

INDIAN EDUCATION NEEDS TO BE GLOBAL IN ORIENTATION & PERSPECTIVE

Academician extraordinaire, **Dr. Gary Stockport**, the university-wide Dean of the Executive Master's in Business Administration (EMBA) program and Professor Strategy at the S.P. Jain School of Global Management in Dubai, explains in an interview with **Education Post's Managing Editor Rohit Wadhwaney** why doing an EMBA can be career-defining moment.





Please take us through your journey as an academician. What inspired you to become an academic?

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you. It is true that people first think of me as an academic particularly as my journey started through studying at premier universities at Leeds, Nottingham, Warwick,

Cranfield and London Business School in the UK and then Harvard Business School in the US. I certainly have had a privileged life and career and I have worked at universities and institutes in the UK, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and now the UAE. What is perhaps less well known is that I have also ran my own strategy consulting business for over

20 years and I have consulted with more than 200 private, public and not-for-profit based organizations across the globe. This includes running open and customized executive-education programs as well as giving one-on-one strategy consultancy advice to C-suite executives. Consequently, I am quite naturally able to blend theory and practice. On the more academic front, I have also taken the more traditional research route and published in top academic journals as well as write strategy textbooks.

? You did your PhD in Developing Inter-Organisational Networks within an Incubator on a Science Park. What exactly does this mean?

My PhD developed a new theory/framework about how organizations network both informally and formally in order to share information as well as to trade, form strategic alliances and joint ventures, as well as acquire one another. My research focused upon new technology-based firms and the research design was based upon an ethnographic approach which meant that I entered the companies in order to study them first hand. Consequently, it can be said that I was at the coal face of studying strategy in action so to speak. This was an incredibly rich learning experience at the time and something I have never forgotten.



Doing an EMBA can be a career-defining moment, as many change jobs whilst studying. Being armed with an EMBA brings more confidence and many students and alumni change jobs, companies and transform into a new career trajectory.

? You are going big on spreading knowledge about the Executive MBA (EMBA). Please explain the difference between a regular MBA and an EMBA.

An Executive MBA (EMBA) is a part-time master's degree typically studied over 18-24 months. It is targeted at busy, working professionals who are typically around 35-40 years of age, have a technical background and bring 10+ years of work experience into the classroom. However, in reality, an EMBA attracts many candidates who have at least three years of work experience, work in a wide cross-section of sectors and have diverse work roles and responsibilities. Given the students are juggling work, family and study the timing of these programs



is very important with most being run on weeknights and/or weekends. The learning formats can be face-to-face, online or within some sort of a blended format. An MBA, on the other hand, is typically offered full-time over a 12-18-month time period. Persons doing an MBA typically have around three to five years' work experience and are in their mid to late 20s. As you can therefore see, the EMBA and MBA are aimed at very different target market segments, and you cannot really compare apples with oranges. However, I think from a school's strategy and branding perspective, it is important for a business school to offer both.

? How does an EMBA add to the current skill set of employees?

An EMBA is essentially a generalist management qualification. Therefore, it aims to build an all-round knowledge and skill set such as accounting, finance, marketing, human resource management and strategy etc. Therefore, it helps students tackle actual problems at work including likely to be faced in the future within both an integrative and holistic way. Project based learning is particularly beneficial in this regard. As well as developing the hard skills, EMBA programs have increasing focused upon developing the students'



softer skills such as presentation and selling skills, negotiation, conflict management, building resilience and effective time management etc. Typically, faculty teaching on an EMBA bring many years of academic and work experience into the classroom. This has been attained working full-time in the public or private sectors or through undertaking consulting. Therefore, the real world of business is brought into the classroom and is analyzed through the lenses of models, frameworks and theories.

? What are the long-term career benefits of an EMBA?

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EMBA brings more confidence and many students and alumni change jobs, companies and transform into a new career trajectory. Some take the plunge and start their own new business venture. In sum, doing an EMBA can result in both career acceleration and adaption as the pace of career development both speeds up and changes direction. Long term, alumni reach significant C-Suite positions where the leadership and strategy aspects learnt while studying really come to the fore. Undertaking an EMBA is no guarantee of career success but it is right to point out that it increases the likelihood and probability of success. Just look at Apple CEO Tim Cook who undertook a part-time EMBA at Duke. Many EMBA alumni proudly attribute their career success to having undertaken an EMBA earlier in their life.

? Your academic journey has taken you across the world, including a stint in India. Do you feel India is lagging in education when compared to some other countries you've visited?

Firstly, I need to point out that I really love India. I first visited India as a PhD student with British Council funding some 25 years ago and I have been coming back ever since. I very well know that EMBA students from India are hardworking, respectful and choose study based upon the quality of the curriculum as well as value for money. The family culture about the importance of education is very evident in India. They expect high quality education.

? Where do you think India is going wrong when it comes to education? What steps should Indian authorities take to improve the situation?

I think Indian education needs to be global in orientation and perspective. The country needs quality leaders at all levels and having a global education foundation such as access to a high quality EMBA is critically important. More generally, I believe India has made great strides in the education sector in recent years and as a result the literacy rate of the country is continually improving. However, perhaps there are still areas for

improvement, such as increasing access to education for all and ensuring quality education is available to everyone.

? Are you aware of India's new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020? If yes, what is your opinion of it?

Yes, I am aware of India's new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Generally, I think it is a comprehensive policy that aims to transform the Indian education system and make it more relevant, inclusive, proactive and responsive to the needs of the 21st century. I believe it is more relevant and inclusive to the needs of the current job market. The policy emphasizes the importance of early childhood education and digital literacy and encourages interdisciplinary education. Overall, I think the NEP is a positive step towards improving education across India, but it will probably require focused commitment and alignment across government, the education sector, including parents and students and other stakeholders to help to implement it for eventual success.

? Finally, any message for potential EMBA students?

The best strategic investment a person can ever make is in their own professional development. This is without doubt. Warren Buffet has always said this and so do I. The return on the EMBA investment can be infinite as, in reality, how do persons really quantitatively measure their professional development which can bring much value to themselves, their company, their family as well as other stakeholders. Given the increasing emphasis given within EMBA programs upon Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability (ERS) we can even say doing an EMBA will also help make a student become a better global citizen and therefore even a better person. Why not do one and see for yourself! 📖