

Can Wisdom be taught?

Constructing a Human Capital Concentration for a Christian DBA

At an evangelical Christian University, the contemplation of “God-fearing wisdom” is a value and standard by which we seek to measure ourselves as faculty and hopefully emulate in a meaningful way in the classroom with students. Unfortunately, “wisdom” is often ‘side dished’ for the more recent terms and processes of “higher learning”, “expert”, and “intelligence” (Rowley, 2005). So when colleagues engaged in the development of a DBA program, the grounding of *wisdom from above* became a key underpinning for the conceptual development of the degree program. The goal of using wisdom as a focal point resonated, as “Human Capital Management from a Christian perspective” aligned so directly with the objectives, courses, content and outcomes sought to be embedded in the program. Therefore, an overview of Wisdom, Human Capital, and historical perspective of the Human Capital Management (HCM) concentration are explored in this paper.

Literature Review

Wisdom

Hokmah, the female Hebrew word for wisdom, as defined by Old Testament scholars is viewed differently than the secular perspective, and even within Christian communities there is lack of agreement on the concept (Gerdis, 1934-40; Von Rad, 1972). It is quite apparent that the three specific Biblical books attending to wisdom — Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes — all address her from a different humanistic perspective, thus demanding a unique and different response. This is frequent, because the biblical references are specific and our current culture prevents an understanding of the broader use of the term.

In further investigation of wisdom (as a term) relative to the biblical text and current context, it quickly became apparent that “wisdom” is widely misunderstood. Several authors (Rowley, 2006; Von Rad, 1972; Schultz, 1997) agree that wisdom is the human developmental synergy between truth, knowledge and understanding. In current culture, *truth* is sometimes perceived as “relative”; but our Christian heritage informs “truth” as non-negotiable, as fact or fiction. And, the responsibilities of truth are evident through character and integrity. Those with *knowledge* are able to collect, remember, and access information — the truth they encounter. They “know” the Scriptures. God’s word is literally “in them”. But, it is possible to have knowledge and lack understanding and wisdom; to have the facts, but have no clue as to the meaning or what to do next. Those with *understanding* are able to abstract meaning out of information, to rectify discrepancies, sort and prioritize data, differentiate truth from untruth.

Those with *wisdom* know which principle to apply in the right context. Understanding without wisdom can appear contradictory (Prov 26:4-5). For example, several proverbial phrases: “he who hesitates is lost”, as well as “haste makes waste” are valid principles, though it is evident that without truth, then knowledge, and then following understanding they are quite confusing and contradictory. Those with wisdom

know what to do next; they know which direction to take. They do the right thing. In contrast, there are many who have great knowledge and understanding, but consistently do the wrong thing. Wisdom, in this sense, is the goal, and knowledge and understanding only have eternal value as they result in wisdom, or what we end up *doing*.

Human Capital

Human capital (HC), a component of Intellectual Capital, includes various human resource elements, including attitude, competencies, experience and skills, tacit knowledge and the innovativeness and talents of people (Choo & Bontis, 2002; Fletcher et al., 2003; Guerrero, 2003; Roos & Jacobsen, 1999). Barney (1991, 1996) further expands the definition of human capital to include the training, experience, judgment, intelligence, relationships, and insight of individuals; it represents the tacit knowledge embedded in the minds of employees (Bontis, 1999; Bontis, Crossan, & Hulland, 2002). Additionally, human capital refers to skills of an employee that help meet the task at hand (Hsu, 2006); or the combined knowledge, skill, innovativeness, and ability of the company's individuals (Bontis, 2001). Human capital is similarly defined by Van Buren (1999) as the knowledge, skills, and competencies of people in an organization.

Human capital is vital to organizations since it serves as a source of innovation and strategic renewal (Bontis, 2002; Bontis et al., 2000; Webster, 2000). Further, human capital is an important organizational resource as it assists organizations to innovatively respond to environmental changes by developing innovative strategies and efficiently implementing strategies for complex and dynamic environments (Wright et al., 1994); as such, human capital is a source of innovation and strategic renewal (Bontis, 2002; Bontis et al., 2000; Webster, 2000).

Ulrich (1998) claims that as the service economy grows, the importance of human capital increases. As employees gain experiences, techniques, and skills on the job, they may become a company's indispensable asset. In the workplace these experiences, techniques, and skills embedded in organizational culture, policy, and values translate into "tacit knowledge." Tacit knowledge may pass down as it is or it can be "externalized" as explicit knowledge that can be stored in a database and/or a KM system. A subset of human capital, "Innovation capital" as researched by Van Buren (1999), focuses on explicit knowledge that facilitated the innovation and creation of new products and services. Explicit knowledge is easily codified and transmissible, such as through archives or databases.

Higher levels of human capital are often associated with greater productivity and higher incomes or compensation (Wilson & Larson, 2002); it is therefore in the interest of organizations and specifically human resource managers, to recruit, develop and retain the best and brightest employees as a means of achieving competitive advantage (Bontis et al., 2002).

Human Capital Management Concentration

Innovation of Human Capital Management Concentration

In looking at the specific outcomes of a DBA with attention to wisdom in light of a Christ-centered program, it quickly became evident that alterations to the “typical” curriculum were necessary. Specific changes included: foundational education and activity around community and faith integration - with the precepts of Wisdom, Knowledge and Truth explored. Further, this foundation provided a benchmark by which to evaluate key learning outcomes of the program upon commencement.

Expectations and parameters were set on the investigation and exploration of faith integration within each course. In a culture where “relativism reigns”, it seemed prudent at the Doctoral level to instill a “higher ordered understanding” so that these developing scholars understood what is *theological and/or* what is *biblical* (and how both are integrative for that matter) from the typical proof-texting and low-level integration activities.

Program specific outcomes which measure integrative learning in light of the discipline

Several key components to the Human Capital concentration seek to master understanding in the context of truth and light in the disciplinary material. As such, the following have been intentionally developed into the curriculum.

- a) Presentation of dissertation (prior to defense) at the Christian Business Faculty Association. This activity will provide the emerging scholar opportunity to not only become familiar with experts in the field of faith integration in business, but also provide a platform to present their research and receive valuable feedback prior to final defense of their dissertation. The opportunity to present research will allow for feedback, further expand the scholar’s focus and view of the material, and will aid in the formal defense process.
- b) Portfolio review, in tandem with the dissertation defense, will provide the scholar opportunity to:
 - a. articulate their key learnings in the concentration;
 - b. explain their understanding of the importance of faith integration in writing, thought, and practice;
 - c. defend their understanding and demonstrate practitioner skills necessary for their industry (i.e. corporate, education);
 - d. demonstrate their developmental progress in light of curriculum/training materials, writing/scholarship, civic engagement, along with peer and faculty feedback by incorporating global field experience into their portfolio.

This DBA degree concentration option is directed to the priority of people within organizations and society, as if walking off the graduation stage with a premiere tool kit of applied and transferable skills. Using wisdom as the standard by which to gauge context, HCM will take students past experience, education and current dilemmas in light of new knowledge and wisely take action.

Using the core classes (below) as a foundation to the HCM curriculum, students will explore, engage and develop an understanding of, and master skills which will equip them for management and leadership, at all levels in the organization—along with the responsibilities therein. Additionally, as part of a comprehensive portfolio, demonstration of a Christian worldview and response to the HCM education will be celebrated as Christian principles and values are critical to its foundation. Successful integration of our concentration framework relies on a deep understanding of the integral relationships between faith and knowledge which inherently exist between the content of the faith and the subject-matter of the human capital discipline. Woven throughout the courses, students will develop and ascertain these connections and demonstrate their scholarly understanding whose goal is to ascertain and to develop essential relationships which exist between the Christian faith and human knowledge as expressed in the human capital discipline.

The focus on the “whole” leader and the “whole” employee are central to the HCM concentration where Biblically-based principles and theological contexts are woven into the curriculum and learning outcomes of students. Several outcomes of the wholistic HCM education include:

1. Writing faith-based case studies that connect biblically based and theologically sound principles with their workplace experiences;
2. Presenting final research at the Christian Business Faculty Association’s annual Doctoral Showcase allowing doctoral work to be recognized at a prestigious venue;
3. Certification in behaviorally-based instruments, providing students the credentials necessary to assess and train employees on key pillars of management including: skill assessment; emotional intelligence; project management; group dynamics and conflict resolution.
4. Understanding of how to assess employees, workplace environments, production operations and the competitive landscape so that best practice decisions can be made competently and wisely;
5. Strategically analyzing technological, environmental and behavioral information comprehensively so that wise decisions and process execution and evaluation can be implemented and measured using knowledge, wisdom and truth in response.

Resulting HCM-DBA curriculum map

Doctor of Business Administration		
Human Capital Concentration (21 units)		
<i>Scriptural Foundation</i>		
Knowledge	Understanding	Wisdom
Facts	Meaning	What to Do Next

Information	Principles	Application
Memory	Reason	Action
Scholars	Teachers	Prophets
<i>Scholarly Foundation</i>		
Theory	Application	Integration
Classroom Learning & Teaching	Global and Cultural Dexterity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Field Experience 	Faith Integration – Classroom Learning and Teaching and Global Field Experience
Organizational Behavior	Leveraging Human Capital	Student Portfolio
Organizational Communication	Organizational Legitimacy	Comprehensive Case presentation to CBFA
Knowledge Management	Understanding and Managing Global Workforce Issues	
Human Capital Measurement	Development and Management of Human Capital	
Information Literacy		
<i>Application</i>		
Classroom Learning & Teaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scriptural • Theological • application 	Global and Cultural Dexterity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scriptural • Theological application 	Faith Integration – Classroom Learning and Teaching and Global Field Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scriptural • Theological Application
<i>Outcomes</i>		
Knowledge of Key Theorist	Applying key concepts and theories to theological underpinnings	Student Portfolio
	Global Field Experience	Comprehensive Case Presentation to CBFA
	Publications	Teaching Experience

Suggested Human Capital Concentration Courses:

Cornerstone, 1 unit: Overview of the disciplines explored within the concentration. A focus on the linkage between: Core courses and the concentration; Christian response and the concentration; and application of the studies will be explored.

Information Literacy, 2 units: This course exposes students to the crucial sources of information, the use of information and priority of it from a managerial and leadership perspective.

Organizational Behavior: Theories and Concepts, 3 units: Organizations are undergoing unprecedented and revolutionary change. Organizations faced with multiple and shifting demands must increase the speed of decision making, rethink business processes, and form new alliances. Further, organizations must learn to respond effectively, remaining

flexible and transform themselves for the new global economy. Leaders of organizations must likewise remain flexible and transform the world of work to attract new diverse labor pools. In this course, students will examine the theories and concepts of organizational behavior but also apply those theories and concepts to transform organizations.

Organizational Communication, 3 units: This course integrates ethical theory and business communication practice to help strengthen awareness, judgment, and action in organizations by exploring both common communications and organizational ethical dilemmas. This course seeks to explore a range of complex issues in today's organizations, addresses ethical concerns, and investigates the fundamentals that enable organizations to be simultaneously productive and ethical. This course is case-based and includes a variety of important examples of organizational communication ethics of today.

Knowledge Management, 3 units: In this course, students are provided the knowledge and skills necessary for effective knowledge management present in today's increasingly innovative and global business environment. Students will explain the purposes of knowledge management and consider a variety of topics critical to an organization's long-term success including, but not limited to communities of knowledge and collaborative knowledge sharing. Additionally, students will analyze the relationship between vision, strategy, and intellectual capital, describe the risks and liabilities of not managing intellectual capital and examine the impact of cultural and legal factors on strategic knowledge management.

Organizational Legitimacy, 3 units: Organizational legitimacy emphasizes the social acceptance resulting from adherence to social norms and expectations whereas reputation emphasizes comparisons among organizations. An improved understanding of relationships between legitimacy and reputation requires that differences between the two be specified and clarified. In this course, students will examine organizational legitimacy and organizational reputation and their similar antecedents, social construction processes and consequences. In addition, students will analyze organizational environments to maximize the probability of meeting short-term operational goals while simultaneously building a long-term plan for the organization.

Leveraging Intellectual Capital, 3 units: This course will examine innovation, intellectual capital, goodwill, brand recognition, organizational partnerships, and organizational culture. Students will compare and contrast different types of intellectual capital and their relationship to innovation and analyze the impact of global differences on intellectual capital. Additionally, students will explain the significance of intellectual asset and analyze how organizational structure and ethical behaviors impact intellectual capital value.

Human Capital Assessment, 2 units: This course will provide individual assessments as well as trainer certification for various organizational and management tools. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the material in presentation and in writing. This

course will also train students to develop training materials and corrective action plans for individuals, departments and organizations which will be highlighted in the demonstration of their work throughout the cohort meetings/gatherings.

Development and Management of Human Capital, 3 units: Organizations operating in today's competitive environment must find better ways of managing and measuring their investments in human capital. The workforce, the largest expenditure for most organizations, can be leveraged in ways that provide value. Yet, although organizations are increasingly adept at managing the tangible inputs that drive all businesses, few organizations have implemented measures that provide an accurate means to value and manage the workforce.

Human Capital Measurement, 3 units: This course seeks to explore the ways to quantitatively measure human capital by providing a framework to assess and report organization human capital performance. The workforce, often referred to as a company's most valuable asset, is no longer viewed as an expense on the income statement, but also an asset on the balance sheet. Students will learn to optimize workforce strategy to enable organizations to make decisions today that drive value tomorrow.

Understanding and Managing Global Workforce Issues, 3 units: This course will explore global standards in workforce analytics, workforce planning, workforce metrics and benchmarking, performance management and HR data and transaction classification. In this course, students will lead and educate global organizations on what to measure, what it means, how it fits, and how to improve it.

Human Capital Publications, 6 units (2 products at 3 units each): These units will be completed over the concentration's timeframe. Each product will provide opportunity for students to engage with different advisors so as to develop multiple competencies from engaging in different research agendas with various academicians.

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