Autoethnography and the doctorate in business administration:

Personal, practical and scholarly impacts

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Abstract

Using the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), we analyse autoethnographies in impact statements by doctorate in business administration (DBA) students to understand outcomes for self-reflexivity, management practices, and scholarship. We also use comparative data to content-analyse keywords on UK business school DBA web sites to explore institutional expectations. As a terminal applied research degree, the DBA is designed to generate contextualised 'Mode 2' knowledge driven by solving organisational problems within students' own practices. While our paper shows that DBA students value the impact of the DBA journey on themselves as reflective practitioners, only a few web sites expect DBA students to publish. Consequently, we call for greater emphasis on DBA students' potential contributions to academic publications and the growing research impact agenda. We argue that business schools should raise the ambitions of these experienced scholar-practitioners to be more fully integrated into the academy, creating greater synergies between management theory, practice, and personal impacts in their research. Furthermore, we highlight the value of autoethnography (AE) as a useful method to incorporate self-reflexivity and to map the socialisation of DBA students within the academy. Finally, we recommend collaborative AE for DBA students and their supervisors to evidence personal, practice, and scholarly published impacts.

1. Introduction

Globally, there is strong competition in the supply of doctorate in business administration (DBA) degrees (Mellors et al., 2016) despite Harvard Business School from 2018/19 offering the Interfaculty PhD in Business Administration instead of its long-standing DBA. The DBA is often promoted as a source of self-actualisation and status enhancement. DBA programmes provide space for management practitioners to produce Mode 2 knowledge (Gibbons et al., 1994) which is contextualised and solution focused. Banerjee & Morley (2013, p. 190) note that '[r]esearch conducted in professional doctorates starts from the assumption of reflective practice and its contribution is assessed based on how practice can be enhanced'.

Increasingly, the research impact agenda is gaining prominence within national research evaluation policies (e.g. Engagement and Impact Assessment in Australia; the UK's Research Excellence impact cases). It might be assumed that at its best the DBA exemplifies what Simsek et al. (2018, p. 2021) call 'concurrent impact', i.e. 'co-creative impacts between research and practice' that create synergies between management scholarship and management practices. Yet we suggest that March's (2008, p. 13) assertion about the value of 'the combination of academic and experiential knowledge' which should be found in DBAs is not widely disseminated by DBA students (co-) publishing peer-reviewed academic papers.

The UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE, 2002, p. 62) defines the professional doctorate as: '[a] programme of advanced study and research which, whilst satisfying university criteria for the award of a doctorate, is designed to meet the specific needs of a professional group external to the university, and which develops the capability of individuals to work within a professional context.' This 'within a professional context' requires both understanding, explanation and examination of the researcher, the current environment, and interconnectivity between the two. Gill & Hoppe (2009) suggest that professional doctorates are a vital element in the wider research ecology and should not be viewed as a poor substitute for a PhD. In the business school context, Lockhart & Stablein (2002) emphasize the

importance of DBAs for enhancing practitioners' research capabilities and connecting academia with practice without compromising outputs from either.

In this article we respond to Banerjee & Morley's (2013, p. 183) observation that 'not much is known about the experience of DBA candidates and graduates who have undertaken these programs'. In addition, our paper extends Farrell et al.'s (2018) work on the importance of critical reflexivity in DBA programmes. We contextualize DBAs within the intensifying research impact evaluation agenda (see, for example Khazragui & Hudson, 2014; LSE Impact Blog). Unlike many studies on the DBA (e.g. Costley, 2013), we view the degree as a potential route to an academic career, if not full-time then for individuals with a portfolio career that includes academic teaching. We, therefore, highlight the importance of developing publishing capabilities in DBA students and graduates for them to communicate the impact of their DBA studies more effectively and extensively in the public domain and within scholarly communities.

A useful model to understand expectations of 'doctorateness' is the UK's Researcher Development Framework (RDF) which 'describes the knowledge, behaviours and attitudes of [doctoral] researchers and encourages them to aspire to excellence through achieving higher levels of development' (QAA, 2015: 13). The RDF's (CRAC, 2010, p. 2) four domains include: (i) knowledge and intellectual abilities; (ii) personal effectiveness; (iii) research governance and organisation; and (iv) engagement, influence and impact. Self-reflection is a capability highlighted in the RDF second domain. We suggest this aspect is highlighted explicitly in the impact statements of DBA theses whereas for PhD candidates often the only references to self and the doctoral journey are in the thesis acknowledgements section (Mantai & Dowling, 2015), if at all. In management learning, Cunliffe (2009, p. 98) defines self-reflexivity as a 'dialogue-with-self about our fundamental assumptions, values, and ways of interacting'.

The RDF fourth dimension of impact particularly interests us in this paper. This domain refers to publication which is listed under dissemination rather than impact. It might be

expected that DBA graduates impact their immediate organisational challenges and may contribute to knowledge within professional bodies and an industry sector rather than to academic publishing or society more broadly. In their adapted model of practice capabilities for a DBA at an Australian university, Banerjee & Morley (2013, p. 186) omit any reference to publishing or impact when discussing communicative capability. We suggest this underestimates the quality of published outputs and lowers expectations for DBA students to be heard within the academic community.

In seeking to understand the potential for greater concurrent impacts to be communicated and published by DBA students, this paper draws on autoethnography (AE) as a method adopted in the impact statements required of DBA students in many UK business schools. In explore Ae, we explore the value of both reflexivity and the impact of the DBA on the student in practice and academic publishing. This paper contributes to insights into the black box of mechanisms to track identity shifts in the doctoral journey, specifically amongst DBA students, the development of their scholarly behaviours, and their socialisation into academia.

We begin with an outline of the purpose and types of writing based on autoethnographic methods. We reflect on the benefits and limitations of AE. These issues include valuable self-discovery through enriching theory emotionally as well as the risks of over-exposure and reputational self-harm in a public forum. We argue that AE in professional doctorates requires candidates to articulate their self-awareness and resilience beyond insights expected from a traditional PhD student. From an analysis of DBA students' impact statements and UK DBA web sites, we propose greater appreciation of the potential and perils of an autoethnographic lens to yield interesting insights into their transitions to the role of an independent scholar (Baker & Pifer, 2011). We discuss the implications for supervisors and DBA students. In conclusion, we recommend further study into impact and publishing processes to enhance the impact of DBA students' contribution to concurrent impacts of both management theory and practice.

This article addresses two questions in relation to reflexive methods and research impact: Firstly, 'what are the possibilities and pitfalls of autoethnographic methods for practitioner-doctoral researchers?' Secondly, 'how can DBA programmes contribute to the concurrent impact agenda?' In answering these questions, DBA impact statements and business school web sites provide useful information on (realised) ambitions, intentions, learning outcomes and impact on the student, academia, and management practice.

On the one hand, commentators view the mid-career professional doctoral student's outputs in a practice doctorate as somehow inferior to the traditional PhD (Kirkman et al., 2007). On the other hand, the DBA may be perceived as a 'PhD plus' (Davies, 2016) that neatly combines theory and practice with a clear sense of organisational and personal impacts.

This paper is structured as follows. We begin by highlighting the aims and types of AE. We then consider the potential and pitfalls of autoethnographic approaches. Third, we investigate DBA students' experiences in impact statements and statements on UK business school web sites for DBA programmes. These are analysed within the four RDF domains. We recommend that DBA students are encouraged to publish their research within the growing research impact agenda. Finally, we suggest the value of collaborative AE for both DBA students and supervisors.

2. The purpose and forms of autoethnographic approaches

Reed-Danahay (1997, p. 145) defines AE as 'research (graphy) that connects the personal (auto) to the cultural (ethnos), placing the self within a social context.' This is quite distinct from positivistic approaches (Holt, 2003). Chang (2008, p. 43) contends that AE must focus on cultural analysis as well as self-narrative and interpretation. Denzin (1999, pp. 519) suggests that AE is inevitably political and he calls for 'an enabling, interpretive ethnography that aspires to higher, sacred goals'. Importantly, autoethnographers must behave ethically to

respect participants: ‘our primary obligation is always to the people we study’ (Denzin, 1989, p. 83).

Coffey (2002, p. 320) asserts that AE allows ‘the self and the field become one’ as the subject and object merge to disclose various predicaments and epiphanies which can be personally valuable and potentially risky. AE is distinguished, particularly analytic AE, from autobiographies and memoirs by theoretically examining individuals’ lives. Ellis (2004, p. xix) notes that evocative ethnography ‘usually features concrete action, emotion, embodiment self-consciousness and introspection’. Spry (2001, p. 709) commends the ‘emotional texturing of theory’ that AE provides. Yet in a professional school like a university-based business school, emotions in fields of study such as strategy have only recently been seen as legitimate in academic publications (e.g. Huy, 2011). With respect to our concern for research impact, Doty (2010, p. 1050) highlights the advantages of AE in helping scholars to become public intellectuals, observing that ‘one of the most exciting promises of autoethnography is the potential it has to change the way we write...mak[ing] writing more accessible to wider audiences, less dry and boring to read.’

Quantitative business school researchers and students, however, might find autoethnographic approaches incommensurate with their dominant research paradigm. For instance, Anderson (2006, p. 377) criticises evocative AE for conveying ‘emotionally wrenching experiences’ that are novelistic and lack analytical rigour. This contrasts with staples of DBA programmes – action learning and Socratic questioning which seeks layers of depth and introversion to out the truth and to explore the drivers behind actions. Ellis & Bochner (2006, p. 440) defend these accusations about AE lacking ‘traditional sociological rigor.’ Denzin (2006, p. 422) observes that autoethnographers ‘want to change the world by writing from the heart’ which is also a feature of political and radical AE (Holman-Jones, 2005). Novice researchers like DBA students especially must appreciate different forms of AE, its potential advantages and pitfalls.

3. Benefits and risks of autoethnography

In highlighting the benefits of AE, Gilmore & Kenny (2015, p. 57) suggest that organisational researchers have neglected their own emotions even when exploring others' feelings. Denshire (2014, p. 845) asserts that 'auto-ethnography demonstrates the potential to speak back (and perhaps differently) about professional life under prevailing conditions of audit culture so as to make and remake ethical relations in contexts of professional practice.' AE provides space to reflect on fragmented researcher identities (e.g. Kondo, 1990), and the boundaries between the student's professional and personal life. DBA students use AE to examine dichotomies and 'hyphen-spaces' (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2011) as practitioner-researchers. AE can mitigate what Pelias (2003, p. 369) sees as superficiality in university life which is prone to creating 'academic tourists who only manage to get to the surface of any inquiry they pursue.'

Bell & Bryman (2007) have explored the potential for harm to the management researcher in organisations as distinct from medical research ethics which focus on the potential harm by researchers to patients. Autoethnographic methods not only carry the burden of authorship (Behar & Gordon, 1995) and 'reflexivities of discomfort' (Pillow, 2003, p. 187), but there are real concerns about the potential for self-harm for autoethnographers and the individuals implicated in their highly personal narratives. Tolich (2010, p. 1610) remarks that the writer should '[t]reat any autoethnography as inked tattoo by anticipating the author's future vulnerability' which cannot be deleted once in the public domain. Ellis (1995) asserts that the autoethnographer must assume that anyone mentioned in the text will one day read it. Personal accounts are characterised by risk and vulnerability (Spry, 2001). Jago's (2002) autoethnographic account of her 'academic depression' exemplifies this long-term vulnerability and makes for uncomfortable reading. Moreover, AE is potentially fraught with issues of misery, regret, and intimacies that must be framed in an academic context which

requires higher standards of ethics than in journalism. Tolich (2012, p. 1600) reminds us that 'other people are always present in self-narratives, either as active participants in the story or as associates in the background'. However, the well-being and prior and full informed consent of those involved can be problematic, even with pseudonyms (Chang, 2008). Most importantly, however, Medford (2006) reiterates that autoethnographers must act ethically to safeguard confidential data that the people involved would not want others to read – even if they are anonymised.

So how do DBA supervisors deal with the intensity of emotions generated, perceptions of naiveté, and any embarrassment rather than empathy experienced by the readers of DBA students' autoethnographic research? Supervisors must caution students about the risks of autoethnographers sensationalising their experiences and overdramatising their lives merely to engage audiences. There is also the danger of focusing on affect rather than theoretical underpinnings to accounts, e.g. Wyatt's (2005) evocative autoethnographic story of his father. Denzin (2003, p. 137) reconciles some of these dilemmas by suggesting that autoethnographic writers will 'strip away the veneer of self-protection that comes with professional title and position...to make themselves accountable and vulnerable to the public.'

4. AE in management research

So, what is the role of AE in management research? Sensibilities and bias need to be recognised and managed in any academic research. In considering their academic peers' views on performance in Finland for example, Kallio et al. (2016) entirely ignore any discussion of their own sensibilities and biases. By contrast, Clarke et al. (2012, p. 7) acknowledge that 'prior to the research we (as academics employed by a UK business school) held ideas about the concerns with identity amongst our academic colleagues...and these informed the construction of our interview schedule.' Clarke & Knights (2015, p. 1870) explain that they avoid going native or being unreflective as a result of 'continuous interrogation of our findings between

ourselves and with other close colleagues', candidly stating that 'we do not pretend to develop constructions of reality that are either politically or morally 'neutral.''

While AE is widely used in anthropology, communications, education studies, health and social care, and sociology, it has been applied only to a limited degree in business and management research. Notable examples include business school scholars advocating AE as an unorthodox method to generate novel empirical data about experiencing fragmented identities at academic conferences (Learmonth & Humphreys, 2012). Anteby (2013: 1284) asserts that AE in management research is useful to 'lend[s] visibility to less common experience'. Most recently in organisation studies, O'Shea (2018: 3) has pushed the boundaries with her 'visceral and emotive autoethnographical account'.

5. Doctoral programmes and AE

Typically, doctoral outputs, both PhD and professional doctorates (PD) like the DBA, must demonstrate critical analysis and argument; sound methodology, structure and presentation; scholarship; a contribution to knowledge; originality and creativity with a degree of risk taking and a confident, self-critical approach. In traditional PhDs, the latter may be discussed in a section on the limitations of the research and in qualitative inquiry in the research methods section with reference, for example, to notions of the researcher-as-instrument (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Janesick, 2003; Patton, 2002).

A potential problem in completing, supervising, and examining professional doctorates (PDs) is the application of non-traditional methods and outputs that strive to demonstrate criteria for originality and creativity that test narrowly worded regulations and conventional expectations (see Doloriert & Sambrook, 2011). As the doctorate is the highest-level terminal qualification, doctoral candidates in the UK must evidence excellent standards as researchers against QAA (2015) benchmarks. In this paper we suggest there is much greater scope to embed requirements to demonstrate the impact of excellent research in DBA training programmes.

This direction of travel is gaining traction within business schools, as research impact increasingly becomes currency in measures such as Research Excellence Framework (REF). Currently, UK research council funding does not support the Doctorate in Business Administration, possibly on the assumption that employers and working practitioners will be self-funded and the key focus is on organisational practices.

The UK's 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) was the first to evaluate research impact which the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE, 2011 p. 40) defines as 'an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia.' To its surprise, HEFCE discovered that individuals rather than employers are funding professional doctorates in England (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016). Business school directors of research who are searching for impact case studies to submit in future REF returns could be encouraged to explore the potential contributions of working executives who are completing professional doctorates which usually illustrate the influence of research findings on organisational change. Moreover, there is scope for funding bodies to work with employers to encourage executives to see the DBA rather than the MBA as a terminal degree. We argue that the policy issues of professional doctoral training and the research impact agenda present an important area for attention in the talent pipeline that does not appear to be addressed currently in the literature. In this study, we suggest that impact statements written autoethnographically as part of professional doctoral programmes are important public relations collateral to promote the importance of applied research in management education.

Doloriert & Sambrook (2011), a supervisor and PhD student pair, reflected together on the hurdles in producing an autoethnographic doctorate in a traditional business school. They note that innovations in research methods for doctoral theses can be problematic as institutional academic regulations tend to stifle creative writing processes (except perhaps where there is a strong creative arts and design doctoral programme where performance and physical artefacts

may be acceptable) despite the requirements for originality and contributions to knowledge. Business school professional doctoral student voices are rarely heard. Curiously, several DBA candidates have completed their theses about the DBA (e.g. Charity, 2010; Williams, 2011) without exploring autoethnographic research methods.

6. The stimulus for our interest in this study

We bring three distinct perspectives to this review as a DBA facilitator, DBA graduate, and current in-house DBA student based in an English university-based business school. These three voices run throughout the analysis as a device for drawing out and framing the discussion. The impetus for our interest in AE in DBA programmes was in particular generated through the context of working in a university where all full-time faculty must hold doctorates or be registered on a doctoral programme. Our interest in AE was sparked by the summative assessment including the requirement for DBA candidates to submit a personal impact statement as part of the final thesis submission alongside a publishable piece of work. In their first year of the programme, DBA students write an assessed case study narrative on an organisational or leadership issue where the writer is one of the protagonists. In drafting this piece of work and within the DBA action learning sets, there is a risk of excessive self-exposure and need for adequate institutional guidelines about emotional boundary and identity work. This also applies to the DBA impact statements submitted at the end of the programme.

Additionally, as participants on the programme include colleagues of those delivering and assessing the work within the university, confusion may arise about the students' multiple roles as doctoral students, academics and senior managers, with very real concerns emerging around ownership of stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In particular, this scenario raises issues about 'relational ethics' (Ellis, 2007) with respect to autoethnographers' responsibilities to (in)visible characters (Chang, 2008) such as balancing the representation of close family members (Wall, 2008).

7. Research design

We recognise the potential risks in close-up studies (Alvesson, 2003) of researching our own sector. However, the authors' familiarity with the doctorate in business administration ethos and purpose enabled discussions in the research team to question assumptions within our analysis in comparing key themes emerging from the two datasets.

This small-scale study is a textual analysis of four impact statements produced by one year's cohort of DBA students (labelled D1, D2, D3, and D4) who completed their professional doctorates in a modern full service university-based business school in the UK. D5 is a current student on the DBA who provided similar structured insights. Table 1 summarises the five research participants' characteristics.

Table 1

Research participants' characteristics

DOCTORAL STUDENT:	**D1:**	**D2:**	**D3:**	**D4:**	**D5:**
DBA STUDY	Completed	Completed	Completed	Completed	Year 4, writing up
WORK LOCATION	Private sector Care	Public sector Marketing	Public sector Legal	Public sector Senior HR professional / university senior lecturer	Public sector Senior university lecturer
FUNDING PROVISION	Self-funded	Employer funded	Self-funded	Self-funded / employer funded	Employer funded
GENDER	Female	Female	Male	Female	Male

An initial textual analysis revealed 13 key themes: fragmented identities; learning journey; personal change and resilience; learning insights; motivation; transitions; critical incidents; political AE, affirming values, morality, ethics; transformative outcomes, discovery; action learning set cultural experiences, relations with others; emotions – evocative AE, self-disclosure, discomfort; research insights – analytical AE; post DBA identity, aspirations, self-

value. These themes were then mapped against four domains within the Researcher Development Framework (CRAC, 2010) mentioned in the introduction.

8. Findings

Our analysis emphasised the interplay of dualities of self and culture and the tensions and discoveries between the two as the DBA student is socialised as a scholar-practitioner. Tables 2-5 present key themes from the DBA students' impact statements in our sample written in various forms of evocative, analytical, and political autoethnographies. These are supplemented by the views and perceptions of a student who is currently studying the DBA (D5). Clustering students' comments within the four domains of the RDP framework groups shows how their capabilities have developed during their doctoral journeys. These include the domain of knowledge and intellectual abilities (Table 2), personal effectiveness (Table 3), research governance and organisation (Table 4), and engagement, influence and impact (Table 5). The greatest focus was on personal effectiveness with the least focus on intellectual abilities and impact.

Table 2

DBA impact statements mapped against RDF domain a: knowledge and intellectual abilities

D1:	D2:	D3:	D4:	D5:
1. Research insights – analytical AE				
The value of coding frames.	Temporal contextualisation. Acceptance of own interpretivist stance in conversations with positivists. Theoretical framing of managerial experiences.	The value of questions, organisational culture and critical incidents.	Development of reflection. Collision of grounded theory in thesis and action learning set design of the DBA programme delivery caused upset for the student.	Enjoyment of the freedom that narrative research brings and the interest that comes from semi-structured interviews and the surprises and twists that take the research in new directions... and that within this discipline this is acceptable and useful.

Table 3

DBA impact statements mapped against RDF domain b: personal effectiveness

D1:	D2:	D3:	D4:	D5:
2. Fragmented identities				
'There is nothing special about me except that I manage to balance different activities without derailing.'	Identity as a female humanities graduate in private sector with male senior managers with financial/legal backgrounds.	Document chronicles public service vocation and diverse interim experiences.	HR practitioner who during study transitioned into a full-time academic role.	Former HR practitioner, career change into academia. Sustaining pracademic identity by teaching working postgraduates.
3. Learning journey				
Learning for the job then learning for life.	Moving out of comfort zone, more democratic leadership style.	Commitment to lifelong learning.	Unhappy at school and felt let down in terms of aspirations being supported. DBA was a deliberate choice over PhD for professional reasons.	Initially joined as part of the University's mandate for all academics to hold a doctorate. Found constructive misalignment in the benefits from the study and journey.
4. Personal change and resilience				
Resilience, emotional intelligence, self-determination, pragmatism, energy management, focus, ability to deal with critical feedback, tenacity. Openness, courage, embracing new practices.	Delegation to team members at work to reduce overload in full-time job while completing doctorate part-time.	Public service ethos, ability to link theory and practice. Valued the need for leaders to develop soft skills in setting the tone of an organisation. No real sense of self-doubt expressed in the impact statement.	Inspired by DBA supervisor. Overcame illness and self-doubt and showed resilience.	Following quite serious illness, surprised at being able to manage study and work effectively – this rebuilt confidence in capacity and resilience.
5. Learning insights				
Frankl (1946: 135) 'when we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.'	Importance of maintaining a learning journal for personal and professional insights.	Reflections shaped by profession, education and personal experiences.	Enjoyed the learning journey and delivered surprises throughout.	Interest in narrative qualitative work, feminism. Confidence regained.

6. Motivation				
Intellectual challenge, recognition, autonomy, competence, to make a difference. Dissatisfaction with marketisation in current role.	Encouraged by boss to register for the DBA. Concern about the impact of policy changes on income generation.	Government policy changes, New Public Management reforms. Professional identity.	Autonomy, self-esteem, 'doing something for me'.	Initially part of the university mandate – no choice. The research started to generate its own rewards.
7. Transitions				
From imposter to confident researcher.	Imposter syndrome, discussions of lack of self-confidence. Self-esteem gained during the doctorate.	Transition from a specialist employee to an interim legal services researcher on the public service ethic.	Part way through moved into an academic role. Making a difference as an outsider, transitioning to an insider.	On-going imposter syndrome, but recognising this. Now more accepting of transition to the DBA.
8. Political AE, affirming values, morality, ethics				
Desire for intellectual challenge after working in a job that increasingly focused on shareholders amidst political turbulence overseas.	Personal struggles in working in the public sector that is subject to intense marketisation.	Questions personal public service ethic in an environment forced to adopt business-like practices.	Affirmation of self. Need for 'authenticity'	Continue to question value of the DBA. University's mandate to complete DBA and publish are political elements to the journey.
9. Action learning set cultural experiences, relations with others				
'Psychological nudge' (Deci & Flaste, 1996). Valuable peer support and feedback. Increasing mutual self-respect for each other's work. Inspiring intellectually. Regularity, momentum. Critical friends.	Very valuable mutual support. Discipline of taking time out to think, challenge assumptions, reframing. Time to step back is a necessity and an integral part of the learning. For problem solving (Moon, 2002).	The value of Rolfe et al.'s (2001) framework for reflexive practice and Revans' (1980) focus on collective learning in action learning.	Some reservations as it was felt the participants were not all on the same project. The action learning set of DBA students was closely managed and facilitated which detracted from the potential for organic development	A strong and mutually supportive group which has continued to add value into its fourth year.
10. Emotions – evocative AE, self-disclosure, discomfort				
Fear, despair, daunted, demoralised, lost confidence,	Self-doubt, anxiety because of soft discipline background with quantitative	Enjoyment conducting interviews, interesting,	Regret at not having previously met potential (Oxbridge).	Some initial reservations that quickly gave way to enjoyment. The judgment of value based on publishing star

disorientation, exhilaration.	colleagues, greater confidence.	revelationary experience.	Taking personal responsibility for development and learning.	ratings is at odds with personal need to see inherent and explicit value in research.

Table 4

DBA impact statements mapped against RDF domain c: research governance and organisation

D1:	D2:	D3:	D4:	D5:
11. Critical incidents				
Completely reframing the proposal was a key milestone. Recalibrating values and mental attitude. Quantitative assignment.	Appreciation that she needed to 'let go' at work and trust others so that she could cope with the overload of work and study.	Yr 1: understanding paradigms and philosophy. Clarity around own learning styles. Yr 2: settled on a paradigm. Yr 3: literature, empirics.	Workplace organisational change. Husband's redundancy at work part-way through.	Submission and high grade achieved for progression document at the end of year 2 validated the value of the DBA work and impetus to progress.
12. Transformative outcomes, discovery				
Self-rediscovery. 'We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time' (Eliot, 1943, p. 39). Recovery of own voice. A healing process.	Reached stage seven of Kitchener & King's (1990) reflective judgment model: willingness to re-evaluate the adequacy of one's judgments as new data or new methodologies become available.	Enhanced research skills, original contribution of practical relevance.	Integration of work-life and academic study. A line of future research and development of expertise	Integration of study into teaching and use of the enhanced understanding of research and philosophy have helped guide and challenge Master's level students. Still on the journey towards research efficacy and confidence.

Table 5

DBA impact statements mapped against RDF domain d: engagement, influence and impact

D1:	D2:	D3:	D4:	D5:
13. Post DBA identity, aspirations, self-value				
Facilitating research workshops, policy work, consulting, bridging practice and theory. Changed job out of a high pressurised 'rat race.'	Remained in same role, enhancing services in the same institution.	Continue to research data and work in interim roles. Bridges local government and legal professional role. Not concerned with personal career advancement.	Proof of concept – the DBA student became a full-time 'academic'. Focused on their impact on university students.	Not yet there ... hopefully some confidence, and efficacy in research.

In the impact statements written by D1, D3 and D4, the individuals used the DBA as a route to move from demanding full-time corporate jobs to attain a different work-life balance and find new intellectual challenges more aligned with their personal values. D5 is a lecturer who moved into academia from a senior professional role and currently studying the DBA. In relocating from an increasingly bottom-line mandate in healthcare overseas, D1 reflected on regaining equanimity, averting derailment. She reiterated her resilience and grit, her capabilities in managing her work life balance that is driven by her courage to embrace change and passion for life-long learning. In terms of impact, this DBA graduate discusses her intentions 'to make a difference' as a 'confident researcher', with her 'own voice' using the skills of framing situations and coding. No reference is made to publishing aspirations in terms of bridging practice and theory, policy work, or her role in facilitating research workshops. In view of D1's journey from despair to exhilaration and appreciation of mutual peer support, the account suggests a focus on actual concurrent impacts would be valuable to ground the transformational journey through critical self-reflexivity over the course of the DBA.

The impact statement for D2 again highlights a sense of 'other' in self-reflections. In this case, female v. male, public v. private sector, and humanities v. financial/legal backgrounds led to a similar loss of personal self-confidence felt by D1. The themes of letting go, in this

case of delegating work, and seeking intellectual challenge and a more inclusive style of working to make space for self-reflection and to contemplate the impact of public policy market pressures were important elements of the narrative. Importantly, D2 was open to more evidence-based arguments, peer support, and theoretically framing management problems over the course of the DBA. Yet there was no change in job role but a focus by D2 on enhancement and greater confidence which may reflect an in-house employer-funded degree. Again, no aspirations to publish were mentioned which indicates that reflective practice was privileged over broader concurrent impacts.

For D3, the only male DBA graduate in the sample, once more the theory-practice link was emphasised alongside a public value ethos. However, no reflections on self-confidence were mentioned, in stark contrast with the women's voices. Like D2, there was a concern with understanding changes in government policy and resistance to New Public Management and profit orientations. As for D1, D3's DBA coincided with a transition from being an employee to more personally fulfilling interim work experiences underpinned by their enhanced research skills. Again, however, there was no concrete evidence about how the individual's 'original contribution of practical relevance' was published to evidence concurrent impacts beyond the DBA thesis.

D4 illustrated a career change into a full-time academic position during the DBA with responsibility for teaching courses approved by her professional body. The individual felt that the DBA was an opportunity to take personal responsibility for her life-long learning to compensate for the lack of support in secondary school for her to excel despite suggestions at the time that she was 'Oxbridge material'. Curiously, in hindsight this respondent also felt that the DBA let her down in not developing her academic publishing skills that are required for REF publishing and impact expected of her in her full-time academic position. As in the other examples of female DBA students, personal resilience, self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-determination were highlighted in the self-reflections. This was coupled with a sense of being

more rounded, authentic, and able to cope with work-life-study balance because the DBA was 'her' agenda. This DBA graduate overcame illness and a spouse's workplace redundancy to complete her DBA which represented a form of career future proofing in uncertain times. D4 criticised the action learning and highly reflective methodologies adopted throughout the delivery of her DBA programme that she felt were misaligned with her own preferences for grounded theory in her thesis.

Finally, D5 provides an example of a DBA student who is mid-way through the journey and who is required by his current academic employer to publish in peer reviewed journals. D5 is still experiencing imposter syndrome. D5 has a practitioner background and having moved into academia a decade ago he passionately feels the need to focus on the practical value of research. He views himself as a 'pracademic' (Posner, 2009) with its positive, rather than derogatory, connotations of bridging theory and practice effectively. The impact statement is, therefore, core to this individual's framing of value by ensuring that he is in touch with his authentic values in producing research that is of direct practical relevance to the external world and his academic job.

None of the DBA impact statements was concerned with seeking career advancement as a goal that was considered more important than learning and self-fulfilment. The mandate for D5 to complete a doctorate to continue to work in his academic role in a particular university that is seeking AACSB accreditation was a source of personal frustration and annoyance.

Overall, there was a sense of the individuals developing professional research skills and making the world a better place. The DBA helped them to become more attuned to their values and public value. The doctorate helped the students to change from a narrow focus on being 'business-like' and on profits and shareholder value. There were substantial mid and end of career realisations that these individuals discovered about changing themselves and moving on from predicaments where they had felt trapped and intellectually unfulfilled.

Our analysis of these statements suggests that research insights were mainly related to personal growth, understanding self and government policies and conversations with immediate DBA peers. The impact statements did not illustrate that D1, D2, and D3 who were not working in academia were so driven by a sense of public and academic engagement to sustain a place in the culture of the academy after graduation. The exception was D4 who was immersed in academia but who felt insufficiently equipped to publish on graduation. This is then given further context and granularity by considering the responses of a student still on the DBA journey (participant D5).

To complement comments from DBA students in this single institutional case study, like Poole (2018) we also looked at DBA web sites. We updated Bannerjee & Morley's (2013) web site analysis of DBA offerings by UK business schools listed in *The Complete University Guide*. A comprehensive review of the publicity materials of 33 UK universities has indicated very little mention of 'reflection'. There is also a variance in expected outcomes: self-development is usually the main selling point followed by contribution to professional practice. Only one university mentions the contribution of DBA students as members of the university's research community:

> *Our DBA and DProf participants become active members of our research community… Members of this community are true practitioner-researchers* (University of Chester).

Only one university in Scotland alludes to DBA students' work being included in peer-reviewed journals:

> *you'll join our economics research community… you'll be encouraged to submit and present papers…to be considered for publication in academic journals* (University of Strathclyde, Economics DBA).

We found that four universities state academic publication skills are developed to enable DBA students to publish:

> *Develop writing skills to enable you to submit researched work for* publication (Leeds Beckett).
>
> *DBA graduates… have the ability to… produce first-class original research of publishable quality* (University of South Wales).
>
> *develop transferable skills in… academic publishing* (Anglia Ruskin University).
>
> *some of our students do publish in leading academic and practitioner journals* (University of Bradford).

Only business schools at the University of Sterling and University of South Wales indicate that the DBA could offer a route into academia. In contrast, Henley Business School specifically states that the DBA is especially beneficial for a business school academic who is seeking a doctoral qualification:

> *The programme will be of particular benefit to experienced senior executives, consultants, management educators and business school academics.*

The requirement for business school faculty members to complete an in-house doctorate is a strategy to fulfill AACSB accreditation standards (Stoten, 2016) – this practice may be subject to accusations of conflicts of interest as colleagues become supervisors and students.

9. Discussion and conclusion

Our paper has extended Farrell et al.'s (2018, p. 378) concern for 'wastage' on DBA programmes where the academic potential of students is lost. We show this in the analysis of DBA impact statements through the lens of the RDF tool and by replicating Banerjee & Morley's (2013) analysis of key words on UK business schools' web sites for the DBA. We have demonstrated that this concern is justified more widely in terms of the claims by only a few business schools that DBA students are expected to publish or are embraced by a school's scholarly community.

Methodologically, we have shown that DBA students' reflections illustrate the utility of AE in management research which has tended to under-utilise self-revelatory accounts found in disciplines such as sociology. The commentaries provided in the impact statements in Tables 2-5 that were analysed and clustered according to the RDF framework in this study illuminate the value of AE for analysing DBA students' insights. In assessing the limitations of these self-evaluations in a small single institutional sample, we might ask whether the DBA students have rationalised and sanitised their accounts to avoid appearing emotionally 'immature, primitive, or even pathological' (Lutz, 1988, p. 41).

Tables 2-5 illustrate that practitioner doctoral students gain confidence over time in re-defining themselves as they transition between their affiliations with different milieux as executives and students. AE helps them to verbalise their insecurities and anxieties about finding their own voices. This requires skilful storytelling and literary skills that take time to develop in appreciating their own progress and the new academic culture they are becoming part of. The individualising focus on the 'I' in autoethnographic writing is complemented by the camaraderie of professional doctorate cohort programmes (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016, p. v) and in the case of the DBA students in this research provides them with an empathetic audience. Nevertheless, supervisors must take responsibility for professionally 'containing' doctoral students' emotions which can drain the resources of the key stakeholders involved. Doctoral impact statements serve a useful purpose in going far beyond what Gilmore & Kenny (2015) note is often seen as tokenistic researcher self-reflexivity written mechanically in so many research methods sections. DBA statements also provide an element of longitudinal review, identifying transitions and changes throughout the DBA journey

The vignettes in the impact statements offer inspiring stories of resilience, hope and triumph in completing a thesis. In the case studies provided here, there is a strong sense of reclaiming one's intellectual capabilities in or after demanding jobs where market forces have made the DBA students question the public value of their work. This sense making and identity work

give the subject as object opportunities to reflect on their emergence as professional researchers and finding their voice and renewed agency in a series of existential crises. The personal epiphanies and questioning of assumptions at best can be engaging and compelling. However, there are risks in these self-narratives being dismissed as navel gazing, confessional, overindulgent and sensational like reality TV diaries.

How do supervisors assure the quality of autoethnographic research which breaks canonical methods? How are doctoral candidates guided to ensure they respect boundaries, ethical relations and apply high ethical standards to themselves as they confront their emotions and reflect on and contextualise their intellectual growth over time? How do examiners evaluate the quality of autoethnographic accounts? Issues of generalisability, reliability, validity and legitimacy are replaced by considerations of meaningful coherence and resonance in qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). What may be cathartic and intimate for the writer may be dull, self-centred and uncomfortable for the reader and risk the privacy and safety of others. Yet the story telling qualities and cultural insights of some autoethnographic accounts may be fascinating and truly inspiring. Nevertheless, supervisors and current students need to be mindful of the candour and openness they are showing, which provide both great value and learning from the impact statement, but also present potential vulnerability that is not so immediately identifiable in a PhD thesis 'researcher-as-instrument' (Pezalla et al., 2012) methodology section or in thesis acknowledgements thanking friends and family.

In terms of the impact agenda addressed in our second research question, like Farrell et al. (2018) we find that critical self-reflexivity appears to be prioritised over expectations and incentives for these professional doctoral students to publish concurrent impacts in management scholarship and management practice. As management educators in universities, there are clear opportunities for us to integrate impactful DBA outputs into the growing range of professional doctorates in management.

With the UK's intense focus on the REF impact case agenda, research pathways in research grants, and UKRI funding focused on making explicit links to the UK's industrial and overseas aid strategies, it makes sense for business school deans and representative bodies (such as the British Academy of Management and Chartered Association of Business Schools) to lobby policy-makers and research councils to recognise the valuable impacts of DBA programmes in addressing complex challenges. DBAs might explicitly be integrated into government funded Doctoral Training Centres (DTCs) and in other research funding opportunities. Better communications about the returns on investing in research and practice at the DBA level amongst senior leaders looking to evidence their industrial/organisational achievements would help to raise the visibility of this terminal degree and its wider benefits.

We conclude that as demands intensify for university management educators to demonstrate impact and scholarship, the DBA programme represents an under-utilised source of multiple forms of impact for the student, their practice and academic publications. In raising these discussions, we contribute to contextualising professional doctoral student education within on-going debates about the 'double hurdle' (Pettigrew, 1997) of demonstrating scholarly excellence and management relevance. We argue that the DBA can enhance the legitimacy and impact of business and management education (Pettigrew & Starkey, 2016) over and above the DBA's function as a critical self-reflexive journey and status enhancing title.

We make a practical contribution in calling for further research on support systems and frameworks to enhance the academic publishing skills and ambitions of DBA students beyond their immediate work place and personal challenges to demonstrate significant and far-reaching 'concurrent impact' (Simsek et al., 2018, p. 2021) in both management scholarship and management practice. Finally, we recommend extending AE as a method in management scholarship in the form of collaborative AE to support doctoral supervisors (Duffy et al., 2019) as well as students.

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