

# Tipps und Beispiele zur Erstellung eines „Research Proposals“ für die DBA-Bewerbung

Dieses Dokument soll Ihnen dabei helfen, sich zu orientieren und Ihnen die Erstellung eines Research Proposals für das DBA-Studium zu erleichtern. In diesem Dokument finden Sie:

1. *Tipps zur Erstellung eines Research Proposals für die DBA-Bewerbung*
2. *Vollständiges Beispiel eines fünfseitigen Research Proposals*
3. *Weitere Beispiele, beschränkt auf ihre Krenteile*

Wenn Sie sich für ein DBA-Studium interessieren, beraten wir Sie gerne persönlich bei der Erstellung eines Research Proposals: [info@isl-reutlingen.de](mailto:info@isl-reutlingen.de). Weitere Informationen zu unserem DBA-Programm finden Sie auf [www.dba-reutlingen.de](http://www.dba-reutlingen.de).

## 1. Tipps zur Erstellung eines Research Proposals

### *Typische Ausgangssituation von DBA-Bewerbern*

Weil der Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) sich an Berufstätige wendet, ist klar: Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten ist für Bewerber oft eine ganze Weile her. Deshalb ist es bei DBA-Bewerbern verständlich, wenn die Anfertigung eines Research Proposals mit Fragen und Unsicherheiten verbunden ist.

### *Einordnung des Research Proposals*

Das Research Proposal ist Teil der Unterlagen, mit denen man sich für ein DBA-Studium bewirbt. Es umreißt das Forschungsgebiet und beschreibt die Fragestellung, mit der man sich im Promotionsvorhaben beschäftigen möchte. Dies bedeutet aber keine endgültige Festlegung. Diese Festlegung findet erst am Ende des ersten Studienjahres statt, nachdem Teilnehmer Forschungsmethoden eingeübt haben. Im Bewerbungsstadium geht es also beim Research Proposal um einen plausiblen Ausgangspunkt. Das Research Proposal sollte 2500 Wörter nicht übersteigen (das entspricht etwa fünf Seiten).

### *Wie man sich auf die Suche macht*

Beim DBA sollen praktisch relevante Fragestellungen erforscht werden, zum Beispiel im eigenen beruflichen Umfeld, wo Datenerhebungen oder Interviews durchgeführt werden könnten. Wichtig sind Ihre eigenen thematischen Interessen – versuchen Sie etwa, diese durch Schlagwörter niederzulegen. Mit diesen Schlagwörtern können Sie dann im Internet nach relevanter Literatur suchen. *Google Scholar* ist für wissenschaftliche Literatur eine gute Suchmaschine. Gibt man dort Begriffe oder Autoren ein, so erscheinen nicht nur relevante Literaturquellen, sondern auch ein Verweis zu weiteren, aktuelleren Beiträgen, die die ursprüngliche Quelle zitieren. Eine weitere Seite ist [hausarbeiten.de](http://hausarbeiten.de), wo kaum ein Thema existiert, zu dem es nicht Haus- oder Abschlussarbeiten mit Literaturverzeichnissen gibt.

### *Das Grundgerüst eines Forschungsproposals*

Ein Research Proposal hat etwa folgende Struktur:

1. *Motivation* oder *Hintergrund* des Forschungsvorhabens.
2. Die *Forschungslücke* („*research gap*“) – sie zeigt auf, in welchem engen Themenfeld ein Beitrag geleistet werden soll.
3. Die *Forschungsfrage* („*research question*“) – dies ist die Spezifikation des Forschungsprojekts. Ist die Frage beantwortet, ist das Forschungsvorhaben erfüllt.
4. Die *Methodik*, mit der man der Forschungsfrage nachgeht – diese ergibt sich aus einer für das Forschungsvorhaben passenden Zusammenstellung einzelner, bekannter Forschungsmethoden.

Die ersten drei Punkte erfordern Literaturrecherche. Dabei haben Beiträge in Forschungsjournals mehr Autorität als Fachbücher (auch wenn diese durchaus herangezogen werden können). Anstelle oder in Ergänzung zur Forschungsfrage werden Forschungsziele („*research goals*“ oder „*research aims and objectives*“) formuliert. Da die „*research question*“ meist noch recht allgemein klingt, präzisiert man diese durch ca. drei Unterfragen oder Forschungsziele. Auch werden manchmal sog. Hypothesen formuliert – Vermutungen, die man in einem Forschungsprojekt überprüfen möchte. Der vierte Punkt, die Methodik, erfordert die Wahl einer oder mehrerer Forschungsmethoden. Darauf soll kurz eingegangen werden.

### ***Forschungsmethoden***

Im Grunde kann man zwischen qualitativer und quantitativer Forschung unterscheiden. Benutzt man beides, spricht man von einem „*mixed method approach*“. Bei qualitativer Forschung sind die Rohdaten Texte, bei quantitativer Forschung Zahlen. Qualitative Forschung läuft auf Interviews hinaus, die systematisch ausgewertet werden. Quantitative Forschung analysiert meist mit Statistik Daten, die durch Fragebögen („*surveys*“) erhoben werden, oder die über andere Quellen, wie Datenbanken, zur Verfügung stehen. Während qualitative und quantitative Datenerhebung die Forschungsgrundlage darstellen, sind sie zudem die Basis für weitere Forschungsmethoden, die bei Promotionsvorhaben zum Einsatz kommen. Zwei wichtige sind:

- *Fallstudien* („*case studies*“): Von einer Fallstudie spricht man, wenn das studierte Objekt eine bestimmte Einheit ist, wie eine Organisation, ein Prozess, eine Gruppe oder gar ein Individuum. Dieses Objekt wird dann mit qualitativen und/oder quantitativen Methoden erforscht.
- *Aktionsforschung* („*action research*“): Action Research bedeutet, dass der Forscher selbst in die zu untersuchende Umgebung eingreift, dort eine Veränderung bewusst einführt, um diese dann beobachten zu können. Während man normalerweise von einem reinen Beobachtungsstatus des Forschers ausgeht, hat Action Research also einen gestaltenden Charakter, bei dem der Forscher z.B. Problemlösungen ausprobieren und gleichzeitig wissenschaftlich beobachten kann. Action Research ist meist qualitative Forschung.

Mehr Wissen über Forschungsmethoden ist im Bewerbungsstadium für ein Research Proposal kaum erforderlich – die ausführliche Behandlung von Forschungsmethoden erfolgt ja im ersten Jahr des DBA-Studiums. Auch ist die Wahl von Forschungsmethoden grundsätzlich nicht fix an Themengebiete gebunden. So gibt es sowohl qualitative, quantitative als auch „*mixed method*“ Promotionsvorhaben in Bereichen wie Marketing, Finance, Information Systems usw.

## **2. Beispiel eines Research Proposals**

*Research proposal:*

### **Improving Soft Skill Training in Management through Methods Used in Performing Arts Curricula**

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- I. Motivation
- II. Literature scan
- III. Research gap
- IV. Research question and research goals
- V. Research methods
- VI. Relevant experience, research project feasibility

References

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#### **I. *Motivation***

Recent research findings have reinforced the importance of soft skills for managerial success (Gentry *et al.* 2008). Consequently, there is an ongoing practical need for and research interest in effective soft skill training design for management development purposes (Crosbie 2005). To improve the quality and effectiveness of soft skill trainings for managers, a closer look at professions with deep soft skill exposure, such as performing arts, could offer a source of corporate training optimisation. Managerial training seminars on communication, presentation and presence, speech and use of voice, stress management, facilitation or conflict management rarely exceed a few days. By contrast, the higher education curricula of performing arts universities include practical training on comparable topics over the period of weeks or months. Requirements for soft skill mastery are extremely high in the professional arts: the scale of the audience and the prohibition of mistakes with no chance of re-submission of unsatisfactory performance dictate a most superior skilfulness for stress handling, communication, agility, or, in the case of orchestra, leadership and team building (Gansch 2006). It therefore seems that, in at least some behavioural areas, there is a considerable gap between the training and occupational requirements of performing arts professionals on one hand, and the relatively limited training breadth and depth of managers. However, as stated initially, many studies have witnessed that soft skills are consistently ranked as most important when it comes to career advancement in management. Therefore, a systematic exploration of the applicability of performing arts training methods and exercises to a

management development audience is potentially valuable for advancing the effectiveness and professionalism of soft skills training practice.

## II. *Literature scan*

Two areas and their connections are relevant for the proposed doctoral project: soft skills in business and arts-based training.

### *Soft Skills*

Soft skills are defined as attitudes and behaviours displayed in interactions among individuals that affect outcomes of such encounters (Muir 2014: 13). There exist a few item lists or models that can serve as a starting point, including a competency model by the American Management Association (Tobin & Pettingell 2008) or exemplified lists (Davis et al. 1996; Crosbie 2005). These models can be taken as a starting point for describing soft skill categories. Other concepts related to soft skills, such as emotional intelligence (Goleman 1995), personality or leadership should be included in the study of soft skills when turning to training soft skills or exploring arts-based training. Many authors claim that soft skills can actually be trained. For example, McEnrue and Groves (2006) confirm a considerable agreement among scientists about the fact that skills can be developed over time. This is an important prerequisite when proposing arts-based training elements.

### *Arts-based Training*

Originally, the relationship between arts and the business world has been mainly characterised by philanthropy, sponsorship and social investment and not by turning to artists for business improvements (Manning 2007). Thus, it was only recently that “people in the arts would have begun to share their expertise in creativity and high performance with leadership of business” (Bartelme 2005: 5). Arts-based interventions in organisations may have existed for a few decades, but overviews about this phenomenon only emerged recently. It is generally known that “only very few empirical studies have been conducted” and that there is “a considerable gap between research and practice” (Berthoin Antal 2009: 5). Some very few models have been proposed to structure the phenomenon of arts-based management development, including a typology matrix (Tylor & Ladkin 2009) and the arts value matrix of Schiuma (2009). However, these models are very abstract and do not address training specifics, especially relating to the training of soft skills.

## III. *Research gap*

As seen above, the review of literature on training and management development reveals rather limited reference to the use of music or arts in managerial training settings. These few references include the general “potential of arts in training” (Beckwith 2003), the “enhancement of management education through music and magic” (Wheatley 1998), or the metaphorical potential of chamber music for coaching managers (Megginson 2000). Thus,

research has hardly linked the training universe built upon in performing arts education to the training context of managers, particularly in the area of soft skills.

#### IV. *Research question and research goals*

The research question can be stated as follows:

*How can management soft skill training benefit from training exercises used in performing arts higher education curricula?*

This research question translates into three distinct research goals:

1. *Identification and structuring of soft skill training elements:* Managerial and performing arts training should be related to each other through a common frame of reference – a suitable set of soft skills to be identified.
2. *Clarification of the usefulness of performing arts training for management development purposes:* Without empirical evidence, any value derived from performing arts training elements for management development remains a mere assumption. To substantiate this assumption, empirical evidence is required.
3. *Proposal of training approach:* Based on the findings in the previous steps, a suggestive model might be devised to capture conclusions and recommendations.

#### V. *Research methodology*

Arts-based training for managers is a hardly researched area. Qualitative research seems more appropriate here, because the research topic has to be explored with many open questions. Quantitative research, on the other hand, typically addresses specific questions, for example, how one variable depends on the other – this is less suitable here.

The idea is to conduct in-depth interviews with two groups of respondents: performing arts professors and HR representatives of consulting firms. In-depth interviews are conducted on a one-to-one basis while allowing a great degree of flexibility. Professors from performing arts universities are chosen because they know the curricula of theatre, musical instruments or conducting, including training exercises. The second target group for interviews are HR representatives, since they are knowledgeable about management training needs and programmes. For empirical purposes, these HR managers will be interviewed from industry known to have very high soft skills requirements: management consulting (Mohe 2006). By choosing top management consulting as a target industry, the HR training community is arguably limited to a more coherent population sharing similar training needs for empirical research purposes. Typically, HR training managers in consulting firms have an actual career

track in consulting (Kubr 2002), which makes them knowledgeable about the training needs of consultants.

## VI. *Relevant professional experience and research project feasibility*

I work as a professional trainer and executive coach. My training services include traditional soft skills training engagements such as presentation and presence, voice optimization, facilitation, or negotiation. In addition, I offer a personality development training where I am actually working with selected exercises from classical music / opera training. Hence this research proposal strongly reflects my specific professional background. Since I have had success with my personality development training (with clients from industry, services, and higher education), I wish to use the professional doctorate opportunity to seek further professionalism, produce scientific evidence, and make valuable principles accessible to a wider audience. I have access to more than forty sponsoring firms of my alma mater, mostly represented by HR directors whom I assume to be open to research inquiry. The proposed research project relies, however, not only on corporate interviewing opportunities, but also on the possibility of approaching performing arts academics and professionals for empirical purposes. Fortunately, I graduated from two Universities of Music and Theatre (in addition to my MBA). This formal education background in the performing arts and in music pedagogy provides me with contacts to teachers and artists for interviewing purposes.

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### **3. Weitere Beispiele, beschränkt auf ihre Kernteile**

#### ***A. Impact of the marketised approach in the drug-selling process***

Research motivation: The pharmaceutical industry's sales efforts towards physicians has become less effective despite refinements in customer segmentation and product positioning. With the pharmaceutical drug representatives visiting physicians have shifted to a more marketised approach, there is a need to understand the phenomenon in-depth.

Research gap: Conversations occurring between pharmaceutical companies' managers, their drug detailing sales reps and physicians are hardly researched.

Research questions: There are three research questions

1. Is there a shift towards marketised conversation in drug detailing?
2. If there is, how does it manifest in discursive terms?
3. How does such discourse impact the roles and attitudes of drug reps & physicians?

Research methodology: *Qualitative research (interviews)*

In-depth interviews with drug reps, physicians, and pharmaceutical managers

#### ***B. Optimizing Leadership Assessment in a Multinational Corporation***

Research motivation: My proposed research is motivated by a perceived lack of alignment between desired, observable and rewarded leadership behaviours in the corporation I work for. In addition, different members of top management reward different behaviours. This can lead to confusing messages for the wider organisation.

Research gap: Although many concepts relevant to the above motivation have been researched, the literature is limited on connecting issues of alignment, competency-based performance assessment and decision-making.

Research questions: There are three research questions:

1. What are current criteria used to assess the performance of leaders in this organisation?
2. How consistent do middle managers perceive the behaviours of top management?
3. What should be done to improve the performance appraisal system?

Research methodology: *Qualitative research, quantitative research, action research.*

The research is envisaged in three stages, corresponding to the three research questions:

1. In-depth interviews with top management.
2. A web-based survey with middle management allowing statistical analysis.
3. Feedback sessions for creating a new performance appraisal system (action research).



### ***C. Drivers of the Effort for Accounting Consolidation Systems***

Research motivation: All large companies need to produce consolidated financial statements. This consolidation process can take up considerable time and resources. Therefore it is important to better understand the drivers of the effort.

Research gap: No specific research has been undertaken to investigate the systems on which a year-end process for consolidating the account of multi-unit organisations is performed.

Research questions: What drives the accounting consolidation process effort?

This research question is addressed through the testing of three hypotheses:

H1: The level of accounting system sophistication increases the consolidation effort.

H2: The degree of automation used in the process reduces the consolidation effort.

H3: The level of formalism decreases the consolidation effort.

Research methodology: *Quantitative research*

Data is to be collected from group accountant executives and their consolidation system administrators for the purpose of the statistical analysis necessary to test the hypotheses. This is to happen through the use of self-completion questionnaires.

### ***D. The effect of HR Processes Practices on Performance in the Hotel Industry***

Research background: Past research on the relationship between HRM and corporate performance has mostly relied on questionnaire surveys to identify positive relationships between HR practices and better organisational performance. However, important questions remain unanswered, as the process by which HRM contributes to company performance has remained a “black box”.

Research gap: Despite studies on the effect of HRM practices on organisational performance, it is hardly explained through which concrete process such a relationship is established.

Research question: How does HRM contribute to organisational performance?

This research question is turned more concrete through three hypotheses:

H1: HRM contributes to performance through aligning with business strategy

H2: The achievement of operational goals depends on the availability of the right staff

H3: The availability of the right staff depends on the application of HRM techniques.

Research methodology: *Case studies, qualitative research (in-depth interviews)*.

Four organisations from the hotel sector will be chosen. Interview-based data will be collected in each organisation from two groups: HR managers and general managers.

### ***E. Foreign Exchange Hedging using Leveraged Spot Contracts***

Research motivation: A leveraged spot contract is a spot contract where the trader has the permission to trade for a margin set by the financial institutions (the leverage ratio).

Research gap: Existing literature assumes that asset volatility is constant (as in option pricing models). This is unrealistic for leveraged spot contracts. Also the literature does not seem to include leveraged spot contracts as speculative hedging instruments.

Research objective: To develop a model for leveraged spot contracts that can be used for speculative and hedging purposes.

Research methodology: *Quantitative research*

The research will be based on quantitative data analysis and mathematical modelling. The data used will be secondary data, i. e. real world interest rates data from the US, Japan and Australia, as well as historical spot rates of the currencies of these countries. The data can be obtained from the respective central banks, the Bureau of Statistics, and stock exchanges.