

QUALITY BRINGS CONFIDENCE

by Liang Neng

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EMBA Education in China: An Unbalanced Market

Ever since the media pointed out at the end of 2003 that the MBA/EMBA education market in China was reaching its bottleneck, people are keeping asking the questions: Is the EMBA market in China over-developed? Will there be a sustained growth in the future? From my point-of-view, the overall EMBA education market in China is still in its growing phase. In the United States, currently the number of participants in EMBA programme nationwide is 16,000 each year, whereas most of the senior executives in the U.S. have already studied an MBA program. By contrast, this number is only around 5,000 to 6,000 in China annually, although the majority of senior executives and entrepreneurs in China have not been trained in a management programme yet. Obviously, the EMBA education market in China is far away from saturation if we take into account the large scale of China's economy and the emerging

needs for management education.

The quality of EMBA programmes in China varies from school to school. Although since 2002 a growing number of EMBA programmes has been emerging on the market of China, very few of them can be labeled excellent. The experience from the MBA market in the U.S., a relatively mature market, tells us that while most MBA programmes are under-participated now, the admission ratio of the top MBA programmes is still kept at 7:1 or 8:1. It can be predicted that the EMBA education market in China will continue to be unbalanced in the next few years, with programmes of poor quality fading out from the market while those of good quality flourishing.

EMBA at CEIBS: High Quality Justifies Large Scale

Currently the number of participants in CEIBS EMBA programme each year is 550, almost twice as great as that of participants in the EMBA programme

at Columbia Business School, the largest EMBA programme in the U.S. In this case, is the CEIBS EMBA programme over-sized? My answer is no, because whether or not it is over-sized depends on the quality level of a specific programme but not on whether the market is growing or shrinking in general.

The quality of our EMBA programme is comparable to that of any other world class business schools. This justification is not groundless; rather it is based on facts. The most convincing evidence is the students' evaluation on professors' teaching. Last year, CEIBS invited five top professors from Wharton Business School to teach in the EMBA programme at CEIBS. At the end of the semester, unexceptionally they all received high scores in students' evaluation. However, over ten professors from CEIBS teaching in the same programme received an equally high score, if not higher, as their counterparts from Wharton did. Although, on the research side, CEIBS still has a long way to go to be parallel to other top business schools such as Wharton,



it is completely comparable to the world's best business school on the teaching side.

Based on such a high quality level, the CEIBS EMBA programme is by no way over-sized, especially if we take into account Chinese enterprises' increasing demands on executive business education.

Professors, Students and Learning Culture: the Cornerstone of Quality

The high quality of CEIBS EMBA programme is ensured by three key factors: high quality of teaching, world class faculty, and world class students.

High quality of teaching is placed at the core of operation. With a strong market orientation, CEIBS EMBA programme continuously assesses its position in the market to serve the needs of students and their organisations. This helps to ensure the design and quality

of the programme to stand at the highest level. Neither recognized at home nor recognized abroad when first introduced in 1995, the CEIBS EMBA programme now is widely accepted as the best programme in mainland China.

The high quality of teaching cannot be realized without a faculty of excellence. During its first decade, CEIBS has invested heavily in faculty development. Primarily educated in North America or Europe and teaching in China for almost 20 years, these professors have extensive academic and professional achievements in China and abroad. They are especially good at combining the advanced Western theories on business management with the real business practices in China, which has gained strong recognition amongst the students. Their substantial international standing and deep understanding of the Chinese market brings their teaching an unparalleled advantage over their peers at other business schools.

World class schools demand world class students. Compared with their counterparts abroad, CEIBS EMBA participants, the business elite in China, boast a higher degree of excellence and conscientiousness. On average, CEIBS' participants have 15 years of work experience and approximately 60 percent of the students have top managerial positions, including CEO, vice president, and president. Such a class membership structure provides a valuable mix of professional experience, thus leveraging the depth of discussion during and beyond classes.

Conscientiousness, innovation, and excellence—these spirits are weaved into the learning culture at CEIBS, which

contributes as the cornerstone to the outstanding quality of CEIBS EMBA Programme.

Targeting New Market in South China: A Long-Term Strategy

The faculty team at CEIBS has constantly expanded over the past ten years. By the end of 2004, the number of permanent and core faculty reached 32. Meanwhile, the EMBA programme is also expanding to meet the increasing demand of the market with its accumulated experience and exceptional quality. This year, the programme launched a new class in Shenzhen. Although it would have been easier and less costly to open new classes in Shanghai or Beijing, CEIBS decided to take the effort to explore a new market in South China.

According to the experience of top business schools in the U.S. such as Wharton, Chicago, and Columbia, the geographical location is an important factor that the students would take into consideration when they apply to a school. Most students of the above schools are within the distance of 300 to 500 miles. Therefore, it can be rationalized that the main obstacle that hinders people in South China from participating in the two-year part-time programme in Shanghai or Beijing is the long distance and commuting time. Based on the research on market potential in South China, the program is expecting at least an equal number of participants in its EMBA Shenzhen class, and to hold a leading market share, in the long run, in executive management education regionally.

Although CEIBS is not the first insti-

tution to offer an EMBA programme in Shenzhen, the school's unparalleled advantage of consolidating advanced Western management theories into the real business practices in China has highly inspired its students. After taking the Techmark and Introduction to Management courses, many students comment: We used to be arrogant, thinking we know all. Now we realize that most of our past decisions were based on feelings and intuition, so mistakes were unavoidable. CEIBS' professors instil in us great passion for learning and encourage us to reconstruct ourselves, which is so important for future success. The students' enthusiasm for learning is impressive. Some of them already hold an MBA or EMBA degree from other schools before attending our programme. Not fully satisfied with the degree of leveraging their knowledge or management practice in their former study, the students made a special trip to CEIBS to gain knowledge from the school's renowned faculty. It is the continuous quality improvement that makes CEIBS identified as the preferred and desired source of management education in China.

Dance with Wharton: Innovation through a Global Network

Although, as I mentioned, the quality of our EMBA programme is now comparable to that of any other top business schools in the world, we are making continuous improvement through innovations. This is to ensure that the portfolio of the programme is always relevant to the needs of today's real business world that is constantly

changing. This year, CEIBS EMBA programme is proud to present its English class participants the option to attend the Global Track, which is carried out in cooperation with Wharton Business School.

The recent overseas mergers by two domestic enterprises, TCL and Lenovo, reveal a new trend that Chinese enterprises are entering the global competition through direct international investment. Therefore, first-handed and direct international experience and network become critical. This is a sign for the Chinese business schools to foster entrepreneurs and managers capable of competing in international markets. Starting from 2005, students enrolled in the Global Track will take the International Business course at Wharton Business School, together with Wharton EMBA students in Philadelphia. They will also visit headquarters of leading multinationals in the U.S., and meet senior executives of these companies. In return, Wharton EMBA participants will come to Shanghai for their international business study tour.

With a strong international orientation, CEIBS has developed an impressive team of international professors. Now the school aims at building up a strong international alumni network, taking the joint programme with Wharton as the first step. We hope to provide a higher platform for Chinese enterprises to compete in the global market. Expanding our domestic alumni network globally is the initial step of this strategy.

In addition to "reaching out", we also expect an increasing number of international students in our programme, which was already the case

in the past few years. This is in line with overseas students' increasing demand for a keen knowledge of the Chinese market. In 2003, 2% of CEIBS' participants were international students, while the number rose to 4% in 2004 and 6% this year. In the meantime, the profile of the international students has also changed. In the past, most of them were working for the China office of foreign companies; while, this year, we welcomed two students working in Tokyo and Seoul respectively. Both of them would fly to China once every month to attend CEIBS' classes. In the future, we anticipate more executives from multinationals' Asian-Pacific headquarters and more top leaders from local enterprises based in Asian-Pacific countries to join our EMBA programme.

Last but not the least, I'd like to say a few words on the new residence module. Starting from 2005, participants are required to live on campus twice: one at the beginning; and the other at the end of the programme. The residence module was designed to provide a better platform for exchange and learning among students.

All in all, CEIBS EMBA programme has been adhering to its soul of high quality. We hope all participants can be greatly benefited from this two-year programme.

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