

Education

Executive courses turn to niche areas

Working professionals return to classrooms with more than business aims

BY MIKI TANIKAWA

Business schools have long offered executive education programs for corporations. Along with a welcome stream of revenue, these courses have also brought a sense of real-world dynamism to campuses, as they encourage working professionals to re-enter the classroom.

In the last decade, graduate schools in other arenas — like international relations, public affairs, law and even journalism — have also begun developing executive education courses, particularly in niche areas that are not covered by traditional business schools.

The London School of Economics and Political Science; the Graduate Institute, Geneva; the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard; the Fletcher School at Tufts University; and the Lee Kwan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore all have courses for working professionals and managers.

The Graduate Institute, Geneva, which was founded in 1927, trains diplomats in active service as well as those working for corporations and nongovernmental organizations.

U.N. agencies, as well as governments from nations as varied as Switzerland and North Korea, have sent employees to its courses on diplomatic protocol, multilateral diplomacy and coalition building.

The program was upgraded to a department of executive education in 2008 in response to growing demand.

Some corporations that send managers for additional education “basically are not satisfied with the degree to which business schools address matters at an international level,” said Professor Cedric Dupont, one of the proprietary faculty in the program. “So if you are interested in international regulations of various sorts, they don’t really teach, for instance, how food standards are adopted at the Codex Alimentarius Commission or other technical standards adopted at international standards organizations.”

Mr. Dupont used Codex Alimentarius — a set of international standards that are critical for companies exporting food across borders — as an example of the sort of very specific information that some employers want.

The London School of Economics and Political Science provides much of its professional training via LSE Enterprise, a specialized unit with one of the biggest programs of its kind in the world.

Yury Bikbaev, director of LSE Enterprise,



Students at the Graduate Institute, Geneva, which trains diplomats in active service as well as those working for corporations and nongovernmental organizations.

prise, said that his division was introduced in 1993 as a way to share the benefits of its social science research. Today, a major focus is providing consulting to public organizations and corporations. LSE Enterprise brings in £2 million, or \$3.2 million, in net profit to the university annually.

Since the LSE is a social science university and is interdisciplinary in its approach, “We therefore have a more acute appreciation of how government policy intertwines with corporate strategy and vice versa,” Mr. Bikbaev said.

Julius Sen, associate director and senior program adviser at LSE Enterprise, teaches political economy and trade policy to government officials, notably from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as well as from Hong Kong, Indonesia and Kazakhstan.

“Let’s say the current government has a foreign minister who wants to promote exports into new markets but no one knows how to do this because this is not what diplomats do,” Mr. Sen said.

“So they are trying to understand what is it that business needs for them to say to other governments so that this happens. Or what is it that those governments need to know about you which will help this process along.”

Bhaskar Chakravorti, senior associate dean at the Fletcher School, said that its executive classes were interdisciplinary.

“Here at the Institute for Business in the Global Context at Fletcher, we are creating cross-linkages between business and the broader contextual factors that affect business and vice versa,” he said, adding that subjects could include “geography, history, cross-border issues, security questions, diplomacy and cultural issues.”

“We call this the ability to develop your contextual intelligence as opposed to content intelligence,” he said.

For example, Mr. Chakravorti saw the European financial crisis as a problem that touched many other areas.

“It is a political crisis and it is a histor-

ical crisis,” he said. “A lot of people say Germany benefited from the last 10 years of the euro. It turns out that history matters, so Germans are extremely skittish about issues such as inflation because it hurt them in the past and there are all kinds of memories associated with the period between the first and second world wars.”

“Europe could potentially be helped by Chinese money coming in. Then what does that mean?” he said. “Europeans are historically very suspicious about the Chinese. We are going into domains that, for an executive, require a huge amount of perspective and knowledge about context.”

Douglas Planetta, the chief investment officer at Sageworth, a wealth management firm in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, earned an executive degree in 2004 from the Fletcher School and has attended additional sessions for alumni in recent years. He said that his courses helped him to look beyond facts and figures, and that a key was “thinking differently

from what everybody else thinks, because if you are thinking the same way, you do the same thing, and eventually you would be wrong.”

Some public policy considerations are not addressed properly by business schools, academics say. The Kennedy School of Government at Harvard offers classes with titles commonly found in business schools, like “leadership” and “negotiation.” But the way such topics are addressed are different for public sector leaders, said Debra Iles, associate dean at the Kennedy School.

“In a democratic country like the U.S., where we have to worry about electoral politics, the stakeholder analysis is much more complex,” she said. “We always start with leadership framework of who your stakeholders are and what you are trying to achieve, whether it is upholding the Constitution, and being conscious of the underlying rules of the government and how to stay alive in an environment when you are also subject to a lot of media scrutiny.”

BRIEFLY

Education

New York arts school closing Singapore campus

Facing budgetary problems, Tisch Asia, the Singapore campus of New York University’s Tisch School of Arts, has announced that it will cease operations.

“Tisch Asia has been a model of artistic and academic excellence, but it has also faced significant financial challenges that have required increasingly unsustainable subsidies,” Mary Schmidt Campbell, Tisch’s dean, said in a statement this month.

She said that Tisch would have given its Singapore subsidiary a cumulative total of more than 30 million Singapore dollars, or about \$24.5 million, by September 2013.

The Singapore news media have reported that Tisch Asia also received financial assistance from the Singapore Economic Development Board, a state-affiliated investment promotion agency.

The Singapore school, which only offers M.F.A. degrees, opened with high hopes in 2007. The Economic Development Board had lured Tisch to Singapore to help turn the city-state into an education hub. The film director Oliver Stone served for a time as the school’s artistic director.

Tisch said that the Singapore campus would not cease operations before summer 2014 and that students who could not finish their coursework by that time could do so at N.Y.U. sites around the world. The university also has a campus in Abu Dhabi.

KRISTIANO ANG

Section of library renamed to honor school’s donor

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology has renamed a portion of its library for Chevalier International Holdings, after its chairman, Chow Yei-ching, donated 20 million Hong Kong dollars to the school.

The Chevalier Learning Commons, which is currently open 22 hours a day, is planned to be open 24 hours a day during the next exam period in December, said Brenda Yau, a university spokeswoman. The Commons is a newly renovated section with multimedia tools, broadcast studios and areas where students can eat and chat. “This is different from a traditional library area, where students are told to keep quiet,” she said.

Dr. Chow’s latest donation, which is worth \$2.5 million, was announced this month. He has been supporting various projects at H.K.U.S.T. since 1993.

JOYCE LAU

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British intellectuals unite in tuition crisis

New council is concerned about higher costs and less access at universities

BY JOYCE LAU

About 100 intellectuals, academics and supporters recently attended the founding of the Council for the Defense of British Universities, as concerns grow that rising tuition and dwindling financing are changing the nature of higher education in Britain.

The list of the council’s founding members reads like a roll call of British intellectual life: The novelist A.S. Byatt was at the London event last Tuesday, as was the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins.

In a statement on its Web site, the council criticized the 2010 Browne Review, whose recommendations led to a major tuition increase. The cap for annual university fees paid by E.U. students rose to £9,000 from £3,290, or to \$14,200 from \$5,200 — in two years. Average annual tuition is now slightly over £8,000 for European citizens, and significantly higher for foreign students.

“Powerful forces are bending the university to serve short-term, primarily pragmatic, and narrowly commercial ends,” the statement said.

“Universities are among the U.K.’s most successful institutions,” Howard Hotson, chair of the council’s steering committee, said by telephone from Oxford, where he is a professor at St. Anne’s College. “Yet the U.K. system is being radically overhauled on a scale and pace unlike anything ever attempted in modern times. Undergraduate study has effectively been privatized across the whole of England.”

As part of education overhauls over the past few years, the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills has been given greater influence over decisions affecting universities.

“This is because the government sees universities as a business, and we oppose that,” Thomas Docherty, a professor at the University of Warwick and the London Graduate School, said by telephone.

Some of the financial support for undergraduate teaching has shifted from direct government financing to school fees. Universities, finding themselves more dependent on tuition, may feel the need to compete for students. “The funding now follows the student,” said Mr. Docherty, who also sits on the council’s steering committee.

“Students should not be seen as consumers or customers,” he said, adding that both domestic and foreign students were being treated like “cash cows.” “They should be seen as students who are engaging with the teaching process.”

“We’ve seen a significant drop in applications in students from poorer backgrounds,” he said. “Those in the middle class are thinking twice before applying to university.”

Problems have extended beyond the classroom. “The research which is en-

“Students should not be seen as consumers or customers.”

couraged, which is regarded as the most legitimate, is that which serves the market, with immediate economic effect or economic benefit,” Mr. Docherty said.

“While that is important, it should not be of primary importance.”

The council, which will first focus on fund-raising and a membership drive, will serve primarily as a lobbying group. Mr. Docherty said the new council would focus on “intellectual freedom and academic values.”

“What sets us apart is our goal to put university education back into the hands of universities,” he said.

In an article in *The Telegraph*, David Willetts, a minister in the Conservative-led government, welcomed the formation of the council. “The new group will challenge the coalition’s policies, and I am sure we will have some robust debates,” he wrote. “It would be churlish of me, in my role as universities minister, to oppose any group designed to stimulate such debate about our universities.”

Later in the essay, he summed up the government’s market-driven view: “Education is already a great British export industry.”

Students pitch in during musical marathon

HONG KONG

Instant feedback adds twist to campus project to create 24 songs in day

BY CHARLES ANDERSON

Peter Moser was approaching his 24th hour stationed at the University of Hong Kong’s new Centennial Campus. The British musician, who also organizes school projects, was surrounded by guitars, drums, maracas and energy drinks, and he was beginning to look bleary and stubby.

Last week, he led students in an experiment in which they composed a song every hour for his “24 Hours in a Tower” project. The musical marathon, which ran from noon Monday to noon Tuesday, was coordinated by the university’s Faculty of Arts and the General Education Unit, which provides extracurricular courses and experiential learning activities. An online live stream broadcast the results and allowed him to receive comments and suggestions in real time.

There were songs about Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights in India last week, as well as the Hong Kong skyline and headlines from *The South China Morning*



Led by the musician Peter Moser, students created some songs based on current events.

Post. Mr. Moser sang about Chinese economic growth and President Hu Jintao.

To Fuk, 21, a student of social work, helped out with the percussion.

“I like the concept it’s about — the global village — that we are all connected,” Mr. Fuk said. “It’s like for those 24 hours we were linked, people all around

the world, just for that time.”

At one point in the Hong Kong night, Mr. Moser wrote a love song for three friends who were just getting up in Vancouver, in Canada. They e-mailed back saying that it was the best wake-up call they had ever received.

“We all had this sense that we had

done something that made someone cry 5,000 miles away,” Mr. Moser said. “There was this real sense of community and connectedness around the world.”

Asian education institutions are sometimes seen as being strait-laced and more focused on exams than creativity, which made “24 Hours in a Tower” all the more notable.

Wong Chi-chung, the assistant director of the General Education Unit, who had helped to organize the event, said the project showed the university’s creative, international nature.

“This was something quite different to what we are used to here,” Dr. Wong said. “It has technology and culture, but it has also brought out the sense of community.”

Mr. Moser was finalizing the last song — tapping his fingers on the table in front of him before turning to the piano and tweaking the melody.

He hit the edge of the instrument lightly, stood up and walked past an engineering student, Eric Yeung, who had skipped class to see the finale of the song project.

“Things like this never happen, so I had to come,” Mr. Yeung said.

Mr. Moser spoke into the video camera hooked up to the live-stream broadcast. He thanked everyone and introduced the final composition, “Song 24.”

Qatari spearheads effort to educate 61 million children

DOHA, QATAR

BY ANGELA SHAH

Sheika Moza bint Nasser, wife of the emir of Qatar, has created a program that seeks to educate the 61 million children worldwide who have no access to formal schooling.

The Educate a Child initiative, which was announced at the World Innovation Summit for Education in Doha on Wednesday, has partnerships with five global development organizations, including Unesco and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. It seeks both to support new education efforts and to improve existing ones, especially those tied to getting more girls into schools.

“Millions of children are being robbed of their fundamental right to quality education,” Sheika Moza said at the conference, which was sponsored by the Qatar Foundation. “Right across the world, because of disaster, because of poverty, children are being denied a chance to change their destinies. We can change this, and because we can, we must.”

The groups together plan to invest \$152.6 million on 25 projects in 17 countries over the next three to seven years, with an emphasis on some of the world’s poorest communities, conflict zones and nomadic societies. These initiatives include “floating boat” schools that serve as both bus and schoolhouse for poor children in the flood-prone delta of the Bay of Bengal in Bangladesh and efforts

to provide primary education for children in refugee camps in South Sudan.

A spokeswoman for Sheika Moza declined to say how much Educate a Child was investing in the venture.

Gordon Brown, the former British prime minister who is the United Nations’ special envoy for education, said at the announcement in Doha that Educate a Child’s efforts tied directly into the U.N. Millennium Development Goals on education. He added that the U.N. would have a plan in place by April for countries not on track to meet those goals.

“It’s our duty to make sure resources are allocated to meet this objective, and it’s important that new organizations and foundations are willing to support

this,” Mr. Brown said. “Sheika Moza is the catalyst to ensure that we can and we will accomplish the U.N. development goal objective.”

Rakesh Bharti Mittal, vice chairman and managing director of the Indian conglomerate Bharti Enterprises, was also present at the announcement.

“I firmly believe that if you educate a girl, you educate a family,” said Mr. Mittal, who is also chairman of the Bharti Foundation, an Educate a Child partner. “You educate future generations.”

Though Educate a Child was formally announced last week, the foundation said that it started financing initiatives last spring and had reached 500,000 children so far. “For me, this is not enough,” Sheika Moza said.