

A STUDY ON PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES' MBA PROGRAMMES AND DELIVERY METHODS IN KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

MBA programmes or alike are mushrooming in Klang Valley, the economic centre of Malaysia that covers Kuala Lumpur. Almost all private universities are offering MBA programmes. This research only focuses on the private universities' MBA programmes in particular their structure, delivery methods and uniqueness of the programme. This study only concentrates in all home-grown (not twinning) MBA programmes in Klang Valley. This research uses secondary sources of information from books, the private institution's websites and brochures for reference of MBA information. The study is deemed beneficial for universities to have a glance on what MBA programmes that other institutions are offering and designing their own. Besides, it may serve as a reference for students that wish to embark on MBA degrees. This study finds out those most private universities in Klang Valley offers MBA programmes; average course fee is about RM 25,000 (US\$8,000). While all MBA programmes still have face to face classes, e-learning is getting popular because of its flexibility. More and more specializations are introduced that are relevant to the growth of the knowledge economy such as Telecommunications, Healthcare, Tourism, Hospitality et cetera.

Keywords: *Private universities, MBA programmes, delivery methods, Klang Valley.*

INTRODUCTION

MBA programmes or alike are mushrooming in Klang Valley, the economic centre of Malaysia. Almost all private universities are offering MBA programmes. This research only focuses on the private universities' MBA programmes in particular their structure, delivery methods and uniqueness of the programme. This study will list out all home-grown (not twinning) MBA programmes in Klang Valley. This research uses secondary sources of information from books, the private institution's websites and brochures for reference of MBA information. The study is deemed beneficial for universities to have an understanding on what MBA programmes that other institutions are offering and designing their own. Besides, it may serve as a reference for students that wish to embark on MBA degrees. The researcher finds almost all private universities in Klang Valley offer Master in Business Administration (MBA) or Master of Management (MM). MBA tuition fees range from RM18,000 to RM50,000 (approximately US\$6,000 to US\$18,000).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overall View

MBA (Master of Business Administration) is one of the postgraduate degrees, it was developed by Harvard University in year 1908 (*Master of Business Administration*, 2010). The programme was introduced to enable students to have a general knowledge in different business disciplines (*Master of Business Administration*, 2010). MBA is seemed as a tool for many executives to climb corporate ladder or career advancement. Mihail and Elefterie (2006) had proved that MBA graduates could get some forms of promotions and pay rise after graduation. Ever since the successful implementation of MBA initially by public universities in 90s, it has flourished in Malaysia (Quraeshi and Luqmani, 2008). Both Malaysian public and private universities started introducing MBA programmes in the last decade until now (Quraeshi and Luqmani,2008), the researcher has found out than there are at least 14 MBA programmes offered by private universities in Klang Valley excluding those offered by public or foreign universities. However, Malaysians seem to prefer foreign MBAs, as Tay (2001) found out that employers in Malaysia preferred MBA from foreign universities. In sum, MBA has the following features (Wong et al., 2009):

- Learning general and set of business skills and knowledge in management, finance, economics etc.
- Application of work experience to studies
- Integrate different business functions and how the company can compete
- Enhancement student's portfolio
- Ability to think, reflect and solve business problems
- Boost the managerial capabilities in self-determination, creativity, motivation and confidence

Albeit the popularity of MBA, there are a list learning outcomes that employers expect from MBA graduates. The next section will discuss the expected learning outcomes of MBA graduates.

What Management Wants from MBA Graduates?

Tay (2001) conducted a research in 2001. She found out that there were few items that management will look into when employing MBA graduates. These items are listed as follows:

Expected learning outcomes of MBA graduates (Tay, 2010)

- Leadership skills
- Communication and skills in English
- Interpersonal skills
- Management skills
- Decision making skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Teamwork
- Innovation and creativity
- Business knowledge
- Work ethics

- Entrepreneurship
- Information Technology Skills

Kretovics (1999) grouped most skills above into 4 major domains, these skills were:

1. *Interpersonal skills*
 - a. Help and support others to grow
 - b. Leadership
 - c. Relationship and communication with others
2. *Information gathering skills*
 - a. Sense making skills
 - b. Information gathering skills
 - c. Information analysis skills
3. *Behavioural skills*
 - a. Goal setting
 - b. Action and commitment
 - c. Initiative skills
4. *Analytical skills*
 - a. Theory skills – conceptualization of theories and utilize theories
 - b. Quantitative skills
 - c. Technology skills in computer-related fields

In a nut shell, all these skills are required by managers to solve daily business problems. These involve interpersonal skills as managers need to relate and communicate with people for solving problems. At the same time, they need information skills and analytical skills to gather information to analyse the business problem and lastly propose solutions. Moreover, a manager needs to have positive and right behavioural skills such as discipline, initiation and risk-taking to solve business problems.

Apart from the above skills, universities are beginning to introduce specializations to the general MBA. These specializations are becoming more and more diverse, specializations ranging from business functional areas such as human resource, finance, accounting, business information systems, entrepreneurship and et cetera (*Master of Business Administration*, 2010). There are even newer specializations like sustainable development by the University of Science, Malaysia (Amran et al., 2010).

Teaching and Learning Methods in MBA

Most MBAs are still conducted in face to face approach, face to face approach includes lectures, presentations, case studies and other relevant teaching and learning activities. While Harvard MBA is considered one of the best in the world due to its case study approach (*How the HBS Case Method Works*, 2010), conventional lecture based MBA classes are conducted in many Malaysian universities. However, e-learning is gaining popular among online and distance learning based universities such as Asia e University and Open University of Malaysia (Wong, 2008). E-learning platform provides interactive class

notes, e-forum and simulation to facilitate learning (Wong, 2010). There are already some universities offer MBA in e-learning mode, there are few private Malaysia universities also explored this option offering e-learning based MBA (*Online MBA*, 2010; Wong, 2008) While e-learning is great and save cost, it also provides independent learning environment that are suitable for working adults (Wong, 2010). According to a study conducted by Mahmud et al. (2005), they found out that Malaysians can accept e-learning based MBA and Internet is a useful educational tool. However, not all people in Malaysia can accept e-learning (Wong, 2010), that is why most universities still conduct face to face classes. This can be seen from the findings part later.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses secondary sources of information from Internet, books, magazines or any other secondary materials. The research is based on the following areas: the course fee, number of courses, specializations, delivery mode and venue of the institution. The findings are tabulated and present in a table format.

FINDING

MBA or MM programmes are referenced from fourteen private universities in Klang Valley. The results are tabulated as below.

Table 1: MBA programmes in Private Universities

	EU	BUC	HUC	IUC	KWU	MUS	MUM
Title	MBA	MBA	MBA	MBA	MBA	MBA	MBA
Course Fee	Around RM26,000	Around RM30,000	Around RM22,000	Around RM21,000	Around RM35,000	Around RM21,000	Around RM22,000
Courses	10 Core Course 4 Electives 1 Project	10 Core Course 4 Electives 1 Project	7 Core Course 4 Electives 1 Project	11 Core Course 4/5 Electives 1 Project	8-9 Core Courses 4 papers based on specialisations 1 Project	10 Core Course 4 Electives 1 Project	8 Core Course 4 Electives
Delivery Methods	E-learning, Face to face lectures	Face to face lectures	Face to face lectures	Face to face lectures	Lecture and in-class activities	Face to face lectures E-learning	Face to face lectures E-learning
Duration	2 years part-time	1 year 4 months	1 year 6 months	1 year 6 months	1 year 4 months	2 ½ yrs part-time	2 years
Uniqueness	Specialised in Finance areas like, Finance, Islamic Finance, Insurance, Islamic Insurance, even Tourism, Risk Management, Supply Chain Management, Knowledge Management	Specialised in various fields such as Logistics, telecommunications, banking, semi-conductors, plastic, fashion, event, tourism, foods and advertising	Specialised in Finance and Marketing	Specialised in Finance and Marketing and Project Management	Specialised in Finance, Human Resource Management, Sport Management, Leisure & Tourism, Communication & Public Relations and Multimedia Management	Specialised in Telecommunications, Health Care, Woman Entrepreneurship, Project Management	Specialised in IT area such as IT management, Multimedia Marketing & Multimedia Finance
Location	KL CBD	Puchong, Selangor	Bandar Damansara, KL	Kajang, Selangor	Cyberjaya, Selangor	KL CBD	Cyberjaya, Selangor

*MBA = Master of Business Administration, MM = Master of Management

Table 2: MBA programmes in Private Universities

	OU	SIU	RZU	SELU	UTAR	SGU	SYU
Title	MBA	MBA	MBA	MBA	MBA	MBA	MM
Course Fee	Around RM21,000	Around RM26,000	Around RM20,000	Around RM18,000	Around RM20,000	Around RM22,000	Around RM50,000
Courses	10 Core Course 4 Electives 1 Project (2 parts)	11 Core Course 1 Electives 1 Project	10 Core Course 3 Electives 1 Project	11 Core Courses 4 Electives 1 Project (2 parts)	13 Core Course 2 Electives 1 Project	12 Core Course 1 Project	10 Core Course 2 Electives (Specialised) 1 Project
Delivery Methods	Tutorials and e-learning supports	Face to face lectures E-learning	E-learning, Face to face lectures	Lecture and in-class activities, simulation games	Lecture and in-class activities	Face to face lectures	Lecture and in-class activities, e-learning
Duration	2 years	1 year	1 year 8 months	2 years	1 year 6 months	2 years	2 years
Uniqueness	Specialised in Logistics management, shipping management, Facility Management, Local government	Not special at all, just like other MBA	Specialised in Human Resource management, Finance, Marketing, Islamic Finance, Entrepreneurship, Service management	Specialised in Logistics, Shipping, Project Management Islamic Finance, Entrepreneurship	Not special at all, just like other MBA	Not special at all, just like other MBA	Specialised in Managing Change, New Venture Planning
Location	KL	Cheras, KL	KL CBD	Shah Alam, Selangor	PJ, Selangor	USJ, Selangor, Kota Damansara	Sunway, Selangor

Basically, MBA programme structure is quite standardized with 12 to 15 courses (including electives) and a project. Electives are usually referred to specialisations for the MBA; students in these universities will have to choose between 2 to 5 papers to form a specialisation. Thirteen universities as listed above have project as part of the completion requirement, only one university does not have project as part of their structure.

Since MBA programme is usually offered in part-time mode, its completion duration are quite standard for most universities (7 universities here stipulated 2 years for completion), around one and a half year (6 universities here). Only 1 university allows its graduate to complete in 1 year.

All the above private universities offer MBA courses, their prices are ranging from cheapest RM18,000 to most expensive RM50,000 (Around US\$6,000 to US\$18,000). Two of the reasons from the huge difference in the prices are brand name and delivery mode. Some of the e-learning based universities can offer course fee about RM23,000 as we can see from Table 1 and Table 2 (i.e. EU, OU and RZU). Some universities even offer MBA for below RM20,000 or even less. In addition, from the comparison table as above, most private universities offer MBA around RM25,000 as most foreign MBA are priced around

RM30,000, the private universities have to price themselves more competitive if compare with their foreign rivals.

In terms of delivery modes, all selected universities still conduct traditional face to face lectures. Seven out of fourteen universities above utilised e-learning as part of their teaching and learning platform. The reason could be the flexibility of e-learning platform that suits working adults, as working adults form the biggest number of students for MBA. There is one university starting to explore other learning activities such as simulation games.

Most MBA courses are centred on management subjects in business disciplines includes management, marketing, economics accounting and finance. On top of the general subjects, private universities offer specializations in general business functions such as Accounting, Finance, Marketing and Human Resource. Recently, there is a tendency in offering more unique specializations; there are newer specializations like Woman Entrepreneurs, Telecommunications, Islamic Finance, New Venture Planning, Semiconductor, Health Care, Fashion and Tourism. The development and offering of these specializations is in tandem with current development in Malaysia that focuses services industry (e.g. Tourism & Healthcare), Information & Communication Technology (i.e. Telecommunications), globalization (i.e. Entrepreneurship, New Venture Planning) and banking (e.g. Islamic Finance). These specializations are offered by new comers in the MBA namely EU, MUS and BUC.

Last but not least, most MBA classes are conducted in the institutions' own campuses. However, there is one private university offered its MBA off campus via its centre in a strategic location. As stated earlier, there is a trend of offering the MBA programme via e-learning mode too; EU and OU are two of main providers in online or electronic based MBA.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

MBA proves to be very popular in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Not counting public universities or other twinning (foreign) MBAs, almost all universities provide MBA programmes. There are already 14 MBA or MM programmes offered by private universities in Klang Valley alone.

First of all, most MBA are still priced in a reasonable range with an average about RM25,000 (about US\$8,000). This price is quite affordable for many working adults in Malaysia. However, the researcher found out while the price is affordable, some foreign MBAs are priced comparatively to local MBAs (i.e. RM30,000), this could be a barrier for Malaysian and international students to take up local MBA.

In terms of subjects, while this study does not list all the subjects, but all MBAs cover generic business areas in management, accounting and finance, marketing etc. as stated earlier (*Master of Business Administration*, 2010). However, due to the heavy competition in MBA market, more and more unique specializations are created; there are some very innovative and useful specializations in MBAs which include telecommunications, tourism and healthcare, Islamic finance and et cetera. All these fields are in tandem with recent development of Malaysia that is more focused on Knowledge Economy (*Economic Transformation Programme*, 2010).

MBA programmes are still offered in traditional face to face approach albeit the ever increasing popularity of e-learning approach. Most Malaysian are still complacent in the face to face teaching method, e-learning is a bit alien to them (Wong, 2010). However, the e-learning trend is picking up.

In conclusion, MBA programmes are flourishing in the capital of Malaysia. The MBAs also cater for the growing needs of the country that need more managers in Knowledge Economy. Malaysian government has recently announced the Economic Transformation Programme that focuses more in Knowledge Economy includes Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Tourism, Financial services, Retail, Healthcare and Education (*Economic Transformation Programme*, 2010). All stated areas in Knowledge Economy form specializations of MBAs. MBAs are still very affordable and yet relevant for the growing needs of Malaysia. Number of online or electronic based MBAs is growing too; they are also getting attentions of busy working adults as they require flexibility in learning.

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