Business Professional Doctoral Programs: Student Motivations, Educational Process, and Graduate Career Outcomes

Louis Grabowski
Vice President,
Kennesaw State University
Foundation,
Kennesaw, GA, USA

ljgrabski@gmail.com

Jeanette Miller
Director of Strategy,
360° Transformational
Development, USA

jeanettekaymiller@gmail.com

Abstract

The emerging body of research on business professional doctoral programs has focused primarily on the programs' composition and management, offering limited insight into students' motivations and the impact the degree has on graduates and their careers. However, understanding these student motivations and career impacts is valuable for several reasons. In addition to helping future candidates assess various programs and the business professional doctoral degree itself, it can help enrolled students maximize their academic experience and help administrators improve these programs so that they better meet students' personal and professional expectations. To bridge this research gap, this study pursued a mixed-methods approach to glean insights into why people pursue professional doctorates in business, the ultimate personal and professional outcomes of students, and the educational process producing those outcomes. The study revealed that most students entered these programs with a desire for personal or professional transformation, including the possibility of entering academia or a new industry. Moreover, the vast majority of program graduates believed they had experienced such a transformation, often in both professional and personal ways. Further, while important to personal growth, alumni perceived that certain program elements—such as the student networks they created and non-research related coursework—had little to no effect upon their career and viewed their research and the research process as far more important to their professional development. Based upon these findings, the researchers propose a comprehensive process model to explain the personal and professional factors and outcomes for graduates of business professional doctoral programs. They also suggest practical steps that students and administrators can take to improve the business professional doctoral educational experience.

Keywords: Professional doctorates, careers of professional doctoral graduates, motivations of professional doctoral students, doctoral education process

Introduction

Professional doctorates have existed for decades in many disciplines, including medicine, law, psychology, engineering, and education (Gill & Hoppe, 2009). Indeed, professional doctorate offerings are currently expanding. Possible reasons for this growth include increased demand from industry in a knowledge-driven economy (human capital theory), conflict and competition in higher education, credentialism (that is, as the number of people with a certain credential increases, the credential's value in the labor market decreases), and the corporatization of higher education (Servage, 2009).

Although business professional doctoral programs are relatively new, such programs are emerging around the world. In early 2012, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) created a task force to determine global trends and future needs of business doctoral education. The resulting report revealed a significant amount of diversity in business doctoral education models, intended outcomes, and purposes worldwide. The study found that, while more than 2,300 doctoral students at AACSB-accredited business schools successfully defended their dissertations in 2012, little quality information exists about potential career paths, the benefits of business doctoral education, or the ideal profile of successful candidates for these programs (AACSB International, 2012). This information is critical to helping potential students assess the various programs offered, as well as compare the business professional doctoral degree with other degrees, including a traditional Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Further, the study's findings can help students maximize their business professional doctoral experience and program administrators better tailor programs to meet students' personal and professional needs.

Existing Research

Building on the need for additional research, this study aimed to understand why professionals pursue business professional doctorates, illuminate the process students undergo to receive these degrees, and determine the ultimate personal and professional outcomes of graduates.

Student motivations

In general, students enter doctoral programs for a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons (Brailsford, 2010). For doctoral students of all types, vocational concerns appear to be outweighed by personal development and general intellectual interests, including acquisition of research skills, interest in the research area, the joy of study, and simply acquiring the degree in itself (Leonard, Becker, & Coate, 2005).

Wellington and Sikes (2006) found that biography—described by Fenge (2009, p. 171) as "who I am and what I do"—was the crucial factor in the decision to pursue a doctorate. Their research also found that this decision was motivated and informed by a web of reasons, including confirming or bringing about structural change to the person's identity. Further, Fenge (2009) pointed out that, while the split between intrinsic and extrinsic factors is helpful in analyzing motivational factors, these motivators are often blurred, with people sometimes stating an extrinsic reason for pursing the advanced degree (e.g., a promotion or the need to keep their job), while also pursuing the degree for intrinsic reasons (e.g., making others proud or being seen as a good provider for their family).

As for professional doctorates in particular, Scott, Brown, Lunt, and Thorne (2004) find that the primary motivation of professional doctorate students varies by the identity they wish to project and enact; the relationships, beliefs, and values that are important in their lives; and the stage at which they find themselves in their career. In general, Scott et al. (2004) reveal three broad categories of motivators: two extrinsic, based on where professionals are in their career, and one intrinsic. Extrinsically, people early in their careers view the qualification as a professional initia-

tion and a catalyst for career development and accelerated promotion. More established individuals on the other hand see the degree as a professional continuation and a way to enhance their career development both upwards and sideways. Intrinsically, both those early in their careers and more established professionals were motivated by several factors including personal development; the identity they wish to project and enact; and, their key relationships, beliefs, and values.

Expanding upon these findings, Gill and Hoppe (2009) identify five desires that could—individually or in combination—lead an individual to pursue a doctorate: entry into academia, professional development, professional advancement, entry to a new career, and self-enrichment.

Finally, as Wellington and Sikes (2006) and Neumann (2005) describe, part of the decision to pursue a professional doctorate rather than a PhD includes such factors as;

- the social interaction provided by most professional doctorate programs' cohort structure;

- the structure present in these programs;

- the link to professional practice;

- the prospect of investigating a specific business problem;

- the ability to continue working while pursuing the degree; and

- the time required to earn a traditional PhD, coupled with the low likelihood of actually receiving one.

Indeed, a recent study found that only 57% of doctoral students in the United States (U.S.) complete their programs within 10 years of enrollment ("The disposable academic," 2010).

Education Process

As Weidman (2006) points out, educating professional and graduate students is a socialization process wherein prospective students enter with certain motivations and expectations, go through a learning and socialization process, and emerge with particular personal and professional outcomes. Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001) describe this course as a "perilous passage"—an interactive I-E-O (input, environment, outcome) process involving the graduate academic program's *normative context* (teaching, research, service); *socialization process* (interaction, integration, learning); and *core elements* (knowledge acquisition, investment, involvement).

To build academic programs that can successfully educate and socialize students, institutions throughout the world have developed various professional doctoral programs that differ in form, function, and desired outcomes from the traditional PhD. Whereas both traditional PhD and professional doctoral programs aim for students to acquire the skills needed to design and carry out a research project that will make an original contribution, the PhD student focuses on contributing to knowledge in a particular discipline, whereas the professional doctorate student focuses on contributing to knowledge of practice in the business management field. Further, PhD programs' career focus is often on entry into academia, whereas professional doctoral programs claim to focus on students' career needs in general (Bareham, Bourner. And Stevens, 2000). Indeed, of the 72 business professional doctoral programs they reviewed, Banerjee and Morley (2013) found that only three universities mentioned academia as a career objective for their programs.

Business professional doctoral programs themselves also vary widely in form, function, and outcome, including the degree designation a graduate receives. These degrees currently include Executive Doctorate of Management, Doctorate of Business Administration, Executive Doctorate of Business Administration, and Doctorate of Professional Studies (Gill & Hoppe, 2009). Further, the programs utilize a variety of teaching and learning methods for personal and professional development, including individual supervision, lectures, communication and information technolo-

gies, presentations, independent study, workshops, a residential format, block study, seminars, and action learning (Bourner, Bowden, & Laing, 2001). Still, most business professional doctoral programs accredited by the AACSB have certain commonalties, including a duration of two to five years; research methods courses complemented with content courses; and a requirement to complete and defend a research project, thesis, or dissertation (Bourner et al., 2001; Banerjee & Morley, 2013; Fink, 2006). In addition, many of these programs are more structured than the traditional PhD, utilizing a cohort structure that focuses on enhancing peer support to avoid the PhD's lone researcher syndrome and promote a cross-fertilization of ideas (Neumann, 2005).

Graduate Outcomes

Perhaps because the programs are relatively new, limited research literature exists that empirically measures success outcomes for graduates of business professional doctorates such as postgraduation career paths, income premiums, job mobility, increased employment, and job satisfaction. It thus remains to be discovered how these outcomes align or differ from those of traditional PhDs, where most graduates are satisfied with their post-graduation employment situation but where other career outcomes vary considerably over time, by country, and by industry (Project OECD-KNOWINNO, 2012).

Like traditional PhDs, academia appears to be a career path for many business professional doctoral graduates. In an international survey of 46 part-time business professional doctoral programs, 50 percent of the schools reported that their graduates reached academic positions during or after their programs (Graf, 2014). For both professional doctorates and traditional PhDs, however, academic career paths are now less clear than they once were. From 2005–2009, only 16,000 new professorships were created in the U.S., though more than 100,000 doctoral degrees were granted ("The disposable academic," 2010). Indeed, in one of the few post-graduation studies of professional doctoral holders, Spain's labor market was shown to not yet value postdoctoral education: doctors of humanities and social sciences (including economics and business administration) reported experiencing low job satisfaction and low expected wages (Canal Domínguez & Muñiz Pérez, 2012).

Methodology and Results

This study employed a mixed-method approach to obtain a fuller picture of the personal and professional motivations and outcomes of business professional doctoral graduates, as well as to illuminate the process of creating these outcomes (Meyers, 2009, p.10; Yin, 2009, p. 8–10).

To encourage participation, the researchers developed a short questionnaire consisting of 12 questions for students and 17 for alumni (see Appendix A). The core survey was designed to capture the respondent's status (student or alumna/us), school attended, expectations upon entering the program, and level of interest in participating in a post-graduate association. For alumni respondents, the survey asked five additional questions: year of graduation, how and to what extent the program had a positive impact on their career, personal fulfillment gained from the program, and current involvement in or future plans for teaching. The survey was an on-line survey so where possible, a sliding scale of 1-100 was used for certain questions to improve respondents interaction with the survey instrument and provide for a greater breadth of answers. The survey was sent electronically to more than 500 students and alumni, distributed by administrators of various business professional doctoral programs throughout the world.

Based on the survey results and guided by the work of Weidman (2006), Scott et al. (2004), and Gill and Hoppe (2009), questions were then developed for two types of interviews: eight in-depth interviews that lasted at least an hour each conducted with graduates of business professional doctoral programs; and 12 shorter interviews with both alumni and students (see Appendix B). These

interviews gave alumni and students an opportunity to share their personal stories and their reasons for pursuing a doctorate. They also encouraged participants to consider the true impact of the degree on their professional and personal lives and let them comment on the program factors that they found helpful or of little consequence to those outcomes.

Survey Results

In all, 167 students and 130 alumni from 12 business professional doctoral programs responded to the questionnaire. Of those respondents, 75% attended programs in the U.S., and 51% of the alumni respondents had graduated within the past two years. Demographic information of gender, age, income, and years of experience, and was not gathered from the survey respondents.

Current students expected their business professional doctoral degree to facilitate their professional development in a variety of ways, but no single expectation stood out. Of the three possible responses—advancement within their current organization, changing companies within their same industry, or changing industries or career focuses—none dominated, with responses averaging 50-60 for each result on a continuous scale of 1–100.

In terms of actual professional outcomes, a somewhat different picture emerged, with 66% of alumni experiencing some change in their careers. Of those alumni who experienced a change, 50% changed career paths or were promoted, while an additional 16% remained in their same professional role but changed industries or companies. 22% of alumni respondents experienced no professional change, remaining in the same position with the same organization. The remaining 12% responded "Other" and provided various explanations, such as being self-employed or in transition (see Figure 1).
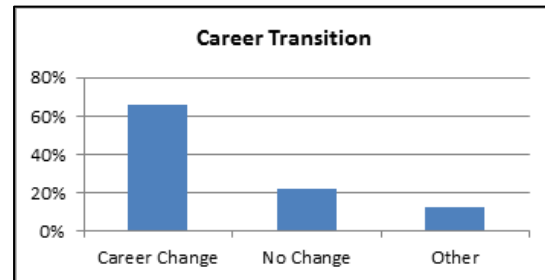

Figure 1: Career Transition
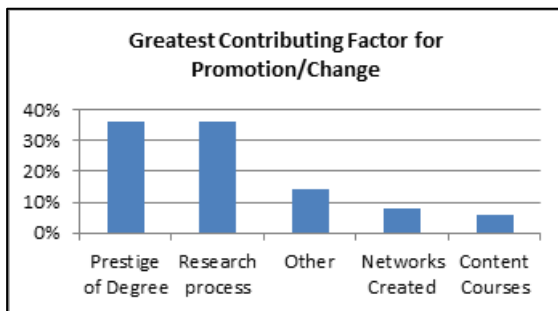
Figure 2: Greatest Contributing Factor for Promotion or Career Change

For alumni respondents who experienced a change, 85% felt their degree somewhat or greatly facilitated their promotion or career change. In defining the greatest contributing factor for the promotion or change, prestige of degree (36%) tied with research process (36%), including the dissertation process, academic writing skills, and research methods learned. Other factors reportedly contributing to career change included networks created through the program (8%), content courses (6%), and other (14%), which included factors unrelated to the professional doctorate (see Figure 2).

Regarding research and publishing capabilities post-graduation, 47% of graduates reported having published, co-published, submitted, or actively worked on at least two or three articles. The strongest reasons for those not researching and publishing were simply a lack of time (72 on the 1–100 scale), lack of access to a network of fellow researchers (52), little or no access to library or research facilities (49), and other (75), including social isolation, burn out, and problems accessing research data in their field.

When asked to indicate the extent to which their program benefitted them professionally and personally, alumni said their professional business doctorate and program participation helped them both personally and professionally. Results showed that the personal benefit was greater, with an average of 80 for personal benefit and just over 70 for professional benefit on a 100-point scale (see Figure 3). Student respondents averaged 66 for personal fulfillment or reasons other than professional development.
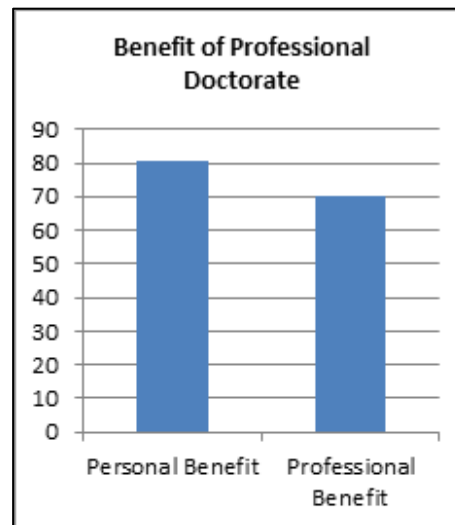
Figure 3: Benefit of Professional Doctorate (Alumni)

Teaching figured prominently into career expectations and outcomes of business professional doctoral students and graduates, but was only a moderate motivator for students. When asked the extent to which they wanted their degree to facilitate their entry into academia, the students surveyed averaged only 57 on a continuous scale of 1–100. This contrasts with the actual results among alumni, with 74% either currently teaching or planning to teach in the future and 24% currently teaching full-time at the university level.

Interview Results

To further support the research and learn more regarding the motivations, career outcomes, and personal stories of the students and alumni, the research included a qualitative component of in-depth interviews. The interviewees disclosed a variety of reasons for pursing a professional doctorate degree. Intrinsic motivations included intellectual challenge, self-enrichment and transformation, personal pride, and intellectual stimulation. Extrinsic motivations included career advancement; professional development through learning rigorous new research methods and honing skills (one respondent, for example, expressed a desire to "sharpen my game…since what once worked in the past has now greatly changed"); and the career flexibility provided by having the degree itself.

All interviewees expected their professional careers to advance in some way, but many were uncertain when they started about how the degree would tangibly impact their career. Most alumni interviewed mentioned a desire for the degree to advance their current career in academia or provide a door to academia, either upon graduation or later in life when one "loses the passion for working" in industry. When asked why they chose to pursue a professional business doctorate over a traditional PhD, the majority said that pursing a traditional PhD was "not an option given personal and financial commitments" due to the PhD programs' full-time structure and longer duration. Many suggested they might have pursued a PhD—which they believe "carries more weight," at least within academia—if the time commitment had been shorter and they had the option to continue working.

Interviewees singled out non-research coursework, the cohort structure, and student networking as key elements that facilitated personal growth, but did not necessarily directly help their professional careers. As one interviewee remarked, "It's that conversation you have with someone while in line for lunch" that was particularly helpful, while another said it was "knowledge created through interactions." Working within groups in the programs facilitated student networking and was a "real-world lesson in collaboration," though one interviewee described it as a "nightmare." One leadership course had a "tremendous effect" on one individual and opened him up to "new ways of thinking." Indeed, even after an alumnus described his non-research coursework as "fluffy MBA [Master of Business Administration] courses," he went on to point out that the courses nonetheless provided essential scaffolding for the program.

It was the research-related courses, the research process, and the networking and interactions with faculty; however, that interviewees believed benefited them professionally. The research-related courses "improved the rigor" of one alumnus' work and provided the "most useful tools" for another. For his dissertation, one student interviewed several top managers in his company, resulting in excellent visibility within his organization that was "hugely advantageous" for his career and yielded a significant promotion shortly after he completed his professional doctorate. Through her research process, one alumna became an expert in her industry on a "hot topic", while another used his dissertation to develop a web-based course for which he charges a subscription fee.

All interviewees who experienced career transformation agreed that both the knowledge gained from their dissertation research and the research process itself were instrumental in their career development and advancement. In fact, in reflecting on the importance of her dissertation's chosen area and her post-graduation career aspirations, one interviewee said she wished she had "focused my dissertation research clearly towards the direction I envisaged my career taking." Lastly, alumni viewed faculty networking and interactions as very important to their professional development. This was particularly true when a faculty member or dissertation sponsor played a mentoring role to a student, suggesting alternate career avenues, providing advice and contacts, and being available even after the degree's completion.

All alumni said that their professional doctoral programs offered the personal, intrinsic outcomes of personal satisfaction, intellectual stimulation, and at least a partial transformation. One person described the personal transformation as an "enrichment/quality of life element." Another interviewee said that, "it's a vanity thing, but I do value just having achieved the degree." Others said their programs helped "increase my emotional self-confidence," "opened up new ways of thinking," and offered a "great experience, though I wouldn't do it again given the rigor and commitment." Professionally, interviewees said the degree helped them in a variety of ways, including to open doors to academia and help them switch industries and careers, advance within their organization, move to a tenure track within academia, and improve their consulting business.

Profiles: U.S. Doctoral Graduates

Following are brief profiles of three graduates of U.S. business professional doctoral programs that illustrate various motivations, experiences, and outcomes.

Madelyn: Personal satisfaction and career transformation

Madelyn was a successful senior executive at her company, which is a world-renowned global leader in its industry. She wanted to pursue a doctorate because she foresaw a future career in academia and dreamed of a solid work–life balance. Madelyn would have preferred to pursue a PhD due to the credibility given the degree in academia, but because of her significant travel

schedule and family commitments, she instead chose a professional doctorate program in the major metropolitan area where she lived.

Madelyn had years of leadership training—including in Six Sigma—with major multinationals, so she thought she had experienced it all. However, after completing her business professional doctorate, she profusely complimented the program's non-research courses for furthering her leadership skills: "I refer back to the material constantly, perhaps almost daily." She also felt the program strongly supported her career development through the dissertation process, the quantitative underpinnings, and especially her choice of dissertation topic. Because she chose a very hot topic in her industry and had access to substantial and relevant data, she has become known as the leading expert in her field on that topic.

Madelyn's company paid for the degree, and she had a commitment to remain there for at least one year after she completed it. After that year ended, she accepted a teaching position at a major research institute. Then, within six months, she was offered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to return to industry as a practitioner at a dynamic company. She took the opportunity, although she believes she will return to teaching in the future. Overall, when reflecting on her degree's outcome, Madelyn estimates that her professional doctorate will prolong her career by 10 years by providing her the credibility to write, consult, or teach. On the personal side, she found the experience personally satisfying and credits it for enriching her quality of life.

Charles: Intellectual stimulation and career advancement

Charles has run a successful consulting practice for more than 30 years. Although he wanted to be an academic all of his life, he was "bid away" from academic pursuits and has worked in business throughout his career. His extrinsic motivation for pursuing a doctorate was to improve the rigor of his consulting work, as well as to increase his credibility. Although he had negative experiences with his research advisor, as well as a lack of contribution from other students on a significant group research project, he still had a very positive overall experience in his professional doctorate program. He noted that the research structure and statistical analysis training were "invaluable" for his career and work. In addition, he said that the ethics and leadership courses opened him up to "new ways of thinking."

Charles describes the program as "a wonderful experience," and—although he currently does not teach—the program helped him in the training he does as one component of his consulting practice. He also noted that the "Doctor" designation and the program's credibility have helped him in promotional presentations for his consulting practice. He feels he is engaging in higher-quality work and currently is working on his second book.

John: Intellectual stimulation and academic career

John is a chemical engineer with master's degrees in both management and statistics. For years, he had worked his way up in the corporate world, eventually becoming a plant manager supervising more than 100 people. When his plant's work was outsourced to an overseas operation, it closed down and John's position was terminated. However, John had always been interested in a career in academia, so he began teaching management courses full-time at a state university, as well as doing business consulting on the side. Three factors motivated John to pursue a doctorate: he enjoyed intellectual challenge, he wanted to advance his academic career, and he wanted to improve his future career options. He specifically sought out a professional doctorate, as he needed the income his teaching and consulting provided and thus could not attend school full-time.

After graduating, John was promoted to a tenure-track position at his university and is beginning to consult in the healthcare industry, which he credits to his degree from an AACSB-accredited program with good research rigor. Still, he admits, "The older faculty at his institution still are

skeptical of the business professional doctorate degree, and I may not have been offered the job if they didn't know me before receiving the degree." He adds that academia still sometimes considers the professional doctorate as "all engaged and no scholarship" and prefers a traditional PhD.

John believes the content courses and peer networks in his doctorate program were not crucial to his professional outcomes, but that through them he learned how to read academic journal articles and gained helpful knowledge on globalization. Personally, he enjoyed the significant challenge of the process, the personal relationships formed, and simply having the degree itself ("It's a vanity thing"). For John, the research skills learned, the dissertation process itself, and his relationship with his doctoral sponsor were extremely important to his career, including his advancement within academia.

Discussion and Practical Implications

Based upon the above results, the researchers developed a comprehensive model to explain the motivations, experiences, and outcomes described by survey respondents and interviewees. This model adopts the I-E-O socialization and learning process structure proposed by Weidman et al. (2001) but, unlike Weidman et al.'s (2001) model, focuses on career outcomes and does not directly incorporate his concepts of normative context and core elements. It does integrate, however, the work of Scott et al. (2004) and Gill and Hoppe (2009) in developing the defined antecedents and motivators (See Figure 4).
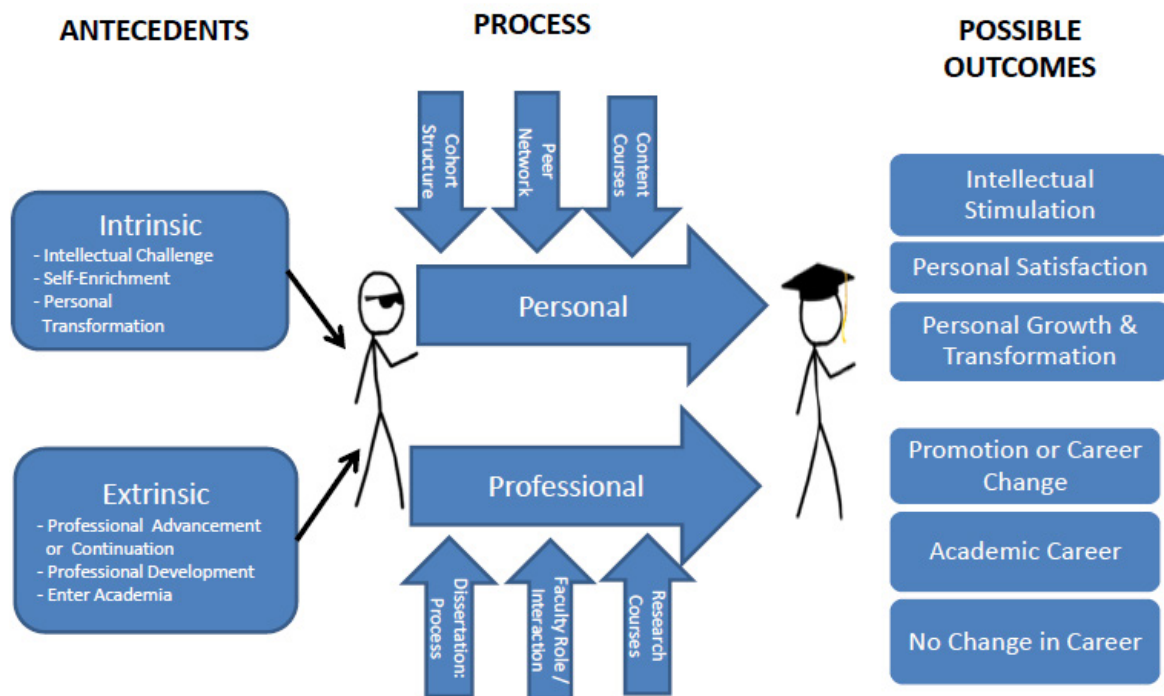
Figure 4: Process Model for Professional DBA (adapted from Weidman et al., 2001)

Personal Factors: Antecedents, Process, and Outcomes

As Brailsford (2010) revealed, students enter doctoral programs for a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. The survey average of 66 on a scale of 100 suggests intrinsic desires are strong; indeed, many interviewees said they entered their business professional doctoral programs primarily for intellectual challenge, self-enrichment, and personal transformation. This finding on the importance of intrinsic motivators is consistent with Leonard et al.'s (2005) research, in which

doctoral students' concern for personal development and intellectual interest even outweighed vocational concerns. It also mirrors Wellington and Sikes' (2006) findings on the great need for programs to help bring about structural change and transformation to a student's identity.

Interviewees said the factors that contributed most to satisfying their intrinsic motivators and creating positive personal outcomes were the content courses, peer network, and the cohort structure, which aided their interactions. They perceived the content or non-research method courses as helping them create new ways of thinking and improving their leadership skills. Although only 10% of survey respondents perceived peer networks to be of value to them professionally, many felt that the cohort structure helped them develop these networks, which they said benefitted them personally. This finding is consistent with research on adult learning in cohort groups, which reveals that, while learning in cohorts may not produce significant gains in the cognitive domain, it has been shown to lead to learning gains in the affective domain related to attitudes, self-concepts, and values. Further, cohort members tend to enjoy being part of a collaborative group and have positive feelings about their learning experience (Imel, 2002).

It is important to stress, however, that while this research did find that the factors affecting personal development were not perceived as immediately and directly helpful to a graduate's professional development, this study did not measure their indirect or long-term professional effects—a key point given that 51% of the graduates surveyed were within two years of graduation. Lastly, on a scale of 1–100, the perceived positive personal outcomes for alumni were valued 10 points higher than professional benefits. The interviewees' responses indicate that these benefits centered on intellectual stimulation, personal satisfaction, and personal growth and transformation.

Professional Factors: Antecedents, Process, and Outcomes

Extrinsically, as posited by Scott et al. (2004) and Gill and Hoppe (2009), motivators for students and alumni include professional advancement or continuation, professional development, and a desire to enter academia. One motivator not found to be prevalent in pursuing a business professional doctoral degree, however, was a preference for the professional degree over a traditional PhD. In fact, given the *perceived* inferiority of the professional doctorate in academia and the goal of many professional doctoral students to enter academia at some point, it could be argued that the PhD would have been preferred but for the possible adverse financial and personal consequences of the longer duration and full-time commitment required.

The factors that respondents perceived as a direct and immediate positive influence on their professional outcomes were research method courses; the dissertation process, including the area of focus; and the role that faculty played. Learning research methods is a primary objective of pursuing a business professional doctoral degree; it is therefore not surprising that students in these programs clearly saw the research courses' benefit to their professional development. Likewise, 36% of the interviewees believed that the greatest positive professional effect was the learning gained from the dissertation process itself, especially when the chosen topic involved or aligned with a student's current or future career, company, or industry—as in interviewing top management or researching a hot industry topic.

Finally, respondents perceived faculty interaction and relationships as very important to their professional outcomes. Among the ways they felt faculty contributed to these outcomes was by suggesting alternate avenues to students, providing advice and contacts, and being available even after the completion of the degree if there was a need. These results echo the findings of Schlosser, Knox, Moskovitz, and Hill (2003) that satisfactory relationships with graduate student sponsors were typically characterized by faculty members that, in addition to being dissertation advisors, offered their students career guidance, encouraged them to join conferences, and introduced them to important people. Lee (2009) also found that faculty nurses seeking professional doctor-

ate degrees want advisors and faculty members who are experienced, accessible, able to explain the ropes, and sensitive to the need for both emotional care and academic advice. Likewise, recent empirical research shows that when college faculty play this mentoring role it can positively impact a college student's academic achievement and persistence (Crisp & Cruz, 2009).

In terms of professional outcomes, promotion or career advancement was typically achieved, with 71% of business professional doctoral graduates reporting a change in their professional lives. That said, business professional doctoral programs report that incoming students have an average of 15 years of professional experience (Graf, 2014) and, given that students are in programs for three years or more, it is not surprising that a high percentage of alumni reported advancement. However, it is significant that 85% believed their degree somewhat or to a great extent facilitated that advancement. This high level of personal and professional satisfaction for professional doctorates is similar to the levels found among traditional doctoral graduates (Project OECD-KNOWINNO, 2012).

As we noted earlier, 74% of responding graduates reportedly are involved in teaching or aspiring to teach at some point, so an academic career is certainly a desired and actual outcome for many of the graduates, even if only part-time or non-tenured. A similar outcome is not true in relation to publishing, however; only 47% of alumni report having published, co-published, submitted, or actively worked on two or more articles since graduating.

Finally, 22% of respondents experienced no change or advancement in their career after the program. Perhaps, in part, this lack of change is due to 51% of the alumni surveyed being within two years of graduation. Further, as some people articulated in the interviews, it might also be due to factors such as academia perceiving the professional doctorate as inferior to the PhD (Ellis, 2007; Neumann, 2005); the difficulty and longer duration for job searches involving a career change; and industry's uncertainty about how to value the professional doctorate degree. Indeed, in her study on Australian professional doctorate programs, Neumann (2005) found, surprisingly, that in fields such as management and law, such a doctorate could be more of a hindrance than an asset.

Practical Implications

In terms of practical implications, this research suggests that candidates considering business professional doctoral programs can expect to experience both personal and professional benefits from their programs. If their experience is similar to those in this study, they will feel a sense of personal transformation and satisfaction, as well as enhance their chances for career advancement or change. If a person considering these programs desires to enter academia with the professional degree, however, they should consider that a professional degree might open some doors, but academia still seems to prefer a traditional PhD though this advantage must be weighed against the longer duration and full-time structures of traditional PhD programs.

During professional doctoral programs this research suggests students in business professional doctoral programs might wish to make strong efforts at establishing relationships with peers and faculty. They also should be very diligent in choosing their dissertation topic, and align their research focus not only with their personal and professional interests but also with their desired post-graduation career. Furthermore, they should carefully consider their dissertation sponsor, selecting a faculty member who is not only familiar with the chosen research methods and topic, but also who is someone with whom they are personally compatible and who will act as a mentor to their personal and professional development.

The study also has implications for administrators of business professional doctorate programs. As the findings highlight, students value content courses structured to offer new perspectives and alternative ways of thinking but these course should differ from typical MBA courses, which might be more appropriate for professional initiation than professional continuation. Administra-

tors might also consider electives and labs that give students experience in teaching a class toward the end of the doctoral studies, as a significant percentage of students want to teach at some point. Later electives might also include courses that offer executive coaching and setting up or improving consulting businesses. These courses may be helpful to students embarking on the difficult journey of changing jobs or industries late in their careers.

Further, administrators might consider providing numerous networking opportunities—both during and after the program—among students, faculty, and the practitioner-scholar community. The cohort structure and group work are helpful in this regard, but other efforts might also be beneficial. One possible pathway to enhance networking might be to establish formal mentoring programs with alumni, faculty, and key executives in industry, and to encourage students and graduates to attend appropriate industry and academic conferences. As this research illustrates, graduates view the dissertation, its process, and the sponsor as key to their professional success. Hence, administrators should closely examine the choice of advisors for the program and the process in which students and advisors are matched, with the goal of having advisors act as mentors for both academic and career purposes.

Finally, the success of business professional doctoral programs ultimately will be based not only on the program's perceived personal benefit to graduates and students—which this study shows to be strong averaging 80 on a sliding scale of 1-100—but also on graduates' actual success, the degree to which they publish, and how the degree is perceived in industry and academia. Postgraduation support is therefore essential and can be accomplished in various ways, including active alumni organizations, research centers and networks, industry forums, continued professional education and access to research facilities, and post-graduation career counseling and mentoring programs.

Conclusion

Prior research on professional doctorate programs has focused primarily on their composition and management rather than on students' motivations and how the degree impacts their careers after graduation. This study used a mixed-methods approach to glean insights into several key issues, including why people pursue business professional doctorates; the personal and professional outcomes upon degree completion; and the aspects of business professional doctoral programs that meet students' expectations and facilitate the achievement of their desired outcomes. With insights from this empirical data and guided by the literature, the researchers developed a comprehensive process model to assist in explaining the sometimes transformative process that graduates of these programs undergo.

The study, however, is not without its limitations. First, the data derived from the study is biased toward the perspectives of graduates from U.S. programs and recent graduates of business professional doctoral programs. Second, because the sample was not selected at random, the potential for self-selection bias exists and thus the results might not be representative of those students who chose not to complete the survey or participate in the interviews (Heckman, 1979). Third, despite the effort to reduce these difficulties through a mixed-method approach, interviews have inherent pitfalls and problems, including Hawthorne effects, constructing knowledge, and artificiality (Meyers, 2009, p.126–128). Future studies are encouraged, including those that look more carefully into how demographic factors affect motivations and outcomes of students and alumni; specific career outcomes, including job satisfaction, sector employment, income premium, job mobility, and employment levels; longer-term outcomes of business professional doctoral graduates; comparative reviews of the outcomes and expectations of participants from various programs and program structures throughout the world; and how academia and industry view business professional doctoral programs and their graduates.

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Appendix A:
Survey for Professional Doctorate Students and Alumni

1. Are you a student or alum of an Executive Doctorate program?
(Note: Executive Doctorate programs practitioner-researcher programs which result in awarding an Executive Doctorate of Business Administration, Doctor of Business Administration, Doctor of Management or other similar degrees)

O Current student
O Alumna/Alumnus
O Neither (discontinue survey)

Please note program and location.

STUDENT QUESTIONAIRE:
2a. I am currently:
O First year student, or in first 25% of program
O Second year student, or 50% of program complete
O Final year student, or more than 50% of program complete
O Student in final stage of program, finished coursework and completing dissertation or similar

3a. Upon completion of my degree, I expect my degree to facilitate (if more than one, please rank in order of importance):
O Advancement within my current company/organization
O Change companies within same industry
O Change industry or career focus
O Enter academia
O Degree is for personal fulfillment or other reasons rather than professional development

Additional Comments: (Please include current industry and future career plans):

4a. Would the creation of a _formal alumni organization_ be beneficial?
O No, I don't see a need for such an organization
O Yes, I like the idea, but with membership exclusive to the graduates of my program
O Yes, I like the idea, and it should be part of an international network of scholar-practitioner doctoral graduates
O Other – please describe

Additional Comments:

5a. Would the creation of a _formal organization for current Executive Doctorate students_ be beneficial?
O No, I don't see the need for such an organization
O Yes, I like the idea for all current students
O Other – please describe

Additional Comments:

6a. Should there be a combined student/alumni organization at your university
O No, keep them as separate organizations
O Yes, combine them

Additional Comments:

7a. What would be the appropriate mission of such a _student organization?_ Please rank in order of importance.
O Knowledge sharing/informal study groups
O Experience sharing about courses and curriculum
O Professional networking
O Program advice
O Joint research for scholarly publications
O Other, please specify:

Additional Comments:

8a. What would the appropriate mission of an _alumni organization_ be? Please rank in order of importance.
O Knowledge sharing/informal study groups
O Experience sharing about courses and curriculum
O Professional networking
O Program advice
O Joint research for scholarly publications
O Other, please specify:

Additional Comments:

9a. What activities do you envision by these organizations? Please rank in order of importance.
O Annual practitioner-scholar conferences
O Periodic informal meetings on topics of mutual interest

O Collaborative research projects and dissemination of Executive Doctorate research
O Collaborative problem-solving events
O Periodic reports to program management on potential improvements to the program
O Recommendations for increasing the visibility and prestige of the program
O Marketing the Executive Doctorate degree to academia and industry
O Other, please specify:

Additional Comments:

10a. Would you like to join an organization affiliated with a broader group of scholar-practitioner doctoral graduates from other schools (e.g. Georgia State, Case Western, University of Maryland, Cranfield School of Management, and others throughout the world)?
O No, I don't see a need for such an affiliation
O Yes, I like the idea, but need to know more about it
O Yes, I would be interested in being a member of such an affiliated organization

Additional Comments:

11a. I am willing to participate in the following ways. Check all that apply.
O Attend sponsored conferences
O Prepare papers and present at sponsored conferences
O Serve as organizational support for meetings and/or conferences
O Attend sponsored conferences if held outside the U.S.
O Serve as a representative of my program to a broader scholar-practitioner affiliated group
O Other (please describe below)

12a. If you would like to be contacted and become part of any of these organizations, please provide your name and contact information.

ALUMNI QUESTIONAIRE:

2b. I received my Executive Doctorate degree:
O Within the past 2 years
O 2-5 years ago
O Over 5 years ago

Please note program and location.

3b. Would the creation of a _formal alumni organization_ be beneficial?
O No, I don't see a need for such an organization
O Yes, I like the idea, but with membership exclusive to graduates of my program
O Yes, I like the idea, and it should be part of an international network of scholar-practitioner doctoral graduates

Additional Comments:

4b. Should there be a _combined student/alumni organization_?
O No, keep them as separate organizations
O Yes, combine them

Additional Comments:

5b. What would be the appropriate mission of such an organization? Please rank in order of importance.
O Knowledge sharing/continued educational opportunities
O Experience sharing about courses and curriculum
O Professional networking
O Program advice
O Joint research for scholarly publications
O Other, please specify:
Additional Comments:

6b. What activities do you envision by this organization? Please rank in order of importance.
O Annual practitioner-scholar conferences
O Periodic informal meetings on topics of mutual interest
O Collaborative research projects and dissemination of Executive Doctorate research
O Collaborative problem-solving events
O Periodic reports to program management on potential improvements to the program
O Recommendations for increasing the visibility and prestige of the program
O Marketing the Executive Doctorate degree to industry
O Other, please specify:

Additional Comments:

7b. Would it be appropriate for graduates of your program to join an organization affiliated with a broader group of scholar-practitioner doctoral graduates from other schools (e.g. Georgia State, Case Western, University of Maryland, Cranfield School of Management, and others throughout the world)?
O No, I don't see a need for such an affiliation
O Yes, I like the idea, but need to know more about it
O Yes, I would be interested in being a member of such an affiliated organization

Additional Comments:

8b. I am willing to participate in the following ways. Check all that apply.
O Attend sponsored conferences
O Prepare papers and present at sponsored conferences
O Serve as organizational support for meetings and/or conferences
O Attend sponsored conferences if held outside the U.S.
O Serve as a representative of GSU's EDBA program to a broader scholar-practitioner affiliated group
O Other (please describe below)

9b. After completing your Executive Doctorate, did you change career paths? Please check the one which most closely applies:
O No. I remained with the same organization I was with before graduation and was not promoted
O Yes. I remained with the same organization, but was promoted
O No, but I changed organizations and remained in the same industry
O No, but I changed both organizations and industry
O Yes, but I remained with the same organization
O Yes, but I remained within the same industry
O Yes, I changed both career and industry
O Other (please describe below)

Additional Comments::

10b. <<Answered yes in 9b to promotion, career or industry change.>> **What extent do you feel your degree facilitated that promotion or career change?**
O A great deal
O Somewhat
O A little
O Very little
O Not at all

Additional Comments::

11b. <<If an answered "a little" or more in 9b>> **Check what you believe is the greatest factor of your Executive Doctorate which contributed to that promotion or change:**
O Prestige of degree/designation
O Non research-related coursework and curriculum (what was taught or read)
O Research (researching, writing, research methods learned)
O Networks created (professors and/or fellow students)
O Other (specify)

Additional Comments::

12b. Do you now teach?
O Yes, full-time and university level, as primary career
O Yes, part time/adjunct at university level
O Not currently, but I plan to in the future
O No

Additional Comments::

13b. How actively have you remained involved in research after graduation?
O Not at all
O Little active (published, co-published, submitted, or actively working on one article)
O Somewhat active (published, co-published, submitted or actively working on 2-3 articles)
O Active (published, co-published, submitted or actively working on 4-5 articles)
O Very active (published, co-published, submitted or actively working on 6+ articles)

Additional Comments::

14b. <<If you answered not at all or little active to 13b>> **What do you feel is the greatest reason for your level of publishing activity?**
O N/A
O Not interested in doing formal research
O No or little convenient access to library or research facilities
O Lack of time
O Lack of access to network of fellow researchers (both professors and fellow alumni)
O Other (Specify)

Additional Comments::

15b. Do you now sit on any for-profit or nonprofit boards?
O No
O Yes 1 board
O Yes 2-3 boards
O Yes 4+ boards

Additional Comments::

16b. <<If your answer to 15b is yes>> **How many boards did you sit on before you received your Doctorate?**
O N/A
O None
O 1 board
O 2-3 boards
O 4+ boards

Additional Comments::

17b. Did your program benefit you?
O Absolutely! Both personally and professionally.
O Yes, primarily in my career.
O Yes, primarily for personal reasons.
O Yes, but not to the extent I expected
O No, not at all.

Additional Comments: (Please provide reasons for your answer above):

18b. If you would like to be contacted and become part of any of these organizations please provide your name and contact information.
Name:
Email:
Degree, University & Year completed
Current position

Appendix B:
After the Professional Doctorate, Now What?
Interview Questions

1) INPUTS/ANTICIPATORY (BACKGROUND, PREDISPOSITIONS, PREPARATION) WEIDMAN

   a) Briefly describe your professional background before entering the EDB Program
      i) Career/Organization/Industry just before attending
      ii) Other careers/organizations/industries in your experience
   b) Describe you educational background before entering the EDB Program
   c) What motivated you to pursue a doctorate? (Wellington & Sykes)
   d) Why did you choose a professional doctorate (Wellington & Sykes)
   e) On a scale of 1-10 to what extent did you expect your degree to facilitate: Elaborate (Survey):
      i) Continuing Development: professional development/advancement (Gill & Hoppe)
         (1) Advancement within my current company/organization (Survey)
         (2) Change companies but remain within the same industry, i.e. do not change career paths (Survey)
         (3) Enhance your skills and reputation (e.g. degree for credibility or advancement within academia)
      ii) Transition (Gill & Hoppe)
         (1) Change industry/career focus (Survey)
         (2) Enter academia (Survey)
      iii) Personal Fulfillment (Gill & Hoppe)
         (1) Extent to which the degree was for intrinsic reasons other than professional development or transition
2) ENVIRONMENT (INTERACTIVE STAGES OF SOCIALIZATION, FORMAL/INFORMAL) WEIDMAN
   a) On a scale of 1-10 to what extent did each of these contribute to your post-graduation career path? How (describe)?
      i) Normative Contexts (Weidman):
         (1) Non research curriculum and coursework (i.e. what was formally taught)
            (a) What courses in particular?
            (b) Process of learning, challenge of overall coursework.
         (2) Formal and Informal Networks
            (a) Peer Groups Interaction (interaction with other students) and networks
            (b) Faculty Interaction and networks
         (3) Research and dissertation
            (a) Research skill taught
            (b) Research/Dissertation process
            (c) Area of dissertation focus
      ii) Personal Communities (Weidman)
         (1) Family

   (2) Non-school friends
   (3) Employers/Professional Colleagues
   iii) The prestige of the degree/designation (Survey)
   iv) What changes would you recommend to help these contribute more effectively to future students' career aspirations? (Go through each of the above in i & ii)

3) OUTCOMES (WEIDMAN)
   a) How many years since graduation?
   b) Describe your career immediately after graduation:
      i) Career/Organization/Industry
   c) Describe your career now (if different from b):
      i) Career/Organization/Industry
   d) What impact has your professional doctorate had on your professional life?
      i) Continuing Development/Advanced Entry: professional development/advancement (Gill & Hoppe)
         (1) Advancement within my current company/organization (Survey)
            (a) I remained with the same organization and was not promoted (Survey)
            (b) I remained with the same organization but was promoted (Survey)
         (2) Change companies but remain within the same industry, i.e. do not change career paths (Survey)
            (a) I changed organizations but remained in the same industry
         (3) Enhance your skills and reputation (e.g. degree for credibility or advancement within academia)
            (a) My degree helped me to advance in academia or enhanced my consulting practice through skills learned and the credibility afforded by the degree
      ii) Transition (Gill & Hoppe)
         (1) Change industry/career focus (Survey)
            (a) I changed both organizations and industry but not career
            (b) I changed careers but remained within the same organization
            (c) I changed careers but remained in the same industry
            (d) I changed career, organization, and industries
         (2) Enter academia (Survey)
            (a) I entered academic full time and was not in academia pre-degree
            (b) I teach part time at a University Level
            (c) I teach in other institutions other than University level
            (d) I plan on teaching but do not teach now
         (3) To what extent do you feel your degree facilitated your promotion or career change or career aspirations? (Survey) (e.g. great deal, somewhat, a little, very little, not at all)
         (4) What was the greatest contributor to that success or failure?

  iii) Personal Fulfillment (Gill & Hoppe)
    (1) To what extent personally (scale of 1 -10) did your program benefit you? (Survey)
    (2) What impact has your professional doctorate had on your personal life? (Wellington & Sykes)
    (3) How did it benefit you personally or not?

4) FINAL GUT QUESTIONS:
 a) In terms of helping you professionally, name the 3 things that helped you most in your career as a result of pursuing and receiving a professional doctorate?
 b) In terms of helping you professionally, name the 3 things that were of little help in your career as a result of pursuing and receiving a professional doctorate?
 c) If you had it to do over again, would you pursue a professional doctorate in business? Why or why not? Be specific. Discuss both intrinsic (personal) and extrinsic (professional) reasons.
 d) To anyone thinking of pursuing a professional doctorate, would you advise them to do so?
    (1) If not, why not?
    (2) If so, what specific advice would you give them? What would you tell them to expect personally and professionally both pursuing the degree and after receiving the degree?

QUESTIONS ARE BASED UPON:
- WEIDMAN, SOCIALIZATION OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION, 2011
- EDB SURVEY, 2013
- GILL & HOPPE, THE BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE…., 2009
- WELLINGTON & SYKES, DOCTORATE IN A TIGHT COMPARTMENT…, 2006

Biographies

Dr. Louis J. Grabowski received his Executive Doctorate in Business from Georgia State University, an MBA from University of California-Berkeley, and a BA from Stanford University. He is currently with the Kennesaw State University Foundation and was a partner and executive in a medium-sized real estate firm in the Southeast for over 25 years. In the past he has published papers on decision making and organizational development and is a member of the Executive Doctorate in Business Administration Council.
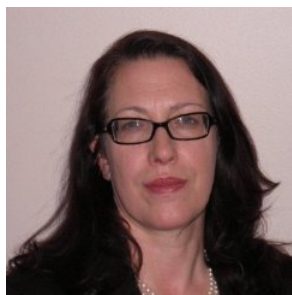
Jeanette Miller is a strategy consultant and partner with the consulting firm, 360°td Transformational Development. She has a background in emerging market economic development and lived in over a dozen countries throughout her career. She holds an Executive Doctorate of Business Administration from Georgia State University, a M.A. in international business and international relations from Webster University in Vienna, Austria and a B.A. in Economics from the University of Texas at Austin. Her principal research areas are the dynamics of social enterprises, innovation networks of small businesses and motivations of independent consultants. Although the majority of her time is spent in the practitioner world, she is also an adjunct professor at Oglethorpe University.