

Research on Existing Problem of China's MBA Education and the Countermeasures

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Abstract

This article started with a brief review of the history and current situation of Chinese MBA education, Moreover, the major problems of Chinese MBA education and the reasonable resolution were presented on improving the MBA education in China as well.

Keywords: MBA education, Curriculum, Case study method

China needs a great number of quality professional managers at all levels for its huge and fast-growing market economy. Within the past two decades, China has initiated efforts to develop domestic MBA education as a crucial element of the country's continued economic development. There are some problems that impeding the vigorous development of MBA education under the present situation. China needs to reform its business education and invests more in order to develop this resource in sufficient quantity and quality. With the increasing globalization of business, more attention would undoubtedly be paid to the internationalization of MBA education.

1.The development of MBA education in China

In the last twenty years, the growth of MBA education in China has been phenomenal. Today, generally speaking, the development of B-school (also named school of economics and management in some Chinese universities) and MBA programs in modern sense where managers for market economics are nurtured has experienced four periods :(Li, Y., 2005; Chen, Z., 2009)

1.1 The first period: from early 1990s to 1997.

The years of this period could be called the coping and groping stage of Chinese business schools. Institutes of higher education were probing into the problem of how to build up B-schools which subject to the current situation in China--market-oriented reform. During this period, as the most representative of management education, MBA was formally introduced into China and developed rapidly.

1.2 The second period: from 1998 to 2002.

After the exploration in the first period, since 1998, the B-schools have been in certain scales. The first-rate schools began to improve their education qualities and build up their reputation. Business-schools and the MBA trained by them have been gradually accepted by society. Requirements on qualities for MBA became more stringent. The demand for MBA increased a lot, and at the same time, a lot of Chinese students went abroad to study MBA program. MBA cooperation programs between China and other countries also started to bloom.

1.3 The third period: from 2003 to 2006.

Due to mature attitudes to MBA by the people, the upsurge of MBA began to cool down in this period. People began to realize that over-expectation on MBA is not reasonable; and not every MBA graduate will be a good manager. During this period, even second- or third-rate business-schools attach great importance to the improvement of education quality and the build-up good reputation.

1.4 The fourth period: from 2007 to present.

In this period, MBA programs are concentrated on their own characteristics and committed to improving the quality of education. Especially for these newly established programs, they pay great attention to cultivating their own core competitiveness, characteristic education, and try to attract students with high quality. Another trend is the globalization and localization. (Chen, Z., 2009).

2. The current status of Chinese MBA education

2.1 The scale of MBA education

By the end of 30 June 2010, there are currently 184 universities were approved to offer MBA programs in China. The scale of students' enrollment has been over 30,000 per year for MBA students, and 7000 for EMBA students.

2.2 The categories of MBA programs in China

MBA and EMBA programs in China fall into roughly three groups: local programs (run solely by PRC universities), joint programs (run jointly by a PRC and a foreign institution), and imported programs (run by a foreign institution, with a Chinese partner university).

2.3 Status of the MBA faculty

In aspect of size of faculty, it increases in a smooth speed totally in recent years, but the increasing speed is small, especially in the case of rapid increasing of scale of students the teachers are increasingly insufficient. And the formal schooling level of teachers in the top 10 Business-Schools upgrades obviously, with the teachers having doctor's degree accounting for 60% on average. Right now, China didn't require a PHD for the minimum requirement for a faculty member, but some top business schools have started to require a PHD as the minimum for the MBA faculty member now.

2.4 The regulation structure of Chinese MBA education

Mainly there are two Chinese government departments in charge of the major regulation issues of MBA education in China for the time being. The Degree Office of State Council accepts and makes approval decision to the applications from domestic universities for offering pilot MBA program. The National MBA Education Supervisory Committee (NMBAESC) is in charge of directing and coordinating the domestic MBA programs, making policy-related studies, promoting the cooperation between the business schools and the business community, and channeling international communication. And it is playing a more and more important role in Chinese MBA education.

3. Observed problems and proposed solutions

In the present situation, there are some problems that impede the vigorous development of MBA education, which need to be addressed if further progress is to be achieved. This section analyzes some general existing problems in the aspects of Institutional and administrative frameworks, enrolment system, faculty - team development, curriculum structure design, teaching mode and career service in the current China's MBA education. On the basis of study, some related countermeasures were also given to improve the quality of MBA education and enhance the competitive advantage of MBA graduate in the market.

3.1 Problems about enrollment and admission system

Currently the enrollment system of MBA education in China is still use selection examination. Only those candidates who can pass the examination are likely to be matriculated. And the re-examination marks were decided by the exam results and the total student enrollment numbers at the National Plan. This leaves a small space for those institutions who want to select the outstanding talents with practical experience through the retrial. And According to the existing examination subject and examination content, a large number of enterprises who have rich experience in management positions with less time to prepare the examination were excluded, but those candidates who have left the school in a short time, with less working experience can get a high score.

All these factors made the age of enrollee younger and younger, and they are also lack of practical management experience. Coupled with this was that some institutions lower the admission standards in order to lure more and more entrants, from a point of economic interests. More and more students which have no expertise knowledge, no management experience entering the MBA group. Just these low quality MBA students led to the devaluation of the MBA market. If this phenomenon goes on, the vigorous development of China's MBA education will be severely influenced.

3.2 Problems about faculty qualification

The quality of faculty is the most often complained part of the education; the inadequate faculty has become a bottleneck restricting the development of China's MBA education, especially for the domestic programs. This problem has two dimensions.

Firstly, there is a large portion of the faculty who never has a chance to make systematic study in business administration or management at a doctoral level. Many faculty members are from related areas, such as economics, engineering, or sciences. Accordingly, their teaching behavior in MBA programs will have the stigmas of the academic degree education

in their original fields, which are still traditional non - interactive method, may not match the way of conducting professional programs. On the contrary, most of those MBA students are from enterprise; they have a strong performance desire, and need more chances of communication and interaction. It is contradict to the traditional inculcation model.

Secondly, most of the faculty members are lack of real business experiences. Most of the faculty members just begin their professorship immediately after their graduation. Because of the institutional constraints, faculty members were usually banned to open their own business or to be business partner with others, or to serve company as a consultant on a long-term base. They generally lack practical knowledge of the business world, and this leads to many Chinese MBA instructors still rely on their past knowledge of Chinese management and theoretical knowledge to teach MBA students more or less in the traditional way.

To solve this problem, those inexperienced Chinese MBA instructors should be encouraged to conduct business consulting projects so that they can acquire hands-on experience in the business. Also, Business schools in China should try to recruit more Western educated scholars to join their MBA teaching faculty and expand their exchange programs with famous business school overseas. Furthermore, these business schools can invite experienced managers from the business world as guest lecturers to conduct seminars or workshops with MBA students and visiting scholars from developed countries can be used to teach MBA subjects.

For each Chinese business school with an international outlook, a three-pronged approach can be available to improve their MBA programs: (1) To attract back Chinese professors who are teaching overseas or to recruit new academics who have just received their doctoral degrees of business administration or in relevant areas from business schools in the US or Europe. (2) To send existing faculty members to train in some of the top business schools, especially in the US. (3) To attract top US and European professors as visiting faculty to teach on their programs and inexperienced faculties members can learn from them.

3.3 Problems about curriculum

Both MBA students and the instructors expect that the MBA programs can give students a comprehensive practical training, sound theoretical background, innovative spirit, and problem solving ability. These demands should be met in the design of the curriculum.

Unfortunately, not all of the domestic MBA programs have well developed curriculum to meet the needs. In the course content, especially for the design of the curriculum, most MBA programs did not keep pace with the market development and response to the market demands. Some of them are just content with reaching the basic requirements put forward by NMBAEAC passively, that is, the MBA curriculum recommended by the national MBA education supervisory committee, the minimum credits requirement or required courses. Compared with foreign MBA programs, less freedom is left to the domestic programs. In reality, most of the MBA programs' curriculum arrangements are no different from the program of master's degree of management science.

Different universities then need to be granted the necessary autonomy to decide on their own course structure in their chosen specializations. A fundamental consideration of how to determine the course structure is not only what a business school can teach, but also more importantly what is needed in the labor market. For example, engineering universities are more suitable to specialize in technology management or management information system that focuses on optimal or technical solutions to workplace problems. Medical management and management of Healthcare Organizations should be favored by the healthcare MBA program in medical university.

Hence, authorized MBA programs should periodically review their courses and make necessary adjustments accordingly. For example, business ethic and socially responsible courses seems to be an important but missing subject in the current Chinese MBA curriculum. Moreover, different business schools can even further differentiate their MBA offerings by focusing on a particular aspect of a chosen specialization. For instance, finance can be a popular specialization in many universities; a particular business school may choose to focus on carbon finance to create a competitive advantage for itself.

3.4 Problems about pedagogy

Much of the criticisms to China's MBA education focus on instruction methods. In traditional Chinese culture, learning is mostly a one-way process of knowledge transferring from teachers to students, or we call it non - interactive method, typical Chinese teaching is characterized by dominate lecturing of the teacher and rote learning of the students. Obviously, this traditional cramming method is not appropriate for China's MBA education, which now requires a more interactive approach.

As for the Chinese MBA students, many students are good at memorizing theories or concepts from the textbook; they generally lack capabilities to apply abstract theories or concepts to analyze practical problems in the real business world. Meanwhile, Chinese MBA students are relatively weaker in practical communication skills in terms of public speaking and professional writing.

In order to cultivate Chinese students' capabilities in these areas, it is important to create an interactive atmosphere in classroom. This can be achieved with different instruction methods such as case studies, group discussing, role playing and team working. For instance, in a online discussion, Engaging students may not only make the learning process more interesting, but also help to overcome Chinese students' concern of face-saving psychology

4. Conclusions

MBA education has witnessed rapid expansion in Mainland China since the early 1990s to meet the economic development of the country. However, compared with the nearly 100-year-long history of MBA education in some foreign countries, China's MBA education is still at the preliminary stage of development. While great achievements are being made, we are still facing with many problems. Chinese MBA education is suffering from a narrowly defined curriculum, a shortage of qualified teaching staff and outdated instruction methods. To improve Chinese MBA teaching quality, accredited universities need to be able to decide their own course structure according to the demands of the labor market, business schools should embrace a more participative teaching approach so that students' critical thinking capability and professional communication skills can be improved. Most importantly, Chinese business academics should focus on developing more localized teaching materials and case studies that are specific to Chinese reality.

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