

Special Advertising Section

Master Class: The New EMBA-Global Asia

An Education in Three Time Zones

When the London Business School recently did some market research for a new executive MBA program, it was considering, it asked prospective students what they look for most in the many programs on offer. The message came back loud and clear - they wanted the program to be global in its reach and its perspective.

"When we did the research we found that the students wanted knowledge of the three major economies, America, Europe and China/Hong Kong. Many of them lived in one, had studied in another, but knew little about the third," explains Anne Sandford, Programme Director, Sloan and Executive MBA Programmes, London Business School.

That prototype executive MBA program is now off the drawing board and selecting its first students. The EMBA-Global Asia - run jointly by the London Business School, Columbia Business School and the University of Hong Kong - is the world's first executive MBA program jointly located in the three financial capitals that are driving global business: London, New York and Hong Kong.

In a piece of highly fortuitous timing for the fledgling course, Time Magazine ran an article in January this year lauding the way this triumvirate of cities is "Yo-yo-kong" the article adds it has capitalized on, and is some way ahead, today's globalized economy. "Business is global now," says Gary Bidde, Dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics, at the University of Hong Kong, "and it would be hard to name an organization of any size that doesn't operate across borders. Even a machine-sized operation has a need in some way to be connected to the US, Europe and Asia, and that's why you need to know what's happening in all three major time zones. It's only your're aware of what's happening in one, or even two, you

are very limited."

An alumna of the existing EMBA-Global program is a partnership of the London and Columbia Business Schools that has been running for seven years), adds to this another, perhaps more personal, reason that executives might have for wanting to sign up for the newly expanded program. "The business environment in Asia is highly dynamic," says Kai Kaufmann, Head of Corporate Access - Asia (ex-Japan) at Deutsche Bank in Hong Kong.

He believes the addition of the Asian pillar to the EMBA-Global program will be very popular with students. "It continues my own personal view that this part of the world will become the most important growth driver for the global economy," Kaufmann's fascination with China started during his EMBA-Global course - he took two classes in Shanghai and Beijing which led to an unexpected life and career change. "I developed a lot of interest in China, not only in the macroeconomic environment but also in the sort of things you don't get from textbooks, such as an appreciation for the fascinating way in which Chinese culture is reflected in the way of doing business in this part of the world. I found that exciting after having developed the first 10 years of my career in the Western financial capitals of New York, London and Frankfurt."

China's economic boom and new lives and work in Hong Kong, and is highly enthusiastic about what he calls the "lockstep" nature of his own career, both in terms of the exposure to China but also in terms of the professional and personal development which he believes he found the courage to move his career to Hong Kong.

The architects of the EMBA-Global Asia program have seen to leverage the personal development potential of the new program and have followed the 'voluntaria' rather



The three deans of the EMBA-Global Asia inauguration - from left to right: Dean Robin Buchanan, London Business School; Dean Gary Bidde, Faculty of Business and Economics, The University of Hong Kong; Dean Glenn Hubbard, Columbia Business School.

than the 'lockstep' model. Eban Harasany, Associate Dean, Executive MBA Programmes, Columbia Business School, believes that the scope of choice built into the program is one of its main advantages over rival programs. "Our ability to offer choice is greater than any other program in the world. Many EMBA programs are 'lockstep' where students are basically taking the same prescribed curriculum from beginning to end, so they don't have much ability to tailor the course to their needs. Our students will be able to tailor the course in so many ways, based on location, profession, academic subject, etc."

He adds that this is particularly true when students come to choose their electives. Students will be able to choose between all of the EMBA programs run by the three institutions collaborating in the EMBA-Global Asia. This means that they will be able to choose between electives in every major region of the world, and on a

wide variety of relevant subjects.

Gary Bidde believes that the creation of the EMBA-Global Asia has really taken the MBA degree to the place it has been aspiring to ever since the first MBAs were crafted. "It is located in the three top financial centres of the world, and run by three of the top universities in the world. Graduates will therefore come away with diplomas from three institutions that span the globe and that are the top institutions in their regions. They will also have second part of a vast alumni network spread to those who've put all this together, then's another that comes close."

"With the rich talent pool of students from Asia, together with our faculty thought leadership and an unparalleled alumni network, EMBA-Global Asia will redefine management education and help shape tomorrow's global marketplace," says Columbia Business School Dean Glenn Hubbard. "The expansion of EMBA-

Global to Asia furthers the Columbia Business School mission of bridging academic theory and real-world practice by connecting the world's best business faculty with business leaders and students on a worldwide scale."

"It will be a truly unparalleled global business education," says London Business School Dean Robin Buchanan. "This new program will give students the opportunity to benefit from everything EMBA-Global offers - access to global networks, world-renowned faculties, exceptional alumni networks and world business capital - plus the stimulating and profoundly important markets of Hong Kong and Shanghai. We are delighted to be working with Columbia and The University of Hong Kong on this exciting initiative. London Business School's strategic partnerships re-enforce our already powerful abilities to develop truly outstanding leaders capable of operating across the world."

Brave New World

When the first EMBA-Global Asia students arrive at the University of Hong Kong's new Cyberport campus next May, they will be stepping into an environment that, as Dean Gary Bidde of the Faculty of Business and Economics at the University puts it, "has learning built in."

"The learning goes in all directions," Bidde says, "the students interact interdependently with each other, as well as with the Cyberport campus are designed to maximize the opportunities for this interactivity. In addition to two tiered classrooms, capable of accommodating 70 students, there are 16 group study rooms."

Interactivity is also facilitated by the IT tools which, as you might expect from a 'cyber port', are state of the art. The student's office has free Wi-Fi access for all staff and students. It is connected to the Cyberport core network, with internet speeds among the fastest in Hong Kong (data throughput speeds of up to 120Mbps locally and 2.5Gbps internationally). Bidde is particularly enthusiastic about the

potential of the wireless-enabled projectors and screens.

"You can walk into any of the study rooms with a laptop computer, connect to a projector wirelessly, project your presentation onto the wall and share it with other students' laptops. Meanwhile, you can write on a whiteboard and, at the press of a button, take a digital image of it which you can download onto your laptop and take into the next room to use in your presentation."

The three business schools offering the EMBA-Global Asia - London, Columbia and the University of Hong Kong - are well aware of the importance of this technology which has been a key to their success. "Clearly, faculty is important," says Gary Bidde, "you have to have the people we do, in our institutions that are the best in the business, but the synergy among the students themselves and between the students of the three schools is equally important."

Students of the EMBA-Global Asia need to have about 10 years' experience to secure a place on the course, and are from diverse backgrounds and industries, so the knowledge base in the student component of the class is a valuable

resource. "You get folks who are from family-controlled companies and from public companies, you get folks who are entrepreneurs and professionals," says Bidde. "On a course I taught recently one of the participants was an adviser to the president of one of the countries in Asia. Now someone like that can add things to a discussion that you wouldn't expect to hear, this really broadens your horizons."

Eban Harasany, Associate Dean, Executive MBA Programmes, Columbia Business School, adds that the hard-won reputation of the three institutions running the EMBA-Global Asia program will mean that it will be able to attract high quality students. "The possibilities for peer exchange on this program is something that no other program could possibly replicate. We have been leaders in the EMBA market for years and have built up reputations in the field. One of the most common things I hear from students finishing our EMBA-Global program is - 'I wish I could take five more.' We take that as a compliment."

One alumna of the existing EMBA-Global program, Kai Kaufmann, confirms the importance that peer exchange

has for students. "You build strong networks with your classmates, all being impressive individuals with international management experience and diverse backgrounds," he says. "I certainly

benefitted from building a new global network as it helped me make a major step forward in my career. Looking back, I think I learned at least as much from my classmates as I did from the professors."



Discussing the success of the new EMBA-Global Asia program - from left: Professor Gary Bidde (Dean, Faculty of Business and Economics, HKU), Programme Director, Sloan and Executive MBA Programmes, London Business School; Council Chairman, HKU; Deputy Vice-Chancellor, HKU; Dr Victor Fung (Professor Richard Wong, Mr Eban Harasany, Associate Dean, Executive MBA Programmes, Columbia Business School); and Dr Peter Fung (Director, EMBA and Executive Programmes, HKU).