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**Stakeholder expectations
and benefits: an assessment of
the Poznan-Atlanta
MBA Program**

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STAKEHOLDER EXPECTATIONS AND BENEFITS: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE POZNAN-ATLANTA MBA PROGRAM¹

Summary

This paper provides a general assessment of the Poznan-Atlanta Master of Business Administration (MBA) Program with special attention to its influence on the managerial qualifications and professional careers of the graduates. The paper begins with a review of the evolution and growing importance of MBA programs worldwide and then reports the results of a survey of graduates and students from the Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program on its tenth anniversary. Findings concerning expectations and benefits are interpreted within the theoretical framework of the Four-Stage Career Model developed by Dalton, Thompson, and Price (1977) and discussed within the context of the recent literature about MBA programs with special attention to Mintzberg's (2004) multifaceted critique.

Keywords: Master of Business Administration, economics education, career model, wage level and structure, stakeholders expectations.

JEL codes: A29, J31, M53

1. Introduction

"Above all, business schools must inculcate in their students the power to think, decide, and act efficiently and innovatively in an unpredictable global business environment" (Laura D'Andrea Tyson, *Dean*, London Business School)

In spite of decades of criticism and countless suggestions for improvement (Mintzberg, 2004; Pierce, 1999; Porter, McKibbin, 1988), the MBA degree continues to thrive as the "most celebrated product of business schools" (Tyson, 2005, p. 235). From approximately 5 000 annual graduates with MBA degrees in 1961 in the USA, the degree accounted for 23% of all graduate degrees granted in 2000 with 100 000 people in the USA receiving this "stamp of approval" for managers (Friga, Bettis, Sullivan, 2003). After WW II, the MBA degree, characterized as a popular international "qualification", spread to Europe and the rest of the world. Today, there are more than 2 700 MBA programs offered by 1 400 universities in 126 countries (<http://www.mba.info.com/>). Once a mark of exclusivity, the MBA degree, paradoxically, has become a benchmark requirement for entrance into careers in management.

Due in large part to the post-war Soviet dominance of the country, MBA programs in Poland were delayed until 1989. The MBA program at the Poznan University of Economics, in cooperation with Georgia State University's Robinson College of Business and supported by the Andrew Mellon Foundation, became operational in 1995 with the first students being graduated from the program in 1997. In the tenth year of its joint program, the Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program (as it has become known), conducted a study of its graduates and current students in an attempt to better understand their rea-

sons for entering the program and its impact on their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and career progression. Results from this study of expectations and outcomes provide much of the content reported here.

While students constitute the primary stakeholders in MBA programs in Poland and elsewhere, other stakeholders include the universities and their faculties, the employment community, and society itself. While data are limited regarding the impacts of MBA programs on these secondary stakeholders, there is some objective data and anecdotal information that may help explain the rising popularity of MBA programs outside the USA. This information is presented briefly in the background and discussion portions of this paper.

2. Background for the study

2.1. The MBA: tradition and reinvention

A brief synopsis of recent literature about MBA programs is presented here as background for the survey and discussion sections which follow. This section also briefly reviews the history and development of MBA programs in Europe and Poland with special attention to the Poznan-Atlanta MBA program.

Based upon a review of the MBA literature, including meta-analytic syntheses, Boyatzis, Stubbs, and Taylor described three clusters of competencies needed to be an effective manager or leader in today's business environment (Boyatzis, Stubbs, Taylor, 2002, p. 150):

1. Cognitive or intellectual ability, such as systems thinking,
2. Self management or intrapersonal abilities, such as adaptability,
3. Relationship management or interpersonal abilities such as networking.

These academic findings are similar to statements made by the successful practitioners interviewed by Ashby and Miles (2002, p. 9). They concluded from interviews with 51 top-level executives and leadership experts that: *"CEOs need to function as chief relationship officers within their organizations, promoting distributed leadership and forging strong bonds with employees, customers, partners and suppliers (...)"*. But proportionately few of the annual 100 000 MBA recipients are CEOs; rather most are at early or mid-points of their careers. So how do MBA programs address the competencies needed by persons who one day may become top-level executives but currently are coping with the realities of supervisory and middle-management responsibilities?

Friga, Bettis and Sullivan's (2003) perspective on the evolution of MBA programs in the USA portrayed changes occurring in several major cycles:

- They characterized the first cycle as a *"very functional and practical approach"* with classes taught by professors who were either practicing or retired corporate managers (Friga, Bettis, Sullivan, 2003, p. 235).
- The second phase, with major funding from the Ford Foundation, *"aimed to make business schools more academic, research based, and analytical"* eventually causing business schools to "shift their strategies to be more researched focused and less vocational" (Friga, Bettis, Sullivan, 2003, p. 235).
- Citing the overly quantitative nature of the curriculum and the lack of preparation for entrepreneurial careers, the Carnegie Commission promoted the inclusion of organizational behavior, teamwork, and entrepreneurship in the curriculum.
- And finally, the Porter and McKibbin report (1988) raised issues of relevance and promoted greater cooperation and coordination with businesses and the importance of lifelong learning.

Today, the strategies and structures of business schools are said to be similar to those of the 1950s. However, over time MBA programs have increased dramatically in popularity and now serve their universities as "cash cows" providing resources for less-funded programs.

While their strategies and structures may be relatively stable, MBA programs are functioning in business environments characterized by major transformations: for example, globalization, disruptive technologies, demographic shifts, and deregulation (Friga, Bettis, Sullivan, 2003). So, how do MBA programs keep current? Tyson (2005, p. 235) states that business school relevance is maintained only by practicing the *"art of reinvention (...)* Like any organization in a highly competitive marketplace, business schools are adept at reinvention. They simply have to be". Arguing that *"reinvention begins with better understanding of the marketplace and the needs of consumers"*, she reports the global business capabilities identified as essential by a sample of more than 100 executives from global companies in 20 countries. She summarized the needed knowledge, skills, and attributes for success as follows (Tyson, 2005, pp. 235-236):

- *"(...) Knowledge covers the basic functional areas: macro and micro economics; finance; supply chain management; organizational structures and dynamics; sales and account management; accounting; marketing and brand management; technology management; decision sciences; and corporate governance.*
- *(...) Skills are practiced ability, the learning acquired through the repeated application of knowledge. Effective management requires several diverse skills including decision making, team building, communicating ideas and motivating people, managing performance, and understanding cultural diversity.*

- *The final element (...) is leadership attributes. The development of such attributes - including integrity, self-confidence, curiosity and a passion for excellence – is still largely unfamiliar territory for most business schools. (...) But this is changing”.*

Changing perhaps, but not quickly enough for the quintessential critic of management education, Henry Mintzberg.

Mintzberg’s (2004) recent book entitled *Managers Not MBAs: A hard look at the soft practice of managing and management development* has as its central thesis that management is part art form and part craft and therefore can not be learned vicariously through lectures and reading. To Mintzberg, managers learn by doing (Mintzberg, 2004, p. 5):

“It is time to recognize conventional MBA programs for what they are (...) specialized training in the functions of business, not general educating in the practice of managing. Using the classroom to help develop people already practicing management is a fine idea, but pretending to create managers out of people who have never managed is a sham”.

Even more critically, he states (Mintzberg, 2004, p. 7): *“Business schools pride themselves in teaching about new product development and strategic change, yet their flagship, the MBA, is a 1908 degree with a 1950s strategy”.* He devoted approximately half of his book to criticizing MBA programs in general (*“Wrong People”, “Wrong Ways”, “Wrong Consequences”*) and half to suggesting improvements. Is his criticism justified? If so, how does one explain the worldwide popularity of the MBA degree?

Tyson’s (2005) response to Mintzberg’s book is that criticism is useful if it leads to debate that, in turn, produces useful change. She views a long history of debates

about business education as stimuli for change resulting in an acquired ability to change in response to changing circumstances and expectations (Tyson, 2005, p. 235): "*business schools are adept at reinvention*". Her statement is supported by research reported by Boyatzis, Stubbs and Taylor (2002) who studied nine cohorts of MBA students². Their research showed statistically significant improvements on the *Learning Skills Profile* scales dealing with Leadership, Relationship, Helping, Sense-Making, Information-Gathering, Information-Analysis, Theory-Building, Quantitative, Technology, Goal-Setting, Action, and Initiative Skills, and on Self-Confidence scores. Discussing what caused these dramatic improvements, the authors concluded (Boyatzis, Stubbs, Taylor, 2002, pp. 160-161):

"(...) An MBA education can help people develop cognitive and emotional intelligence competencies needed to be outstanding managers and leaders. But we cannot use the typical lecture-and-discussion methods with their focus on knowledge acquisition only. Rather, a more holistic approach can help dramatically improve our impact and the relevance of an MBA to students' future work organizations".

In brief, the relevance of Mintzberg's (2004) criticism of the MBA degree seems to vary with the type of students recruited (inexperience students vs. experienced managers), the nature of the curriculum (specialized training vs. knowledge, skills, and attributes), and the methods of instruction (lecture-focused vs. holistic). With 2 700 MBA programs functioning worldwide, Mintzberg's criticism is likely to be applicable in varying degrees to many of them, but perhaps not to all. And if Friga, Bettis and Sullivan's (2003) predictions are correct, those elements of the management education industry that continue to evolve in ways that meet stakeholder expectations will be the programs that survive in

what is becoming a highly competitive industry. This is especially true in the education and business environment of the European transition economies.

It was in the context of stakeholder expectations and benefits and program improvements that the Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program surveyed its graduates and current students on the occasion of its tenth anniversary in 2005. Its partner organization, the Robinson College of Business, Georgia State University, completed substantive revisions of its MBA program earlier that same year. The survey focused on the Poznan-Atlanta's principal stakeholders, its graduates and current students.

2.2. MBA Programs in Poland

European MBA programs developed after WW II now have a global reputation for excellence. The MBA is a popular "qualification" widely recognized and accepted by leading employers in Europe. The length of the European MBA is typically 10-15 months and the delivery modes are varied and flexible, including full-time and part-time programs in English and other languages. MBA programs are popular in France where instruction is pragmatic and programs often have close associations with the business community due in part to the common practice of program sponsorship by local Chambers of Commerce. The MBA degree is seen as an efficient way to make career progress and improve earning capacity (Jaromin, 2005).

The MBA arrived in Poland in 1989. MBA program development flourished in the 1990s largely in partnership arrangements with American and European universities (Quandt, 2002). The MBA degree does not have state-regulated status in Poland. Thus, most programs are organized within a framework of post-graduate studies. Upon finishing the MBA program, successful students typically receive a diploma of post-graduate

studies from the Polish university and a diploma or certificate issued jointly with its foreign partner institution. In 2005, there were 67 MBA programs in Poland offered through 41 universities and business schools. The major concentrations of programs are in Warsaw (28), Poznan (5), Lodz (5), and Krakow (5). The most common partnership arrangements are with universities from the United Kingdom and the USA, followed by Germany and France. The general MBA is the most common form of the degree, but there are also specialized MBA degrees in e-business, agro-business, health services, public administration, and so forth. To date, the various programs in combination have produced over 8 000 MBA graduates.

Transformation and liberalization of the Polish economy showed new opportunities to gradually reduce civilization gap, which arised due to the domination of centralized economy. Poland looked to the West for inward investment and joint business ventures. But it lacked the organizational structures, business practices, and managers Western countries looked to for cooperative efforts. Much of the impetus for the startup of MBA programs in Poland came from companies in the USA, UK, France and Germany that wanted to do business in Poland and their counterparts in Poland seeking joint ventures. The MBA programs, partnership operations by foreign and Polish universities, provided a common business language and concepts that facilitated successful cooperative efforts and made the joint business venture partners more comfortable with each other.

The Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program became operational in October 1995³. Prior to the operational phase, Polish faculty members designated to teach in the MBA program came to Atlanta for periods of up-to three months to interact with their counterparts at Georgia State University (GSU). The interaction involved joint course planning and textbook selection, observations of and participation in MBA classroom activities, exchange

of cultural information, and other activities to give faculty members from the partner organizations a better understanding of each other and to arrive at a shared vision of the program's mission and objectives. These activities and the early operational years of the program were made possible by support from the Andrew Mellon Foundation.

3. Assumptions and procedures of survey

The principal data collection was via a survey⁴ conducted on the tenth anniversary of the Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program. The survey had several major purposes:

- To assess the degree to which the program had achieved its primary learning objectives as stated in the Graduate Bulletin.
- To contrast expectations at entry into the program with benefits reported after graduation.
- To assess career progress via the *Four-Stage Career Model* (Dalton *et al.*, 1977; Thompson *et al.*, 1986).
- To explore job attitudes and work styles.
- And to determine the extent to which continuing education activities were desired by the program's graduates.

The survey sample was limited to those students who had successfully completed all MBA coursework and the additional PUE requirement for all masters degrees, a masters thesis.

A survey form was constructed to gather information about expectations and outcomes as well as program strengths and needed improvements. Respondents were asked to rank-order the four major KSA objectives stated in the GSU Graduate Bulletin at the time the Poznan-Atlanta MBA program was established. Career status at entry in-

to the program and at various points after graduation were assessed by having the respondents check one of 12 possible points on the *Four-Stage Career Model* (Dalton *et al.*, 1977; Thompson *et al.*, 1986). Each career stage has three points: *Early*, *Mid-point*, and *Late*. Behavioral descriptions of each stage were provided in an appendix to the survey form. Job characteristics were assessed using a 10-item scale, anchored with six points from *Strongly Disagree* through *Strongly Agree*, selected from the *Job Characteristics Inventory* (Sims, Szilagyi, Keller, 1976); while work styles were assessed using a 20-item scale with two types of anchored six-point descriptors, *Strongly Disagree* through *Strongly Agree* and *Rarely* through *Consistently*, from the *Inventory of Barriers to Creative Thought and Innovative Action* (Martin, 1990). Since no pre-data or comparison group data were collected, the results of these two scales were used for descriptive purposes only to get a sense of consistency among career, job and program outcome responses.

A total of 307 survey forms were distributed; 70 to students currently enrolled in the program and 237 to graduates of the program. The postal service returned 37 marked "undeliverable". Others may have been undeliverable but discarded rather than returned to the post office. There were 96 responses, 31 from current students (44.3%) and 65 from graduates of the program (32.5%), resulting in an overall survey response rate of 35.5%. Some survey items were appropriate for both graduates and current students, while responses to other items were restricted to graduates only. They are reported here accordingly.

In addition to the survey, information was collected by reviewing published documents and websites and by interviewing the directors of other MBA programs in the region proximate to Poznan. Document searches provided national salary information, descriptions and national

rankings of MBA programs, and comparative information about MBA programs throughout the European Union.

4. Results

The ranks assigned to stated program objectives are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Achievement of Major MBA Program Objectives⁵

Stated Program Objectives	Rank	% # 1
To develop creative decision-making skills that incorporate global, ethical and culturally diverse dimensions	2	34.1
To develop skills to assess/diagnose organizational performance	1	45.5
To develop leadership skills	4	3.4
To develop skills needed to be contributing members of an effective work team	3	17.0

Source: Survey of Poznan-Atlanta Program Graduates and Students.

The highest ranked program achievement from among the four stated objectives described the development of assessment/diagnostic skills; while the lowest ranked program achievement was the development of leadership skills. As stated earlier, respondents were asked to place a check mark at one of the 12 points on the *Four Stage Career Model* where each stage has points relevant to time and responsibilities, i.e., a scale ranging from 1-12. As indicated in Table 2, the respondents entered the Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program at the cross-over point between career Stages 2 and 3 (mean = 6.19; standard deviation = 2.54).

Table 2.***Career Progression***

Career stage status at entry into the MBA program (all) Mean = 6.19 (Late stage 2) S.D. = 2.54
Current career stage* Mean = 8.95 (Late stage 3) S.D. = 2.49
Extent to which completion of MBA facilitated career progression* Little or none (18.9%) Somewhat (44.6%) Greatly (36.5%)
If you have <u>not</u> made the career progress you expected, why?*
Not applicable; my career progression expectations were met (75.8%)
Economic factors in my industry/locale curtailed normal advancement (10.6%)
Pursued the MBA for career change, not for advancement (6.1%)
Did not prepare me for career advancement in my field (6.1%)
Advancement opportunities available, chose not to pursue them (1.5%)
Extent to which you expect completion of MBA to facilitate future career progression Little or none (5.2%) Somewhat (59.7%) Greatly (35.1%)

* graduates only

S.D. – standard deviation

Source: Survey of Poznan-Atlanta Program Graduates and Students.

Respondents, who since graduation had been working for an average of 4.48 years, reported being in the Late phase of Career Stage 3 (mean = 8.95, standard deviation = 2.49), or at the cross-over point to Stage 4. A key difference between Stage 1 and Stage 2 is the credibility one has achieved and the independence one is given by her/his manager; whereas the key difference between Stages 2 and 3 is the responsibility one now takes in managing others; while the key difference between Stages 3 and 4 is the responsibility one now begins to take for the organization itself. In summary, students reported entering the Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program at a career point where they are beginning to take greater responsibility for managing the productivity of others; and several years after graduation have progressed to a point where they are exerting more organization-wide influence.

Table 3 presents the descriptive responses to questions about present jobs and

work styles. A rating of "5" was defined as *Agree* for descriptors of *My present job*. The three highest scores indicate work appropriate for MBA-level careerists, i.e., meaningful, skilled, creative and challenging. The *work style* high ratings used both the agreement and frequency scales. A "5" rating indicated either an agreement level described as *Agree* or indicated a frequency of *Almost always*. The respondents' work styles appear to be consistent with the high rankings they assigned to analytical and decision-making skills in Table 1 and with the increased self-confidence one often associates with completion of the MBA degree (per the results reported by Boyatzis, Stubbs, Taylor, 2002).

Table 3.
Characteristics Most Descriptive of Current Job and Work Style

Characteristics	Mean
<i>My present job ...</i>	
<i>is meaningful to me</i>	5.15
<i>requires a great deal of skill to perform at a high level</i>	4.95
<i>is creative and challenging</i>	4.74
<i>In terms of my work style,</i>	
<i>I seek many ideas because I enjoy having alternative possibilities</i>	5.19
<i>I feel the excitement and challenge of finding solutions to problems</i>	5.12
<i>I have taken calculated risks and would do so again</i>	4.84
<i>I offer to negotiate areas of disagreement</i>	4.76
<i>When solving problems, I attempt to apply new concepts or methods</i>	4.76

Source: Survey of Poznan-Atlanta Program Graduates and Students.

While not stated as a "content" objective, the program seeks to install in its students a desire for learning. Table 4 indicates the major sources of current training needs on the part of program graduates (N = 62).

Table 4.**Major Sources of Current Training Needs**

Source of Training Needs	Answers (%)
My current interests, career goals, and self-development	57.7
The complexities and challenges of my present job	11.3
Changes within my industry that may impact my job and career	1.4
Anticipated future changes for which I would like advance preparation	29.6

Source: Survey of Poznan-Atlanta Program Graduates and Students.

The reasons for seeking continuing education seem quite similar to those typically stated for entrance into MBA programs, i.e., self-development motivated by interests and career goals. A secondary, but important reason for continuing education is also the desire to be prepared for the many changes occurring in today's global business environment (Table 4).

A review of published documents provided some information useful here. In 2007, the "Wprost" Magazine ranked the Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program in a tie for 4th place in the country with a total of 89 out of a possible 100 points (see Table 5).

Table 5.**Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program in "Wprost" rating**

Rating Dimension	Possible Points	Obtained Points
Market value of the diploma	40	36
Quality of the program	40	36
Quality of education	20	17

Source: Authors on the basis of Wprost (2007).

The highest ranked MBA program in the "Wprost" assessment was at the Miedzynarodowe Centrum Zarzadzania Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, a cooperative effort in Warsaw involving the University of Illinois, with a total of 92 points, 37, 37, and

18 respectively. Interestingly, the PUE actually is home to four MBA programs with foreign partners: The Poznan-Atlanta Program which is the focus of this paper, plus a cooperative program with a British university (tied for 3rd place), another with a German university (tied for 8th place) and a program with a French university (which has not been classified). It is no coincidence that USA, British, German, and French companies are also the leading investors in joint ventures in the Wielkopolska Region where Poznan is a major, centrally-located city. As Jaromin observed, foreign investment in Poland (estimated to exceed \$12 billion USD) is often promoted by factors such as the strength and stability of the economy, the availability of a highly qualified workforce, and the educational infrastructure (Jaromin, 2005).

A second finding has to do with national data regarding the gross monthly income associated with various educational statuses in 2005. The average high school graduate earns 1 800 Polish zlotych per month, employees with masters degrees in general earn 2 800 zlotych per month, but the average monthly salary for persons with the MBA is 8 700 zlotych per month or 3.5 times as much as other masters degree recipients (Jaromin, 2005). According to our survey information (Table 6), the median monthly salary for graduates of the Poznan-Atlanta MBA program was in the range of 8 600-9 500 zlotych per month (i.e., slightly above the national average) with 34.7% indicating monthly earnings of 10 600 zlotych or more (Table 6). The survey data in Table 6 confirms some differences in income between male and female MBA graduates and students in Poland.

Table 6.
Monthly PLN income level of present position of MBA students and graduates

Possible answers	Male (% of answers)	Female (% of answers)
less than 2 500 (gross)	0.0	12.0
2 600 – 3 500	8.0	16.0
3 600 – 4 500	4.0	8.0
4 600 – 5 500	10.0	12.0
5 600 – 6 500	8.0	8.0
6 600 – 7 500	8.0	4.0
7 600 – 8 500	8.0	4.0
8 600 – 9 500	8.0	12.0
9 600 – 10 500	6.0	8.0
10 600 or more	40.0	16.0

Source: Survey of Poznan-Atlanta Program Graduates and Students.

And finally, Jaromin both surveyed and interviewed Directors of MBA programs in the Wielkopolska Region. She summarized several positive ways the directors said their MBA programs influenced the careers of graduates (Jaromin, 2005, p. 42):

- wages of graduates have increased after finishing MBA program,
- promotion at work was determined by graduation from the MBA program,
- dynamics of professional career are increased,
- graduates opened their own business,
- graduates changed their jobs for the ones with more responsibilities and with more attractive salary.

5. Discussion

5.1. Self-assessment of Poznan-Atlanta MBA graduates and students

The graduates and students responding to the survey distributed on the 10th anniversary of the Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program have a high level of satisfaction with the impact of

the program on their careers with 75.8% reporting their career progress expectations were met and with 94.8% stating they expect the MBA degree to be *somewhat* or *greatly* helpful to future career progress. They also gave high rankings to the assessment and decision-making skills that serve as the foundations for many traditional MBA programs. The rankings suggest they received the very degree that Mintzberg (2004) criticizes as focusing on the wrong people, using the wrong instructional approach, and producing the wrong consequences. Let's explore his criticisms and the survey data more fully within the context of the *Four Stage Career Model* (Dalton *et al.*, 1977; Thompson *et al.*, 1986).

The model suggests that careerists enter at Stage 1 hired for specific types of expertise needed by the employing organizations, often in technical areas. Their activities are directed by others and often involve detailed and routine work performed under time pressures. Their status within the organization is limited by a lack of experienced and earned credibility; their principal career task is to prove themselves. After transitioning through the early, mid-point, and later periods of Stage 1, the careerist enters Stage 2 where she/he works more independently at more responsible and challenging assignments eventually resulting in earned credibility and reputation, increased confidence and ability, and more self-reliance in problem-solving and work decisions. Stages 1 and 2 are similar in the sense that they rely upon and apply the technical knowledge and skills for which the careerist was hired by the organization. The transition to Stage 3, however, is qualitatively different in that the careerist is now taking on responsibilities for people and processes beyond her/his technical base. For lack of a better term, the careerist has evolved from being a specialist grounded in an area of technical expertise, to becoming a manager with an increased portfolio of responsibilities.

Entrance into the Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program at the transition point between Stages 2 and 3 (see Table 2) is ideal timing. As the MBA participants take on managerial responsibilities in their workplaces, the program is in a position to provide needed assessment and decision-making tools and a context within which to apply them. Unlike Mintzberg's inexperienced undergraduate student moving directly into a MBA program, the average Poznan-Atlanta student is experienced, credible within her/his organization, and ready to learn the tools the MBA program presents. Given the nature of the program (weekend classes), these employed students are able to take concepts from the classroom and immediately test them for relevance in the workplace. Later, armed with new tools and grounded in new perspectives, graduates of the program reported experiencing a full career stage of advancement within 4.5 years of graduation; approaching the level where their responsibilities expand in scope to the larger organization (Stage 4).

The descriptive high ratings in Table 3 suggest that the graduates are indeed experiencing meaningful and challenging work and are employing work styles commensurate with Tyson's (2005, p. 236) mandate *"to think, decide, and act efficiently and innovatively"*. The ratings suggest they are functioning at career Stages 3 and 4; and further that their exposure in academia to what Mintzberg (2004, p. 36) calls *"management by analysis"* has not destroyed their flexibility.

Does the program have weaknesses in need of improvement? Clearly, it does. When asked about program weaknesses, respondents indicated the curriculum was too theoretical with not enough practical exercises and applications, and not enough case studies. They also indicated the lock-step nature of the program did not give them the opportunity to pursue electives they would like to have had. And by the rankings in Table 1, they implied a lack of balance between the analytical and leadership development

composition of the program, a criticism consistent with one of Mintzberg's (2004) major contentions.

And finally, the graduates expressed a strong interest in continuing education, in part to fill the gaps they perceived in the formal program where their personal interests could not be fully accommodated given the lock-step nature of the program; and in part due to the complexities and changes occurring in their industries and places of employment. Most MBA programs attempt to instill a desire for life-long learning. However, programs are often so busy competing for outstanding students and impressive rankings, that few follow through with the services needed to meet the continuing education needs of their graduates. If Sauser and Sauser's (2002) assertion that a philosophy of "*continuous organizational change*" is essential in today's complex and competitive business environment, then continuous learning on the part of MBA graduates serving as Stage 3 and 4 managers and leaders is also essential.

5.2 Secondary stakeholders of MBA programs

The impact of MBA programs in Poland on secondary stakeholders is less well defined and lacks systematic study. However, there is reason to believe that partnerships with foreign universities have exposed Polish faculty members to a broader array of theories and teaching technologies and have added a multi-cultural dimension to their experiences and research opportunities. Of course the same can be said for faculty members from the partner universities in the USA, UK, Germany, France, and elsewhere. Poland has changed dramatically in the last 17 years and anyone having the opportunity to observe such "change management in action" benefits from the experience.

The universities have also benefited from the partnership arrangements and MBA programs. For many, the MBA program is a source of revenue, distinction, and enhanced reputation; all valuable inputs for institutions of higher education.

While the most difficult to quantify, Polish society may benefit almost as much as the students themselves from the MBA programs in its midst. There is reason to believe direct foreign investment is facilitated by having an educated management infrastructure in place in Polish firms that managers from the investor organizations can communicate with using business concepts common to both parties. And there is anecdotal evidence that MBA-level managers are playing important roles as businesses in Poland make still another major transition, full inclusion in the European Union. And speaking of EU influence, it has made funds available to encourage employees of small businesses in Poland to enroll in MBA programs.

6. Conclusion

As we look at the "management education industry" through the historical analysis provided by Friga, Bettis and Sullivan (2003) and contemplate its future in terms of strategy, relevance, and financial benefits (Boyatzis, Stubs, Taylor, 2002; Connolly, 2003; Mintzberg, 2004), it may be useful to ponder why and how the MBA degree achieved its worldwide popularity. The experiences in Poland in general and the Poznan-Atlanta Program in particular may help put its popularity in perspective. As experienced in Poland, the MBA likely:

- Provides its primary stakeholders, the students, with opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills needed to advance their careers, make their work more meaningful, improve their earning power, and start new businesses.

- Facilitates foreign investment and helps create joint business ventures where the parties have a common set of models, concepts, tools, and terms which, in turn, improves their ability to coordinate and cooperate, and adds to the confidence they have in each other as business partners.
- Provides faculty from partnering universities opportunities to learn from each other and broaden their expertise and cultural understanding.
- Provides universities with a means of earning needed resources while enhancing their distinctiveness and reputations.
- And finally it provides society with a means for positive change, a management infrastructure that can help with such major transitions as doing business within a new political structure such as Poland's recent experiences upon entrance into the EU.

NOTES

- ¹ The Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program owes its existence to the visionary leadership and persistence of Prof. Bohdan Gruchman and Prof. John D. Hogan who in their respective roles as Rector, Poznan University of Economics, and Dean, Robinson College of Business, Georgia State University, secured the financial sponsorship of the Mellon Foundation, energized the respective faculty members, and initiated the program and launched its successful operation.
- ² These authors used a longitudinal data base developed at the Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University. They compared the results for entering students (N = 1 241) and graduates (N = 610) from 1987-2001.
- ³ For more information on PUE and GSU see Appendix 1.
- ⁴ See Appendix 2.
- ⁵ There were eight missing responses to this item, many likely from the first year student respondents (N = 11) who may not have felt adequately immersed in the program content to respond in an informed manner.

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APPENDIX 1.

Akademia Ekonomiczna w Poznaniu. The Poznan University of Economics (PUE) was founded in 1926 as the Higher School of Commerce and renamed in 1938 when it was given a broader educational charter. During World War II, the university incurred material and personnel losses and its activities were disrupted by the Nazi occupation. The early 1990s was a period of investment and refurbishing resulting in substantive changes in PUE's facilities and programs. At the start of the partnership MBA program with GSU in 1995, PUE had over 8 000 students and 418 instructional personnel. Currently, it has about 16 000 students and 600 faculty members and serves as the leading university in the Wielkopolska Region of Poland with outstanding programs in corporate finance, marketing, management, and economics. The PUE is ranked as the second leading university of economics in Poland.

Robinson College of Business, GSU. Georgia State University, located in the center of Atlanta, is a large, diverse academic institution with five colleges, and the School of Policy Studies with an enrollment of over 25,000 students. The Robinson College of Business, accredited by the AACSB, has the sixth largest part-time MBA program in the country, ranked 7th best in the country by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2004; as well as an Executive MBA Program ranked among the world's top programs: 24th by *BusinessWeek* and 68th by the *Financial Times* in 2004. Robinson College faculty members are ranked 6th among Southeastern schools and 41st nationally in terms of research productivity. Trieschmann and his associates (2000) included GSU in its analysis of programs nationally ranked both for their MBA programs and research productivity. The EMBA program at the Robinson College served as the basic model for the program developed at the PUE in 1995.

APPENDIX 2.

Part 1: Career Progression

Instructions: Please review the "Four-Stage Career Model" attached to this survey form. Then respond to items 1-6 accordingly.

1. Mark (X) the Career Stage that best describes your status at the time you entered the MBA program. Mark only one.

Stage 1:	<input type="checkbox"/> Early	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-point	<input type="checkbox"/> Late
Stage 2:	<input type="checkbox"/> Early	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-point	<input type="checkbox"/> Late
Stage 3:	<input type="checkbox"/> Early	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-point	<input type="checkbox"/> Late
Stage 4:	<input type="checkbox"/> Early	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-point	<input type="checkbox"/> Late

2. Now, mark (X) the Career Stage that best describes your current position:

Stage 1:	<input type="checkbox"/> Early	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-point	<input type="checkbox"/> Late
Stage 2:	<input type="checkbox"/> Early	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-point	<input type="checkbox"/> Late
Stage 3:	<input type="checkbox"/> Early	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-point	<input type="checkbox"/> Late
Stage 4:	<input type="checkbox"/> Early	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-point	<input type="checkbox"/> Late

3. In your judgment, to what extent did the completion MBA facilitate your career progression to date? Please mark (X) the most appropriate response.

Little or none Somewhat Greatly

4. If you have not made the degree of career progression you expected after completing your MBA degree, please mark (X) the best explanation.

Not applicable – My career progress was what I expected it to be.
 The MBA program did not prepare me for career advancement in my field.
 I pursued the MBA for a change of career, not for advancement.
 Advancement opportunities were available but I chose not to pursue them.
 Economic factors in my industry or locale curtailed normal advancement.

5. As you look to the future, to what extent do you expect the completion of your MBA to facilitate your career progression?

Little or none Somewhat Greatly

6. Please mark (X) the monthly PLN income level of your present position:

<input type="checkbox"/>	less than 2.500 (gross)	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.600-3.500
<input type="checkbox"/>	3.600-4.500	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.600-5.500
<input type="checkbox"/>	5.600-6.500	<input type="checkbox"/>	6.600-7.500
<input type="checkbox"/>	7.600-8.500	<input type="checkbox"/>	8.600-9.500
<input type="checkbox"/>	9.600-10.500	<input type="checkbox"/>	10.600 or more

Part 2: Present Employment

Instructions: This part of the survey has several sections asking about the nature of your present employment and your personal work style. Please respond by placing the appropriate number from the scale in the space next to the item.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Disagree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

My present job ...

7. () makes good use of my abilities.
8. () is creative and challenging.
9. () provides a sense of accomplishment.
10. () allows me to be relatively independent, to make my own decisions.
11. () is meaningful to me.
12. () helps me toward the financial goals I have set for myself.
13. () requires a great deal of skill to perform at a high level.
14. () provides security and stability.
15. () provides above average income.
16. () gives me the opportunity to have an impact on the overall organization.

In terms of my work style,

17. () I evaluate criticism to determine how it can be useful to me.
18. () When solving problems, I attempt to apply new concepts or methods.
19. () I get enthusiastic about problems outside my specialized area.
20. () in the past, I have taken calculated risks and I would do so again.
21. () I know how to simplify and organize my observations.
22. () I seek many ideas because I enjoy having alternative possibilities.
23. () I feel the excitement and challenge of finding a solution to problems.
24. () I am willing to present a truly original approach even if it could fail.
25. () I try to make an uninteresting problem stimulating.
26. () I consciously attempt to use new approaches toward routine tasks.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6
 Rarely Occasionally Usually Frequently Almost Consistently
 Always

27. () I manage a variety of assignments with varying demands and complexities.
28. () I adjust work plans to account for new circumstances.
29. () I help others improve their job performance and further their development.
30. () I accept the authority of my manager but continue to demonstrate my initiative and development.
31. () I work well with all types of personalities.
32. () I seek training and assignments to improve my job-related skills.
33. () I make compromises and to get problems moving toward resolution.
34. () I look for new and better ways to accomplish my duties and responsibilities.
35. () I offer to negotiate areas of disagreement.
36. () I modify rules and procedures in order to meet operational needs and goals.

Part 3: Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program

Instructions: This survey is being sent to graduates of the program and others who are in a position to provide helpful advice. If an item does not pertain to you, use "NA" to indicate that it is "Not Applicable."

37. Please mark (X) the number of the MBA class in which you participated:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I (1995-1997) | <input type="checkbox"/> VI (2000-2002) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> II (1996-1998) | <input type="checkbox"/> VII (2001-2003) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> III (1997-1999) | <input type="checkbox"/> VIII (2002-2004) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IV (1998-1999) | <input type="checkbox"/> IX (2003-2005) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> V (1999-2001) | <input type="checkbox"/> X (2004-2006) |

38. Mark (X) the statement that best describes your status regarding the program:

- I was graduated from the program during the period from 1996-1999
- I was graduated from the program during the period from 2000-2004
- I am actively pursuing completion of my MBA degree from the program
- I have not been graduated and I am no longer pursuing the degree

39. The MBA degree program specifies four primary objectives. Please rank-order the objectives indicating the relative degree to which each was accomplished by the Poznan-Atlanta Program. Use the rank of "1" to indicate the objective "best met" by the program, #2 to indicate the objective next best met, etc. Please rank all four objectives:

Stated Objectives for the MBA Program

- To develop creative decision-making skills that incorporate global, ethical, and culturally diverse dimensions,
- To develop skills to assess/diagnose organizational performance,
- To develop leadership skills, and
- To develop skills to be contributing members of an effective work team.

40. In your own words, please describe the strengths and weaknesses of the Poznan-Atlanta MBA program:

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

41. Please suggest ways to improve the Poznan-Atlanta MBA program:

Part 4: Training Needs Assessment

Instructions: A formal training needs assessment is beyond the scope of this survey. However, we would like to get some sense of your needs and your preferences for meeting those needs. Training needs arise from multiple sources: (a) Your personal interests, career goals, and quest for self-development, (b) the present complexities and challenges of your job, (c) changes in technology and competitive strategies in your industry sector that may impact your job, and (d) anticipated changes for which you would like some early preparation. Please give some thought to the following items and help us better understand the continuing education needs of graduates of our program.

42. Mark (X) the major source of your training needs:
- My personal interests, career goals, and self-development
 - The complexities and challenges of my job
 - Changes within my industry that may impact my job and career
 - Anticipated future changes for which I would like advanced preparation
43. Focus on the major source of your training needs as marked in item 41, then briefly describe the need and 2 or 3 training topics related to meeting it successfully:
43. Assuming there are some training needs and topics common to graduates of the program, would you like to see some effort devoted to meeting them through joint continuing education efforts by the alumni association and the university?
- Yes No
44. If you responded by marking "Yes," mark your preference for how such continuing education activities should be structured:
- Off-campus weekend sessions at a comfortable facility suitable for family members who might accompany the trainee
 - On-campus weekend sessions timed so trainees can travel to/from campus daily as desired (for example: Start at 10:00 and conclude at 4:00)
 - Hosted on a rotating basis among companies with the training occurring during work hours at a company training facility but open to all alumni

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY! Add comments as desired.

Appendix: The Four-Stage Career Model*

Survey Response Categories

Early: The first several months in a given stage when assignments are new and expectations are being defined.

Mid-point: The comfort zone within a career stage characterized by sufficient experience with tasks and expectations to resolve ambiguities and reduce stress, but with sufficient novelty and challenge to maintain interest and promote productivity.

Late: The final period before transitioning to the next stage. Here the careerist is often seeking change and may already be performing some tasks at the next career stage level.

Stage I

- Works under the supervision and direction of a more senior professional in the field.
- Work is never entirely his or her own, but assignments are given that are a portion of a larger project or activity being overseen by a senior professional.
- Lacks experience and status in the organization.
- Is expected to willingly accept supervision and direction.
- Is expected to do most of the detailed and routine work on a project.
- Is expected to exercise "directed" creativity and initiative.
- Learns to perform well under pressure and accomplish a task within the time budgeted.

Stage II

- Goes into depth in one problem or technical area.
- Assumes responsibility for a definable portion of the project, process, or clients.
- Works independently and produces significant results.
- Develops credibility and a reputation.
- Relies less on supervisor or mentor for answers, develops more of his or her own resources to solve problems.
- Increases in confidence and ability.

Stage III

- Is involved enough in his or her own work to make significant technical contributions but begins working in more than one area.
- Greater breadth of technical skills and application of those skills.
- Stimulates others through ideas and information.
- Involved in developing people in one or more of the following ways:
 - Acts as a leader for a small group.
 - Serves as a mentor to younger professionals.
 - Assumes a formal supervisory position.
- Deals with the outside to benefit others in organizations – i.e., works out relationships with client organizations, develops new business, etc.

Stage IV

- Provides direction for the organization by:
 - "Mapping" the organization's environment to highlight opportunities and dangers.
 - Focusing activities on areas of "distinctive competence."
 - Managing the process by which decisions are made.
- Exercises formal and informal power to:

- Initiate action and influence decisions.
 - Obtain resources and approvals.
- Represents the organization:
 - To individuals and groups at different levels inside the organization.
 - To individuals and institutions outside the organization.
 - Sponsors promising individuals to test and prepare them for key roles in the organization.

* Source: Based on Thompson, P.H., Baker, R.Z., Smallwood, N. (1986). 'Improving professional development by applying the four-stage career model', *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 49-62.

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Stakeholder expectations and benefits: an assessment of the Poznan-Atlanta MBA Program

Notes for Contributors

1. Articles should contain original unpublished work, not submitted for publication elsewhere.
2. Manuscripts intended for publication in the MBA Poznań-Atlanta Working Papers in Management, Finance and Economics should be written in English and submitted in Word on a diskette and in two hard copies to the Editorial Board.
3. The manuscripts should be typewritten on one side of A4 paper with double-spaced type and only left-band justified. Pages should be numbered (Verdana 11).
4. The manuscripts should be accompanied by a summary of the article of not more than 100 words, keywords and the Journal of Economic Literature classification.
5. Acknowledgements and references to grants, etc. should appear as footnotes to the author's name* and should not be included in the main list of footnotes.
6. Footnotes should be listed consecutively throughout the text with superscript Arabic numerals.
7. Quoted passages of more than 40 words should be set off from the text by indenting the left-band margins four spaces, as a block quotation.
9. In the text a reference should be indicated by the author's name and date of publication and the page number where appropriate, e.g. Blinder (1998, p. 40), Hicks (1965a), Hicks (1965b), Krugman and Obstfeld (2000). References should be listed at the end of the article according to the style in the following examples:
Blinder, A.S. (1998). *Central Banking in Theory and Practice*, Cambridge, The MIT Press.
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Simon, H.A. (1976). "From Substantive to Procedural Rationality", in: S.J. Latsis (ed.), *Method and Appraisal in Economics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
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