well as research agendas. For example, the issue of business relevancy is well recognized by the AACSB, but institutionally it does not become involved in the value that business schools may offer the business community. Rather, by not acting, the AACSB appears to defend and perpetuate business school irrelevancy. As Navarro (2008, p. 120) asserted, "It [AACSB] has become more of a group of foxes guarding the MBA henhouses, than a beacon of leadership and force for catalytic change." Jan Williams (2011), chair of the AACSB Board of Directors, noted that deans of business schools understand the value of the AACSB, but the value to the faculty, students, alumni, and business community is deficient. McTiernan and Flynn (2011) and others have noted more specifically that deans' positions, job tenure, and upward mobility are frequently tied to AACSB reviews and rankings and therefore serve as a form of self-motivation. This, in turn, has precipitated a siphoning of energy away from more relevant issues at many business schools in order to focus on more comfortable and obtainable self-imposed internal activities, invisible and unconnected to the business community.

Other research has clearly pointed out that lack of AACSB accreditation has a minimum negative impact on access to graduate programs, professional impacts, career options earnings, job skills and knowledge, and the quality of faculty (Dempere, Griffin, & Camp, 2009). Additionally, Navarro (2008) and others have observed that the AACSB, while acutely aware of the need for MBA curriculum reform through its own research, especially with regard to soft-skills education, has not provided direction. Rather, the AACSB has an internal focus with sharp attention by its leaders to growing its membership of deans and associate deans in the United States, Europe, and Asia, thus locking in academic leaders and perpetuating its existence.

Current Curriculum

The critical nature of business success tactics and behavioral skills, including interpersonal skills, communication, leadership, and ethics, has been well documented (AACSB, 2002). However, critics have complained that business schools have failed in their teaching to equip graduates with the variety of leadership soft skills necessary for long-term business success. Our results support Navarro's ascertain that the most important correlate to business success is management effectiveness, which, in turn, is dependent upon soft-skills education (Navarro, 2008). Unfortunately, these soft skills are some of the least attended to in the conventional MBA progression. For example, the functional and analytical courses, including those in marketing, corporate finance, financial accounting, operations, strategy, and managerial economics, are required on average at 93% of the top 50 business schools. However, the soft-skills courses required for business success include communications, required at only 60% of the schools, general management at 36%, leadership at 34%, negotiations at 12%, and career planning at 10% (Navarro, 2008). Moreover, despite the growing concern and severe criticism that schools have received relative to corporate wrongdoing, only 40% of the top 50 business schools require a course in corporate ethics and social responsibility. This is all the more disconcerting in that these schools produce a large number of our nation's leaders. A disproportionate number of our leaders come from the Ivy League schools, with Harvard, Columbia, and the University of Pennsylvania accounting for 99 of the Fortune 500 CEOs, not including other top officers (*U.S. News and World Report*, 2011).

It is clear from this information that the MBA curriculum is still heavily entrenched in the hard science quantitative orientation versus a more robust soft-skills perspective. This clustering around the traditional core curriculum suggests that institutional change will likely be slow and difficult. Nonetheless, some positive and noteworthy exceptions to this are emerging where traditional quantitative courses are being deemphasized as attention is turning to improving MBA leadership practice. For example, Stanford has rebuilt its curriculum to highlight such soft-skills areas as critical analytical thinking, innovation, and personal leadership; Harvard's reformed MBA curriculum requires courses in leadership and ethics, negotiations, and entrepreneurship. These courses greatly strengthen educational policy by producing more socially aware and competent general management MBAs, not just analysts.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For more than 50 years academics, professionals, and business organizations have debated the appropriateness and relevancy of the MBA curriculum. Researchers have documented a multitude of apparent and subtle goal conflicts between numerous business school stakeholders: faculty with interest in esoteric niches, deans focusing on ranking criteria, corporations needing business management skills, the AACSB searching for purpose, and MBA students aspiring to successful and rewarding careers. Our research based upon a CQR methodology with successful senior executives confirmed the need for a variety of soft skills education and contributed a typology of 15 soft-skills areas important for executive advancement. Our literature review revealed several areas of structural resistance to behavioral skills development within MBA curricula.

Accordingly, we make the following recommendations to help address the issues of business school relevancy and soft-skills deficiencies in MBA curricula. First, given the reported increasing value of behavioral skills education and the differentiation it brings in the selection and promotion process of MBA graduates, both elite and less competitive schools would better serve their students by careful inclusion of a mandatory behavioral skills core component that extends and builds throughout the MBA experience. Second, the soft-skills core should reflect the needs as identified by experienced executives, not necessarily the research interests of certain academic faculty. Third, deans and administrators should support balancing faculty strengths between theoretical and applied research, and should engage a larger proportion of scholar-practitioners to better mirror the more relevant models of other professional schools such as law, education, engineering, and medicine. Fourth, the AACSB needs to strengthen its business case and provide leadership for soft-skills education in a manner that is seen and appreciated by a larger number of its constituents, especially businesses, faculty, and students. As business schools are at a crossroads, the careful and proactive inclusion of soft-skills education for better practice management would add a critical dimension to strengthen the MBA curriculum and, hence, improve its relevancy to students and the business community.

REFERENCES

Armstrong, J. S., & Sperry, T. (1994). Business school prestige—Research versus teaching. *Interfaces*, *24*, 13–43.

Arthur, M. B., Khapova, S. N., & Wilderom, C. P. (2005). Career success in a boundaryless career world. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *26*, 177–202.

Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. (2002). Management education at risk. Report of the management education task force to the AACSB International Board of Directors. Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/publications/metf/metfreportfinal-august02.pdf

Ballou, V. (2009). Organizational culture as a predictor of job satisfaction: The role of gender and age. *Career Development International*, *15*(1), 4–19.

Barley, J. R., Meyer, G. W., & Gash, D. C. (1988). Cultures of culture: Academics, practitioners and the pragmatics of normative control. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *13*, 24–60.

Beer, M. (2001). Why management research findings are unimplementable: An action science perspective. *Reflections*, *2*(3), 58–65.

Benjamin, B., & O'Reilly, C. (2011). Becoming a leader: Early career challenges faced by MBA graduates. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, *10*(3), 452–472.

Bennis, W. G., & O'Toole, J. (2005). How business schools lost their way. *Harvard Business Review*, *83*(5), 96–104.

Bloomberg BusinessWeek Guide to the Best Business Schools. (2010). Retrieved from http://www.businessweek.com/bschools/rankings

Cerdin, J., & Le Pargneux, M. (2009). Career and international assignment fit: Toward an integrated model of success. *Human Resource Management*, *48*(1), 5–25.

Churchill, G. A. (1999). *Marketing research* (7th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Dryden.

Cohen, L., Duberly, J., & Mallon, M. (2004). Social constructionism in the study of career: Accessing the parts that other approaches cannot reach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *64*, 407–422.

Dugan, M. K., Grady, W. R., Payne, B., & Johnson, T. R. (1999). The benefits of an MBA: A comparison of graduates and non-graduates. *Selections*, *1*, 18–24.

Gaddis, P. O. (2000). Business schools: Fighting the enemy within. *Strategy and Business*, *21*(4), 51–57.

Gallos, J. V. (2009). Creativity forums: Learning from the lives of extraordinary leaders. *Organization Management Journal*, *6*, 76–88.

Ghoshal, S. (2008). Bad management theories are destroying good management practices. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *4*, 75–91.

Gilchrest, S. (1992). Key informant interviews. In B. F. Crabtree & W. L. Miller (Eds.), *Doing qualitative research* (pp. 71–89). London, UK: Sage.

Golman, D., Boyatzis, R. & McKee, R. (2002). *Primal leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Gordon, R., & Howell, J. (1959). *Higher education for business*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Goshal, S. (2005). Bad management theories are destroying good management practice. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *4*, 75–91.

Gosling, J., & Mintzberg, H. (2006). Management education as if both matter. *Management Learning*, *37*(4), 419–428.

Gunz, H. P., & Heslin, P. A. (2005). Reconceptualizing career success. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *26*, 105–111.

Herrington, J. D. (2010). MBA: Past, present and future. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, *14*(1), 63–76.

Hodgkinson, G. P., Herriot, P., & Anderson, N. (2001). Realigning the stakeholders in management research: Lessons from industrial, work and organizational psychology. *British Journal of Management*, *12*, 41–48.

Huff, A. S., Tranfield, D., & Van Aken, J. E. (2006). Management as a design science mindful of art and surprise. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *15*(4), 413–424.

Hughes, T., Bence, D., Grisoni, L., O'Regan, N., & Wornham, D. (2011). Scholarship that matters: Academic-practitioner engagement in business and management. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *10*(1), 40–57.

Judge, T. A., Cable, D. M., Boudreau, J. W., & Bretz, R. D. (1995). An empirical investigation of the predictors of executive career success. *Personnel Psychology*, *48*, 485–519.

Kelan, E., & Jones, R. (2010). Gender and the MBA. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, *9*(1), 26–43.

Kerr, S. (2004). Introduction: Preparing people to lead. *Academy of Management Executive*, *3*, 118–120.

Kolb, D. (1976). Management and the learning process. *California Management Review*, *18*, 21–31.

Laud, R. L., & Johnson, M. (2012). Upward mobility: A typology of tactics and strategies for career advancement. *Career Development International*, 17, 231–254.

Lawrence, P. R. (1992). The challenge of problem-oriented research. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *1*, 139–142.

Luthans, F., Rosenkrantz, S. A., & Hennessey, H. W. (1985). What do successful managers really do? An observation study of managerial activities. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *21*, 255–270.

Martin de Holan, P., & Mintzberg, H. (2004). Management as life's essence: 30 years of the nature of work. *Strategic Organization*, 2(2), 205–212.

McKelvey, B. (2006). Van de Ven and Johnson's "Engaged scholarship": Nice try, but . . . *Academy of Management Review*, 31(4), 822–829.

McTiernan, S., & Flynn, P. (2011). "Perfect storm" on the horizon for women business school deans? *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 10(2), 323–339.

Miller, W. L., & Crabtree, B. F. (1992). *Doing qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Mintzberg, H. (1975). The manager's job: Folklore and fact. *Harvard Business Review*, 53(4), 49–61.

Mintzberg, H. (2004). *Managers not MBAs: A hard look at the soft practice of managing and management development*. San Francisco, CA: Berrrett-Koehler.

Mintzberg, H., & Gosling, J. (2002). Educating managers beyond borders. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 1(64), 452–472.

Murray, M. (2010). MBA share in the U.S. graduate management education market. *Global Conference on Business and Finance Proceedings, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii* 5(1), 17–26.

Navarro, P. (2008). The MBA core curricula of top-ranked U.S. business schools: A study in failure? *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 7(1), 108–123.

Pfeffer, J., & Fong, C. (2002). The end of business schools? Less success than meets the eye. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 1(1), 78–95.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 137–145.

Porter, L. W., & McKibben, L. E. (1988). *Management education and development*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Princeton Review. (2012). The best 294 business schools 2012. Retrieved from http://www.princetonreview.com/business-school-rankings.aspx

Shapira, Z., & Dunbar, R. L. (1980). Testing Mintzberg's managerial roles classification using an in-basket simulation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 65(1), 87–95.

Shaw, D., & Maidment, F. (2010). Getting tenure in a down economy. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 7(12), 1–4.

Siebert, S. E., Kraimer, M. L., and Liden, R. C. (2001). A social capital theory of career success. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44, 219–237.

Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guide book and resource*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Tharenou, P. (2001). Going up? Do traits and informal social processes predict advancing in management. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(5), 1005–1017.

Tushman, M. L., & O'Reilly, C. A. (2007). Research and relevance: Implications of Pasteur's quadrant for doctoral programs and faculty development. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50, 769–774.

U.S. News and World Report. (2011). Education, best business schools. Retrieved from http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-business-schools/mba-rankings

Van Aken, J. E. (2004). Management research based on the paradigm of the design sciences: The quest for field tested and grounded technological rules. *Journal of Management Studies*, 41(2), 219–246.

Van de Ven, A., & Johnson, P. E. (2006). Knowledge for theory and practice. *Academy of Management Review*, 31(4), 802–821.

Whetten, D. A., & Cameron, K. S. (1984). *Developing management skills*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co.

Williams, J. (2011). Vision for the future. *BizEd*, 10(5), 55–59.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Robert L. Laud is Associate Professor of Marketing and Management Sciences in the Cotsakos College of Business at William Paterson University. He received his PhD from Columbia University. He was a partner and the worldwide director of Organization Change at Accenture and later became the global managing partner of the Center for Research and Innovation at Andersen Worldwide. He consults to major corporations, including Microsoft, DuPont, GE, and Citigroup, nonprofits, and government agencies. He may be reached at laudr@wpunj.edu.

Matthew S. Johnson is Associate Professor of Statistics and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. He received his PhD in statistics from Carnegie Mellon University. Since earning his PhD he has worked as an associate research scientist at Educational Testing Service and was on the faculty at Baruch College's Zicklin School of Business. Dr. Johnson currently serves as a co-editor of the *Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics* and is on the editorial board of *Psychometrika*. He may be reached at Johnson@tc.columbia.edu.