

Meet the 'teachsultants' and the 'coachstructors' – the future of executive education

Business schools face major challenges if they are to profit from the growth of executive education. One way, says **Santiago Iniguez**, is to produce faculty with diverse and hybrid skills



One of the biggest growth opportunities for business schools is at the same time one of the biggest challenges they face: how best to provide in-company training and tailored programmes for organisations.

A number of factors are driving the growth in this particular sector of higher education.

Companies need, more than ever, to attract, retain and develop talent. Research shows that an organisation's commitment to in-house training and professional development are among the most important factors for executives when deciding to join a company, particularly in the case of the so-called millennial generation. (See *Creating Tomorrow's Leaders: the Expanding Roles of Millennials in the Workplace*; Boston College, Center for Work and Family).

In the not-too-distant future, businesses will be able to count on the most multi-generational workforce in history. For many countries, the majority of their populations will soon be aged 50 and over. Longer life expectancy and delayed retirement will provide opportunities and challenges for companies.

They will be able to draw on the experience of older managers, their network of stakeholders, their reputation and their knowledge of the sector. At the same time, a constantly changing environment will require periodic retraining, maintaining older employees' capacity to innovate, as well as having to manage diversity across generations.

The need for businesses to convert knowledge management into a differential competitive advantage links directly to the internal development of talent.

The question we need to ask ourselves is whether most business schools, and not just a few, are ready, willing and able to meet the challenge of designing and delivering tailored programmes for companies.

As things stand, at least based on what Chief Learning Officers (CLOs) have to say, the answer is "not yet".

CLOs say that educational content and teaching materials used in custom programmes are not properly adapted to the development and training needs of businesses. They call for less off-the-shelf, packaged, US-centric traditional MBA contents. (See UNICON, "University based executive education markets and trends", Lloyd and Newkirk, 2011)

But the problem with developing adapted content for executive education is that research incentives at many business schools are not generally aligned with the needs of executive education.

Businesses are demanding faculty who are specialists in a wide range of subjects combined with particular skills that apply global knowledge locally. A global outlook, the quality of faculty and expertise in executive development are now crucial factors when choosing an education supplier. (See Henley Corporate Learning Survey, 2014)

But, of course, not all business schools have teachers that are properly qualified to deliver executive education courses. A recent survey shows that the 50 top teachers taking part in custom programmes belonged to just 29 business schools. (A Carter, *Poets & Quants* 2012).

What's more, CLOs are demanding that business schools take an approach that integrates education with a thorough knowledge of their company's strategy and development needs. What companies are increasingly calling for might best be described as educational consulting and talent development rather than training *per se*.

Business schools' dominance in the in-company training sector has recently been challenged by the arrival of diverse new players. For example, engineering schools and departments of psychology or international relations are already offering tailor-made programmes for companies, as are universities' continuous education and extension units.



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At the same time, consultancy firms see in-company training as part of their professional services portfolio and are able to offer myriad synergies for their business units as well as the possibility of implementing their programmes in multinationals via their overseas subsidiaries.

Competition is further increasing thanks to the growing numbers of freelancers and coaches offering their services on an individual or associated basis.

Finally, companies are looking for increasingly competitive prices and shorter design and execution times at the same time as requiring programmes to fit in with participants' schedules and locations, added to which they expect deliverers to scale up their offer for larger groups when needed.

In this increasingly demanding in-company training scenario, developing talent and managing knowledge has also sparked the growth of corporate universities with increasingly sophisticated processes and structures, including external quality accreditation systems such as EFMD's CLIP (Corporate Learning Improvement System).

In response to all of the above, what initiatives can business schools come up with to take advantage of the growth of in-company training while meeting the demands of CLOs?

I would like to propose a few avenues that business schools could explore without substantially changing their mission but which might allow them to take better advantage of the opportunities in the custom programmes sector while at the same time building stronger relationships with their corporate clients.



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The emergence of the “teachsultant” and the “coachstructor”

Academics with relevant research experience in the business world, experience with companies and contact with senior management are the best deliverers of in-company training.

They combine a thorough technical knowledge of their disciplines with the necessary neutrality to efficiently and independently advise companies on their training needs. To develop such profiles, business schools need to adapt their incentive systems to reward and recognise the involvement of their faculty in executive education.

Business schools may bring in teachers with practical professional experience, people who may participate in the academic community, research and teaching methodologies at schools.

The type of educator businesses are demanding might be called *teachsultants*—a hybrid of teacher and consultant—or *coachstructors*, half-coach, half-instructor. These are people able to orchestrate learning and who are capable of transcending traditional disciplines and understanding from within the decisive issues facing a company.



Applied research

New ways to measure the impact of academic research on the real world are required. This means going beyond bibliometrics or article citation rates. As I have argued elsewhere, (Santiago Iniguez de Onzono, *The Learning Curve* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) this means designing systems to measure schools' research and their use as management tools in the business world.

Ideally, this would reflect a wide range of cultural and business practices and thus the heterogeneity of the research.



Blended programmes

The future belongs to programmes that are best able to adapt to the availability of directors, integrating technology and teaching and thus prolonging the learning momentum beyond the traditional face-to-face, classroom sessions.

Integrated learning platforms, managed jointly by business schools and their corporate clients.

These would give participants access to content adapted to their needs and environment, while allowing them to interact with other directors in the company. Such platforms would also allow clients to use assessment schemes to measure personal or group learning progress.



50%

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Measuring the efficacy or impact of learning, a need not being met

I do not believe it is possible to measure investment in education in terms of ROI. In my opinion this is akin to trying to measure the impact of implementing diversity measures or business ethics on the bottom line.

More than 50% of CLOs say they are unhappy with current learning measurement systems. (Chief Learning Officer business intelligence board, 2013 <http://clomedia.com/articles/view/slowly-steadily-measuring-impact/2>)

This is a growing problem for directors, under pressure to justify the impact of any investment on the bottom line. Currently, evaluation of the impact of in-company programmes focuses mainly on how satisfied participants are with a programme.

That said, it is possible to develop methods that allow us to measure the impact of a programme on the personal development of participants and subsequently on their performance within the company.

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Multiple partnerships

Until now, business schools have been very careful about providing any information on their custom programmes. This is changing and it now seems reasonable to hope that we will see alliances between schools and consultancies, coaching networks, and application and technology and content providers

In response to these challenges, my business school has created an alliance with the *Financial Times* Group, the *FT-IE* Corporate Learning Alliance, a joint venture whose mission will be to combine academic muscle and direct knowledge of companies with a vocation for integrating technology and learning. (<http://www.ftiecla.com>)

Its reach will be global and it is open to collaboration with other business schools around the world. I believe that similar platforms will appear in the coming years.



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