



Professor Bernard Yeung, Dean, NUS Business School

MBA REPORT

Bringing out the best

Getting an MBA in the downturn to thrive in the upturn

It's funny but true: Many managers just can't manage. And in many cases, no matter how much "molding" takes place, the inherent personality traits won't allow sustained change to take place.

The good news is today's managers have plenty of skill-honing opportunities. Among the options is harnessing, or creating a strong business sense through a master in business administration (MBA) programme.

A good quality MBA course should develop the student holistically into a businessperson with a good sense of business ethics, social responsibility and integrity in addition to having good business acumen. The graduate should also be able to appreciate business nuances and navigate the intricacies of doing business, whether locally or globally.

A good MBA course should also expand the student's professional network of friends around the world. Through internships and study trips, the student can learn from the best practices of leading companies from around the world.

"The MBA education has evolved over the years to emphasize the development of a well-rounded set of skills. We believe that students need to have a strong educational and moral foundation. They need to acquire more solid analytical skills, a better sense of action and consequence and thus a stronger

sense of responsibility and commitment to true value-creation. They also need to learn to appreciate history more so that they adopt a more holistic appreciation of economic and business development," explained Professor Bernard Yeung, Dean and Stephen Riady Distinguished Professor, NUS Business School.

Mr. Lee Kwok Cheong, Chief Executive Officer of Singapore Institute of Management says, "The reality is the need to increasingly compete in the international scene with the global players. To effectively lead your organisation in the right direction, to enhance shareholder value and produce better results year-on-year, the only way is to stay relevant and ahead."

Choosing the ideal MBA programme

From the traditional objective of providing MBA graduates a strong grasp in management and a broad perspective of business

concerns, a modern MBA serves to meet intricacies in today's commerce.

Thus many MBA programmes have been customised to fit the particular needs of students. It's common to see programmes focusing on a particular field, such as MBA major in Finance or in Human Resource Management.

A good case in point is the NUS Business School, which according to Dean Yeung, represents the best of Eastern and Western business education, where the world's best management knowledge is combined with Asia's unique and diverse context.

"Our school's unique strength is in providing management thought leadership from an Asian perspective, to enable our students to leverage on global knowledge and deep Asian insights that will help propel Asian businesses to the forefront of the world economy and help global businesses succeed in Asia," he pointed out.

"NUS Business School's rigorous curriculum and ample opportunities for exposure also enable our students to gain multiple perspectives, insights and the finer nuances of doing business during their stay with us. They are able to get international exposure, and at the same time, tuned in with what is

happening in Asia," added Associate Professor Susanna Leong, Vice Dean (Graduate Studies), NUS Business School.

The Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) in partnership with University at Buffalo (UB), The State University of New York, offers

an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) programme specifically designed to help working adults with at least five years of working experience to develop skills for managing and working in teams. It

aims to produce superior analysts, problem solvers, excellent team players and effective communicators - all the essential skills required of an effective 21st century business leader. In contrast to the traditional MBA programmes, the EMBA places greater emphasis on the proficiencies needed to ascend into senior management positions. A key unique feature

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Mr. Lee Kwok Cheong, CEO, SIM

>> of the EMBA is the incorporation of the Strategic Leadership Development (SLD) sequence within the programme—centred on integrating the essential skills and disciplinary knowledge required for success in senior level management.

“Our courses cover the basic tools a manager needs, the major functional areas of management, and also provide the broad perspective and skills required by senior managers in any organisation. Participants in our EMBA program are taught exclusively by full-time American professors, and the degree awarded upon completion is an MBA degree from an American university that is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International), the highest level of accreditation for a business school within the US,” said Professor Philip Perry, Associate Dean for International Programs at UB’s School of Management.

“The education our Singapore EMBA program provides is exactly what every manager needs to effectively lead his / her organisation in these difficult economic times, and to position the organisation for solid growth once this recession has lifted,” he added. SIM-UB’s EMBA has been cited by the Business Week as a ‘top programme’.

Crossing borders

To attain a global standard, it has also become essential for top MBA programmes to go overseas in searching for the best managers. The NUS and SIM have also adapted this strategy to bring out the best from their students.

NUS Business School has more than 100 full-time faculty from more than 25 countries, all possessing extensive research, teaching and consulting experience. They hold doctorates from the best universities in the world and publish regularly in leading journals.

They have written books that are used as teaching materials in leading universities around the region.

In fact, NUS Business School was ranked Top 4 for Research (outside of North America) and ranked 47 worldwide in the Top 100 Business School Research Ranking by University of Texas, Dallas 2009. Its faculty is also in constant touch with the industry leaders, with many of them being consultants to businesses in the region.

On the other hand, SIM’s tie-up with the

UB School of Management, allows their students to get instructions from one of the best business schools in the United States-- a perception supported by Business Week and The Wall Street Journal.

This EMBA programme is taught by senior faculty members from the UB School of Management with outstanding teaching, research and private industry experience, with many of them being recipients of esteemed national and international awards.

The reputable partnership of 13 successive years in Singapore with UB provides access to more than 300 alumni members so that SIM’s students are well connected to key decision makers in leading organisations.

“ MBAs, OF COURSE, ARE NOT TOOLS FOR CREATING TALENT”

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Maxwell.

The company assesses individuals and can predict, through structured interviews with an 85 percent accuracy, leadership aptitude.

Talent Plus’ philosophy is based upon strength development principles – focusing on a person’s natural talents. The use of their structured interview science allows the identification of natural talents and abilities. Once an individual is selected for a position, managers can use the interview’s outcome for development and succession planning. Those with leadership talent can be pointed towards opportunities and platforms for that leadership talent to grow and develop.

“Aspiration or desire alone does not a leader make. If someone is identified with talent for leadership, we would recommend further investment in terms of coaching and other developmental processes to set him up for success as a leader. We do not



Dr. William Wan, Managing Director (Asia-Pacific), Talent Plus

Refining talent

MBAs, of course, are not tools for creating talent. Like any other training programme, MBAs are meant to enhance talent and sharpen skills. Talent Plus, the premier global human resources consulting firm with over 200 world-class, quality, growth-oriented clients, emphasizes the principle that training does not create talent, it merely refines it.

Talent Plus was founded by University of Nebraska-Lincoln educational psychologist William E. Hall, PhD, and his student Doug Rath, as well as Kimberly Rath and Sandy

recommend trying to repair weaknesses or focusing on them, because it distracts from focusing on strengths and developing potential. As well, the improvement when focusing on one’s strengths is incrementally greater than when focusing on one’s weaknesses,” said Dr. William Wan, Managing Director of Talent Plus.

“If you are equipping MBA students for leadership roles, you should select individuals naturally endowed with leadership aptitude. A rigorous MBA programme will refine the leadership talent though it does not create it,” said Dr. William Wan.