



Changing strategic direction for executive development in the public sector

Changing strategic direction

Opportunities for top business schools?

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Roulla Hagen

Durham Business School, Durham University, Durham, UK, and

Joyce Liddle

Nottingham Policy Centre, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this research is to examine the largely ignored executive development needs of the reformed twenty-first century public sector by executive education providers in business schools.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper is predominantly conceptual exploring the current debates on the effectiveness of public sector management and the requirements for more relevant management and executive education through a literature review. The antecedents of the current position are explored. Hypotheses are developed about the provision of executive education for the public sector within business schools. In the absence of previous investigations in this field, a preliminary survey is conducted employing the *Financial Times* top 60 ranked executive education, 2006, to test the hypothesis and underpin more in-depth research.

Findings – The findings demonstrate that almost two-thirds of the sample did not provide any executive education to the public sector, and most of the provision on offer was for specialised silos within the sector, or borrowed from existing private sector programmes. There was no support found from the sample for public sector new network governance or leadership challenges discussed in the paper. Findings also supported the view that there is a shortage of evidence-based research for many of the executive programmes that are being offered.

Research limitations/implications – This paper is the first to explore the status of the field under investigation and provide a conceptual framework; whilst the preliminary empirical research has been an initial surface fact-finding study to establish the level and size of the problem, this has been achieved. This paper will now underpin a rigorous empirical research programme to explore the subject matter in greater detail.

Practical implications – The findings support the hypothesis that executive education providers within business schools are failing to address the management development needs of senior executives in the public sector. The paper concludes that there are huge opportunities being missed by business schools both by their management faculty, to investigate and understand the problems of the sector, and by their executive education centres to co-design and deliver programmes to assist the sector to transform and develop effectively to meet the challenges posed by a more globalized, complex, networked world. The paper invites them to engage.

Originality/value – This paper investigates a subject that has been identified by the Academy of Management as important. It requires further research but has hitherto not received much attention from the research community.

Keywords Public sector organizations, Public administration, Globalization, Management development, Professional education

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

Public sector organisations at the supranational, national and local level have been largely neglected by the management academy as a focus for research. This was the overwhelming admission by a number of leading academicians writing in the *Academy of Management Journal* (Shapiro and Rynes, 2005; Von Glinow, 2005; Hambrick, 2005; Pettigrew, 2005) following a paper on schooling (Ouchi *et al.*, 2005) which raised concerns at the lack of application of management theory to public sector organisational and management problems. Simultaneously, public management and public policy scholars were equally alarmed at the lack of evidence based research to understand the problems faced by the public sector (Gregory, 2003; Hood and Peters, 2004; Kelman *et al.*, 2003), or the lived experiences of public service professionals (Thomas and Davies, 2005). In the absence of informed evidence to underpin decisions on the structure and management of the public sector, and to inform the content and structure of executive education, it appears that discrete management tools and techniques are being applied in restructured environments that are incommensurate to organizational arrangements typified by Weberian bureaucracies (Gow and Dufour, 2000). Unremarkably, these are producing unintended consequences of dysfunctionality and fragmentation (Gregory, 2003).

Extraordinarily, the management community's peripheral vision has not taken into consideration a sector that is a significant size and the consequence of its management, good or bad, has a direct impact on society and the economy. It is difficult to provide a total measure of the size of the public sector globally as the OECD 2001 report, page 158, acknowledges and although it proposes a number of ways that the size can be measured, some more complex than others, it is not the purpose of this paper to devote itself to such an investigation. Suffice it to say that there are a myriad of public sector organizations to fulfil the role of the state which are not attracting the attention of management researchers. Figure 1 provides an indicative representation of the public sector infrastructure within which private, voluntary and business sectors are inextricably linked.

There are three factors that should be aired at the outset. First, the assumption is that the sector is declining due to globalisation, decentralisation, privatisation and deregulation but an examination of the data in Table I counters the "rolling back" of the state argument, and demonstrates the relative size of the public sector was in most cases greater in 2000 than in previous decades. This leads to the proposition that the management problems of the sector may be increasing, rather than decreasing as a result (Jackson (2003) in Bovaird and Loeffler, 2003, pp. 29-30).

Second, the debate has not abated on whether the public sector is different from, the same as the private sector, or a complex conflation of the two. This will be addressed later in the paper. Thirdly, the paper is focusing on the management of the public sector, with management research feeding the work of executive education to assist in the development of public sector managers to lead and manage more effectively. The analysis is not focusing on accredited degree courses such as Master's in Public Management, Master's in Public Administration or Master's in Business Administration for the Public Sector, as these programmes recruit from all ranks and are of long duration; the focus of the paper is on the senior executive programmes. Neither is the paper focusing on sector specific leadership courses, such as those provided for police and criminal justice, fire officers, senior civil servants at National Schools of Administration, or leaders in health, education or social services, or including the

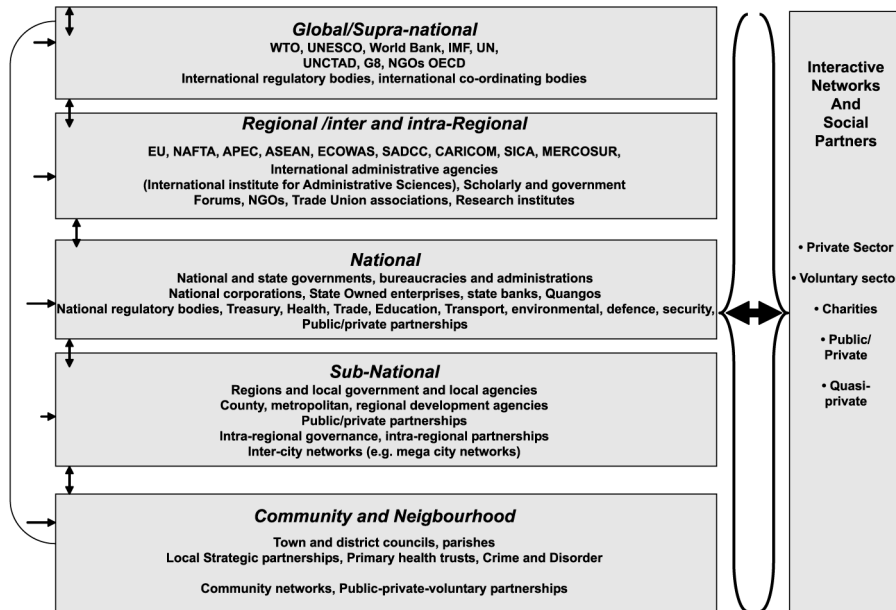


Figure 1. Indicative public sector network infrastructure. Global opportunities for executive education

Schools, designed particularly in the USA, for the public sector such as the renowned Kennedy School of Government at Harvard or the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) in the UK. The former courses are usually tailor-made for a specific sector and tend to rely on a combination of in-house and external faculty. The Kennedy School of Government and the LSE specialise in high quality education in public policy and not necessarily, or specifically in public management, though some of their courses have a management element or involve senior personnel from the public sector as external speakers or mentors. This distinction underpins the decision of the new Dean of Harvard Business School's recent announcement that Harvard Business School is building "intellectual bridges" (*Financial Times*, 2006b, p. 6) with the Kennedy School at Harvard to offer joint programmes. Harvard Business School is clearly responding to the concern about public sector management through this new initiative, "The objective would be to train leaders for the public sector and the quasi-public sector that's the driving force behind it . . . the problems of leadership in the public sector are just as important as those in the corporate sector". It is through the management research which is undertaken in business schools and underpins the work of executive education to develop public sector leaders, beyond the public policy focus that the paper is addressing.

The demand for more effective management leads us to look at the provision of public sector management development within executive education in business schools. Executive education is considered strategically to be linked to organisational effectiveness (Long, 2004) by performing a critical role in organisational transformation; as a mechanism for continuous organisational and individual renewal; capable of communicating and implementing corporate strategy and building strategic co-ordination (Ready, 1995; Long, 2004). There is a detectable move from the

	General government outlays, by countries (% of GDP)			
	1970	1980	1990	2000
Australia	25.2	32.3	33.0	31.4
Austria	38.0	47.2	48.5	48.8
Belgium	39.7	53.4	50.8	46.7
Canada	33.8	39.1	46.0	37.8
Denmark	40.1	55.0	53.6	51.3
Finland	29.7	37.1	44.4	44.8
France	37.6	45.4	49.6	51.2
Germany	37.2	46.5	43.8	43.0
Greece	23.3	29.6	47.8	43.7
Ireland	37.7	47.6	39.5	27.7
Italy	32.7	41.8	53.1	46.7
Japan	19.0	32.0	31.3	38.2
Korea	14.8	19.2	18.3	23.4
Mexico				
The Netherlands	37.0	50.9	49.4	41.5
Norway	34.9	43.9	49.7	40.6
Portugal	18.0	28.1	44.2	42.1
Spain	21.7	31.3	41.4	38.5
Sweden	41.7	56.9	55.8	53.9
UK	36.7	43.0	41.9	38.4
USA	29.6	31.3	33.6	29.3
Euro area	33.9	43.0	46.3	45.1
OECD	29.2	35.5	38.0	36.5

Table I.
Determining the size of
the public sector

Source: *OECD Economic Outlook*, No. 68, Issue 2, December 2000, OECD National Accounts and OECD calculations: 42

predominant focus in the past on the individual development of managers and executives to organisations “using executive programmes to make critical organizational changes” (Crotty and Soule, 1997) by adding value (Conger and Xin, 2000).

The paper’s main intent is to present an analysis of the current condition of public sector management and the burgeoning discourse surrounding the calls to improve it. It investigates the proposition that it is not only management researchers but also executive education providers that have been blinkered by a private sector mindset and failed to take up the opportunity to work more closely with the public sector. The paper also reports on preliminary research conducted into the provision of public sector management programmes by the *Financial Times* (2006a) top 60 global executive education providers of open and customised programmes. To contextualise the problem, it is necessary first to examine the antecedents of the changing dynamics within the public sector.

The rising global profile of ineffective public sector management

Debates are always simmering on the effectiveness, efficiency and high quality service of the public sector but the aftermath of highly dramatic events such as 9/11, the Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina which were seen globally, through the media, to be disturbingly mismanaged by the public sector over a very long period of time

co-ordinated the criticisms into an international call for action. Dutton (2005, p. 956) in this extract represents a view that is gaining currency:

As the wrenching images and stories of organizational failure circulate, and the momentous task of rebuilding organizations faces government leaders and citizens, I wonder what difference it would make if organizational-management researchers were at the table or anywhere on the scene to wrestle with and contribute to these action-based discussions . . . it would make a substantial, positive difference.

The public sector is accountable, amongst many other stakeholders, directly to its citizens and the public disquiet that ensued demanded action to be taken to assist better public sector management (Feldman, 2006). Such mismanagement, as Ostroff (2006) noted, quoting from the 9/11 Commission Report (2006, p. 141), are “symptoms of the government’s broader inability to adapt how it manages problems to the new challenges of the twenty-first century”. The gap has widened alarmingly between the formulation of complex policy reform and the capability to implement. It has not been a Damascian revelation; problems between formulation and implementation of policies have been accumulating for at least three decades as a result of advanced industrial countries undergoing fundamental change (Fox, 1996). In the foreword to the UN *World Public Sector Report: Globalization and the State* (United Nations, 2001), Guido Bertucci, Director for Public Economics and Public Administration, DESA, summed up the problems facing the public sector:

Managing the public sector in today’s environment of constant change, particularly in view of globalization, has become an increasingly demanding challenge for national decision makers, policy advisors, service delivery managers and civil servants at large . . . a parallel shift has moved the State’s centre of gravity and with it the locus of power. Decentralization, debureaucratization and deregulation are adding to the importance not only of local government, but also non-state actors on whom significant functions are devolved or outsourced.

Globalisation: from administration to management in the public sector

Since the mid-1970s “the traditional conceptualization of the public sector has been under strain” (Peters and Pierre, 1998, p. 223). The traditional public administration model described by Woodrow Wilson in his 1887 essay on “The study of administration” was to purify the corruption in the civil services by separating the implementation of public policies from the political decisions that created those policies – as the science of administration it sought to prevent the politics of favouritism and gain from meddling in the administrative decisions about personnel, procurement, finance and service delivery (Peters and Pierre, 1998). Due to the global recession in the mid-1970s there was pressure on governments, criticised for being bureaucratic and centralised, to abandon the traditional public-administration paradigm and address the rise in the costs of their public sector budgets and social welfare. Public administration underwent a crisis of credibility. “It did not work anymore” (Gow and Dufour, 2000, p. 585). A focus on reform to redress inefficiencies and cut costs in the civil service, hospitals, schools as well as “reinventing government” (Kettl, 1995, p. 11) in the way the government, the state, discharged of its functions took hold. The *Zeitgeist* for reform labelled New Public Management (NPM) was developed in the “Westminster-system countries (Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Canada) and USA, the foremost exponent of NPM” (United Nations, 2001)

as well as in countries such as Korea, Portugal, France, Brazil and Sweden (Kaboolian, 1998). The economic market model was applied to the reorganisation of the public sector to attack inefficiencies and bureau-pathologies through privatisation, deregulation, decentralisation and de-bureaucratisation in an effort to replace the Weberian paradigm of public administration (Gow and Dufour, 2000). It was expected that traditional hierarchical structures would be flattened and that the people would have a voice. NPM “refers to a focus on management, not policy, and on performance appraisal and efficiency; disaggregating public bureaucracies into agencies which deal with each other on a user pay basis; the use of quasi-markets and of contracting out to foster competition; cost-cutting; and a style of management that emphasizes, among other things, output targets, limited term contracts, monetary incentives and freedom to manage” (Bevir *et al.*, 2003, p. 4).

Such reforms based on economics and business administration nevertheless require implementation and the rational expectation was that the role of public sector managers would change overnight from a scientific management model, abandoning command and control management, to become market-orientated, entrepreneurial agents and to be freed from the shackles of routines and processes; the heritage of a rigid administrative system.

There was an uncontentious acceptance that interventionist measures in the form of education and training would be required to prepare public sector managers to manage in the newly reformed environments and within more flexible and restructured systems. Deterministic wish lists of the qualities, types, abilities and skills of leadership and management (United Nations, 2001, p. 98) have proliferated. They include managers to be: agents of change, able to reform bureaucratic structures with new approaches, to manage adaptability, openness, participation, human resource development where skills would be continually “upgraded”, leadership to scan the environment, to galvanize and mobilise, create new career structures of capacity building, and develop cognitive capacity in the face of globalisation. These were deemed necessary to fulfil the NPM movement’s slogan, “Let the managers manage” by adopting the new attitudes, values and identities. Yet this passive picture of a compliant public service professional is presented as unproblematic in presenting NPM as a “given” that would automatically transform their subjective identities to become agents of change. Such a naïve rational approach, without any understanding of resistance at the micro-level or “empirically informed understanding of its [NPM’s] daily enactment in specific organizational settings” has been rejected (Thomas and Davies, 2005, p. 683) Thomas and Davies found in their research that NPM is highly dynamic, with individuals appropriating different meanings and “throws into question the portrayal of NPM as a hegemonic discourse, sweeping across the public services, deprofessionalizing all in its wake” (Thomas and Davies, 2005, p. 700).

The triumph of hope over experience

Unintended consequences have resulted from reforms because, argues Gregory (2003) NPM reformers have failed to test the validity of their theories against practical experience[1]. A report on the urgency of readdressing some of the unintended consequences that have resulted from NPM were based on a “flawed theory” and led to the fragmentation that has developed due to the proliferation of agencies – “structural fragmentation means many small agencies, spreading leadership talent and other skills

more thinly and increasing the risk of weak capability” the report calls for alignment and “structural consolidation” (Gregory, 2003, p. 2) with the remedy being to establish “super networks”, yet another ideological statement without fully understanding network theory. Hood and Peters (2004) note that the same solutions are applied to recurring problems but continually fail and blame “consultants in retaining and relaunching such ideas” as pay-for-performance, strategic planning models, new IT systems or e-government as if these adjunct management tools could of themselves solve the organisational problems. They call for more “science” and “evidence” and blaming the “casual adoption of poorly grounded models, the disregard of historical evidence, and a selective approach to evidence and indeed an active resistance to learning in any meaningful sense of the word” (Hood and Peters, 2004, p. 278). Gow and Dufour (2000, p. 588) conclude that NPM in Kuhnian terms is a paradigm only on the level of epistemology and not a “superior theory” but mainly borrowed from economics and business management. This has led to a very broad view of NPM that “virtually any reform could fit within” (Fox, 1996, p. 258). It has embraced incompatible theories such as downsizing, reengineering for efficiency whilst at the same time advocating risk-taking and entrepreneurialism. NPM and PA are considered to be at a pre-paradigmatic stage (Gow and Dufour, 2000; Schedler, 2003) with a bias towards “guru” styles of writing for practitioner audiences (Kelman *et al.*, 2003).

Public/private: the same or different?

The debate remains unresolved regarding the extent to which the public sector is uniquely different or similar to the private sector (Boyne, 2002, p. 162) or indeed a hybrid of both, and this has caused a misalignment of appropriate executive education. Conventional executive education for the public sector has adopted three approaches in its programme design; the first has been framed around the NPM reform process, based on marketisation and the need for new technologies and tools (Kaboolian, 1998); the second has viewed the public sector as a separate entity where the “governance” and political issues were at the forefront when designing courses; the third has developed the content using a hybrid managerial and political basis. None of the existing executive education provision has moved beyond “outside of the box” assumptions to address the implications of moving public administration into public management or to become involved in the recent discourses on new forms of public governance with the shift from representative (and therefore, in theory, more accountable in the conventional ways) to consultative and deliberative forms of governance (with inherent difficulties for forms of accountability) (Pratchett, 2002). Fourth, more recently “network governance” and “post-modern public administration” have begun to attract more attention. (Bogason, 2004a; Bogason, 2004b).

Leadership and networks

It is purported that a new stage has evolved from NPM which focuses on the leadership and network government called New Public Governance (Osborne, 2006). What is indisputable is that there has been an explosion of initiatives and huge public investment in leadership centres for the training of public service professionals. But as Conger (1993, p. 46) observes “we can’t train tomorrow’s leaders with yesterday’s leadership practices. The decade ahead demands a new set of competencies and a revamping of training methods.” Modern day public sector leadership takes place

within a very different global context than that of past decades and the capacity to solve societal problems and act independently has eroded. Internationally, there are powerful trans-national organisations, actors and systems of exchange, whereas at the domestic levels modern governments have also been affected by the re-structuring of societies into complex networks of inter-organisational actors. Public policy has always been characterised by issues and problems that lie outside any one area of professional expertise. The shift to a post bureaucratic state or post modern bureaucracy (Bogason, 2000, p. 8), in which mutuality, trust and negotiation over complex problems has given rise to multi-agency, multi-perspectives, multi-cultures and multi professionals (Taket and White, 2000, p. 4).

The new spaces in which public managers are working alongside multi constituents, at multilevel, within multi-national, multi-agency, multi-project, multi-programmes (Clarke, 2006) illustrates the huge size and scope of public sector operations. They also raise questions over the amount of largely untapped expertise and competence available to shape and design executive education programmes. New programmes must be developed with a clear understanding of the specific contexts in which public managers work, and an appreciation of the challenging situations they face. Any executive education programs, to be of assistance in the globalised world of public management require different approaches; ones based on the ability to co-plan, co-design, co-produce and co-deliver appropriate programmes. The altered relationship between public managers, who now need to collaborate with a vast range of stakeholders (Martin, 2003) reveals that conventional dualist approach between the “boundaried” world of NPM and the “un-boundaried” forms of network governance has atrophied the debate and arrested any theoretical, conceptual and practical developments. An entirely new way of thinking about the shape and future provision of executive education for public sector managers is vital, and there needs to be a radical rethink of the current underpinning philosophy, if an integrated theoretical underpinning for the practice of executive education is to be a realised strategy. There are clearly immense opportunities for the executive education community to contribute to the development of the new cadre of global public sector leaders.

Management education

The problem is further exacerbated by the predominance of a traditional management education characterised by a dominant functionalist, hierarchical and bureaucratic management model (Ghoshal, 2005) that does not address the current problems faced by the public sector. Instead of assisting in the transformation and development of the public sector it reinforces and legitimises a way of managing and organising that continues bad practice and adds to its ineffectiveness. It is the neglect of the management academicians to study the problems being experienced by public sector managers which has led to the recent outcry from some of the most respected minds in management to redress this problem (Ouchi *et al.*, 2005; Pettigrew, 2005). It is a timely opportunity for the management education sector to radically rethink its underlying assumptions and the type of provision it offers, and rise to the call for more effective public sector management.

The paper has established that:

- The public sector is a huge interlinked network of organizations globally and within national boundaries encompassing a large percentage of all organisations.

- The transformative reforms thrust upon the public sector by policymakers have been developed from a strategically planned, complex and continually changing position without thought to their strategic capabilities in terms of resources, particularly in the development of its executives and managers to implement them.
- The strategic gap between the ideologically planned reforms and the realities of managing in a sector that is tied to the changes and agendas of political administrations usually between four and eight years of electoral voting have resulted in unintended consequences: fragmentation, confusion and “mismanagement”.
- The recent admission by management scholars that they have largely ignored this sector has resulted in a dearth of informed research and analysis on the issues and problems faced by public sector managers. There is evidence that organizational management insights and developments would be highly beneficial.
- Executive education’s mission is to help in the effectiveness of organisations by researching, developing and designing customised programmes that understand the contextual issues to develop executives and managers to better enable them to solve their problems. Or to offer open programmes that deal with the generic issues of management.

The paper has identified very limited research in this specific field. The empirical data presented here is a very preliminary in-road into the topic. The hypothesis developed so far:

- H1.* Management academicians have largely neglected the public sector which has led to confusion and lack of understanding based on an absence of evidence based research to underpin executive education programmes. We would expect to find that the majority of top executive education providers do not offer public sector management.
- H2.* Where there is provision of public sector programmes we would expect the open generic management programmes to predominate.
- H3.* In the absence of engagement of management with the public sector we would expect to find adjunct staff being used from public policy sector teaching on executive public sector programmes.

Research design – sample and data selection

In this section we explain the methodology used with the implications of the findings discussed in subsequent sections. The research progressed in three consecutive phases. The first phase of the research was to overcome the problem of deciding on the population from the enormous and multifarious global executive education providers. The research employed a recognised population drawn from the *Financial Times*, 2006a top 60 ranked executive education providers ($n = 60$). The 2006 *FT* survey of global non-degree executive education programs (*FT.com*, 2006) is the eighth year that the *Financial Times* has ranked open and customised programs which “present a combined ranking for business schools which offer both types of course” (Milton, 2006). The open

programmes in the rankings run from three days to two months. Schools are only eligible if they have had a turnover of at least \$2m “from the relevant programme type” during 2005. If a school has participated in the rankings for the past three years, its data are combined and weighted as follows: 40 per cent for 2006 year’s data, 33 per cent for 2005 data and 27 per cent for data from the 2004 rankings.

The 2006 executive education ranking *Financial Times* top 60 global open and customised programmes is listed below:

- (1) Duke corporate education;
- (2) IMD;
- (3) Harvard BS;
- (4) Stanford University GSB;
- (5) University of Chicago GSB;
- (6) MIT: Sloan;
- (7) Thunderbird: Graven;
- (8) Babson Executive Education;
- (9) Centre for creative leadership;
- (10) HEC Paris;
- (11) Cranfield School of Management;
- (12) London Business School;
- (13) Iese Business School;
- (14) INSEAD;
- (15) Columbia Business School;
- (16) University of Pennsylvania, Wharton;
- (17) Ipade;
- (18) Emory University, Goizueta;
- (19) North Western University: Kellogg;
- (20) Ashridge;
- (21) Kelley Executive Partners at Indiana;
- (22) University of Maryland: Smith;
- (23) University of Oxford: Said;
- (24) RSM Erasmus University;
- (25) University of Michigan: Ross;
- (26) University of Minnesota: Carlton;
- (27) Boston University;
- (28) Essec Management Education;
- (29) IAE Management and Business School;
- (30) Fundacao Dom Cabral;
- (31) UNC Kenan-Flager;
- (32) University of Western Ontario: Ivey;

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- (33) UCLA; Anderson;
 - (34) University of Toronto: Rotman;
 - (35) Stockholm School of Economics;
 - (36) University of Virginia: Darden;
 - (37) University of Wisconsin-Madison;
 - (38) Esade Business School;
 - (39) SDA Bocconi;
 - (40) EM Lyon;
 - (41) Henley Management College;
 - (42) Arizona State University: Carey;
 - (43) Vlerick: Leuven Ghent;
 - (44) ESCP EAP European School of Management;
 - (45) Instituto de Empresa;
 - (46) Hong Kong UST;
 - (47) Edhec Business School;
 - (48) Warwick Business School;
 - (49) Lancaster University Business School;
 - (50) Macquarie Graduate School of Management;
 - (51) Universitat St Gallen;
 - (52) University of Pretoria: Gibs;
 - (53) Wits Business School;
 - (54) Manchester Business School;
 - (55) UC Berkeley: Haas;
 - (56) Tias Business School: Tilburg University;
 - (57) Pennsylvania State University: Smeal;
 - (58) Melbourne Business School;
 - (59) AGSM; and
 - (60) Universidad Adolfo Ibanez.

The *Financial Times* survey did not provide details of the types of programmes offered, and therefore led to the next phase of the research to enable us to identify how many offered public sector management programmes. This involved a web site trawl of the globally dispersed population using the Google search engine to find the relevant homepages, and was conducted between the last two weeks of July 2006. Whilst laborious, it was unproblematic and allowed us to collect contact details including the identification, wherever possible, of names of programme managers or heads of executive education generally, contact details for executive education programmes and, if available, specific contacts for any public sector programmes. The quality and detail of information was dependent on the designer of the website. On some sites the

full prospectus of programmes was available on others the information was sparse. Two broad categories were developed:

- (1) determining how many of the population offered public sector management executive education programmes; and
- (2) how many did not.

Two subgroups were identified. From the category that stated that they did offer programmes they were further classified under four criteria:

- (1) whether the programmes offered were generic management programmes generally open to the public and private sector;
- (2) whether they were specifically designed across all public services;
- (3) whether these were specialised for particular sectors of the public sector such as the civil service, police or health sectors; and
- (4) whether the executive programmes were taught by in-house faculty or adjunct faculty drawn from public policy.

To test the reliability of the information from the web based survey, and to assist in the categorisation of the globally dispersed population, the third phase of the research involved a second type of electronic survey, an e-mail survey because it could reach the globally dispersed units of the research population. It was decided that an embedded questionnaire, where the questions are contained in the body of the e-mail, would be adopted. "The chief advantage of the embedded questionnaire is that it is easier for the respondent to return to the researcher and requires less computer expertise" (Bryman, 2004, p. 480) rather than attaching a file to an e-mail message. The embedded questionnaire asked three questions about public sector executive education programmes:

- (1) Which open programmes (non-degree) do you have for this sector with a focus on public sector management?
- (2) Do you have experience in customising programmes in this sector, if possible give examples?
- (3) Who delivers the program – is it specialist faculty for this sector, general management academics or do you use public policy externals?

Two versions of the e-mail were developed. The embedded questionnaire was identical in both e-mails but differed in one phrase which would enable us to validate the two broad categories in phase two of the research study. In the first it stated that "After preliminary searches of the top 60 *FT* ranked global executive education providers, *I note that you offer such programmes*" and in the second e-mail design the phrase in italics was replaced by "*I am making initial inquiries*". The former was sent to the sample that had been identified as having public sector programs in the first phase of the research and the latter to the group that were identified as not having such programs. The e-mails were sent on the 31 July 2006.

Findings

In phase two, the web based survey found that where $n = 60$, 35 per cent of executive education providers stated that they offered public sector programmes and 65 per cent

did not. In phase three where $n = 60$ there was a 20 per cent response rate from the e-mail embedded questionnaire. Of these where $n = 60$, 18 per cent were from the executive education providers offering programmes and 2 per cent were from the category that had been identified from phase two as not having public sector programmes but provided information that they did. The figures were then adjusted to 37 per cent of providers that did and 63 per cent. These findings provide overall support for *H1*. 63 per cent of the top 2006 *Financial Times* global executive education not does not offer any public sector management programmes for public sector organizations which make up 44.5 per cent of all organizations (OECD, 2001). Of the 37 per cent that did offer public sector programmes in phase two of the web based survey of phase two a 50 per cent response rate was achieved and from phase three (embedded e-mail questionnaire) 2 per cent that we had missed from phase two were added. From the analysis of the information provided this group was further classified as outlined above.

Where $n = 12$, 25 per cent offered generic management programmes to the public sector and 75 per cent offered specialised programmes for the public sector. Of the specialised programme 66 per cent were customised for specific organisations within the public sector, such as health leadership for a particular health authority, programmes for the Catalan government, senior government officials from China and 33 per cent were offering specialised public sector programmes open to participants from across all the public sectors. The findings provide no support for *H2*, the majority of the programmes offered were specialised for the sector rather than offering generic programmes.

Only 25 per cent where $n = 12$ made reference to teaching staff, but the data was partial and weak and could not be used to substantiate *H3*.

Of the twelve responses the largest response, five came from Directors of Executive Education, three from managers of specific public sector programmes and two from executive education business development managers of the top ranked schools.

More in-depth research will be undertaken into interviewing all the Directors of Executive Education of the top ranked schools to examine the reasons why there is limited or complete absence of public sector programmes from their portfolio, and to better understand the approach of the leading schools engaging in this activity.

Discussion and conclusion

The analysis of the *Financial Times* top 60 global executive education providers has clearly demonstrated that almost two thirds do not provide any executive education to the public sector and most of the provision on offer is for specialised silos within the sector, or cannibalisation of programmes from the private sector. This does not support the public sector network governance challenges found earlier in the paper which require cross-sectoral programmes, neither do they respond to the leadership challenge initiatives discussed in the paper. There was only one executive education provider, in Europe, marketing a large portfolio of customised public sector programmes and boasting a team of very specialised executive education staff researching and customising the programmes in collaboration with their clients. In researching this paper there was an alarming recognition that very little research has been conducted into the field of executive education and none specifically on the role of executive education for the public sector. This initial research study into the provision of executive education has found that not only is there a shortage of evidenced based

research but that many of the executive education programmes are context free and very little consideration for the organizational variables that influence the nature of management in the public sector.

The paper argues that not only management researchers but executive education providers should extend their expertise to the public sector. The paper has demonstrated that the effective management of the public sector is of significant size and importance to society and that executive education has an important role to play in its recognized role as a vehicle for developing and adding strategic value, organizational development and transformation. It is incongruent that currently executive education has not played a big role in the strategic and management future of the public sector. It is hoped that this exploratory study will act as a catalyst for further research and action from executive education providers in business schools to redress the current situation.

Note

1. The title is a term used by Hood and Peters (2004), on page 268 It aptly captures the argument presented in this section of the paper.

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Corresponding author

Roulla Hagen can be contacted at: s.r.hagen@durham.ac.uk

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