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E.M.B.A: One-Year versus Two-Year?

Harold F. Rahmlow and John Pasaneny

Background

Saint Joseph's University's Executive MBA Program, which began in 1990, is an innovative graduate degree program for experienced managers and emerging business leaders. The program provides a challenging, interactive learning environment to help working professionals realize their full leadership potential and prepare for the challenges of senior management positions. This non-traditional program encourages students to risk, probe and solve problems in a multi-task format.

The Executive MBA Program provides a personalized approach of support services and specific tools to help students achieve success. The program's goal is to educate students as leaders who think critically, plan strategically and act decisively in an increasingly competitive and global economy.

The ideal Executive MBA Program candidates are successful managers and leaders in business, government or non-profit organizations; medical and legal practitioners; and entrepreneurs. They appreciate the value of formal education, take pride in their professional development and are committed to investing in

their future.

Saint Joseph's selects Executive MBA students based on academic ability, diversity of experience, profession and industry. These criteria give students as added bonus: a well-rounded networking system within the classroom and among alumni.

More precisely, Executive MBA candidates possess sound business foundations and have proven records of high performance. A minimum of five years professional experience is required. Their corporation sponsors most applicants; however, many students are self-employed and are equally considered for the program.

Problem Statement and Context

Traditionally Executive MBA (EMBA) programs have been two years in length. BusinessWeek Online's Executive MBA Comparator lists 150 programs (BusinessWeek Online). The summary information for each program did not include length of program; however searching through the entries did not reveal any one-year EMBA programs. St. Joseph's one-year program is new enough that it does not appear in the listing, so it is possible that other programs do exist. Thompson Peterson's College and University site likewise does not list any one-year EMBA programs (Colleges and Universities).

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On the other hand there are beginning to be alternatives to the traditional MBA format. These programs are motivated by student demand and marketing opportunity. For example, the Kellogg Management Institute provides a 9 month non-degree program which is described as containing the “most managerially relevant topics of an executive MBA program.” (Kellogg School of Management, <http://www.kellogg.nwu.edu>). Online degree programs of unscheduled duration are being offered by several institutions such as Drexel University (Graduate Programs) and University of Massachusetts (Umass Online)

The question that needs to be explored is how these different formats compare? The research reported in this paper examines two EMBA programs at Saint Joseph’s University. One of the programs is the traditional two-year program while the other is an innovative one-year program.

Students in the two-year program are admitted based on the traditional criteria of acceptable GMAT scores and considerable business experience, however they are expected to have little if any formal business education. In contrast students in the one-year program must have the traditional GMAT and experience qualifications, and in addition an undergraduate or graduate business degree.

The two-year program, actually 21 months, consists of 5 semesters. During the first two semesters the students earn 18 credit hours in topics such as: accounting, human resources and organizational behavior, economics, marketing, finance, statistics, and research skills. Beginning with the third semester, the one-year students join the program and take the same courses as the two-year students for the remaining three semesters for a total of 30 credits. Courses during these semesters include advanced topics in: finance, management, marketing, e-business, and leadership and

executive development. A team-consulting project and a global business course, which includes an optional international trip, round out the program.

Ideally an outcomes assessment of the programs would include data at the time of graduation as well as longitudinal data. While the traditional program has been in place for 13 years, the one-year program is in its first year. Therefore it is premature to have the normal outcomes assessment data. However, many stakeholders are anxious for some comparative assessment of the two programs.

Methodology

The research reported here examined both the two-year and one-year classes that will graduate in May 2002. The research examined input, process, and output variables.

Input variables included; GMAT scores, college attended, degrees earned and graduate work, GPA, years since graduation, work experience, management experience, professional memberships, and size of company. Applications for admission provided relevant data. Faculty provided assessments of academic qualifications and business maturity. One variable was considered as a process variable; working relationships within teams. Faculty who taught course taken in common by the two sets of students and students provided data. Output variables included GPA in common courses, job growth, salary growth, team productivity on academic tasks, personal growth, and tuition value. Both students and faculty provided data.

Findings - Input

GMAT

The mean GMAT scores were 496 for the 21-month program and 432 for the 1-year. There were 18 observations for the 21-month

program and 17 for the 1-year. In each class one student was exempt from taking the test. A F-test for variances found no significant differences in variances at the .05 level. A t-test found a significant difference with a two-tail p-value of .04.

College Attended

The students earned degrees from a wide range of institutions of higher education. Included were small schools such as Chestnut Hill, Moravian, and Beaver colleges; prestige schools such as Princeton and Vassar; and large state schools such as Penn State, University of Iowa, and Michigan State University. In the 21-month class no two students attended the same school. In the 1-year class four students (22%) graduated from St. Joseph's University.

Degrees Earned and Graduate Work

The 21-month class had one individual who did not have a bachelor's degree. Three students had some graduate work with one earning a MS and another earning both a MS and Ph.D. All students in the 1-year program had BA or BS degrees. For this class six had some graduate work, but none had completed a degree.

Years Since Graduation

The average number of years between earning an undergraduate degree and beginning the EMBA program was 8.2 years for the 21-month students and 11.1 for the 1-year students. The variances were not significantly different ($p = .17$) and the difference between the means was not significant ($p = .17$).

Full Time Work Experience

The full time work experience for the two groups was similar. The 21-month students ranged from 4 to 23 years with a mean of 11.9;

while for the 1 year it ranged from 6 to 23 years with a mean of 14.3 years. There was no significant difference in the variances ($p = .47$) or means ($p = .23$) of the two groups.

Management Experience

Management experience was a troublesome variable that may lack clarity. The data was drawn from program applications. From interactions with students we are concerned that the data may be flawed. The application asks "Number of years in management position". The problem arises from the definition of management. In some cases applicants considered only the line and staff management of persons and in other cases applications considered responsibility for a function to be relevant. However the application forms for both groups were the same, so being aware of the possible problem we will assume random errors in both groups.

The mean number of years management experience for the students were similar with ranges of 1 to 20 for the 21-month students with a mean of 7.9 years, and 1 – 21 for the 1-year students with a mean of 8.9 years. There were no significant differences in the variances ($p = .43$) nor for the means ($p = .61$). It is interesting to note that the medians were 6 and 9 years respectively.

Professional Memberships

For the 2-year program 37% either had a professional designation or license. In the 1-year program the figure was 50%. This is interesting, but the numbers are not sufficient to draw any conclusions.

Size of Company

As indicated by the data in Table 1, the distribution of students by the size of the

company they were working. The sample size is not sufficiently large to draw any conclusions.

Table 1
Company Size

Company Size	2 - Year	1 - Year
Less than 25	3	1
26 to 99	1	
100 to 999	7	6
1,000 to 4,999	2	4
5,000 to 9,999	2	1
Greater than 10,000	4	6
Total	19	18

Findings – Process

Working Relationships Within Teams

Faculty tended to view the working relationships as neutral or average for both classes. One instructor gave indicated the 21-month group to be “good” and the 1-year “poor”. It was indicated that both classes had internal team conflict. One instructor particularly close to both classes indicated that the 1-year students were less interested in fully addressing key team issues.

A few comments by students on the question of team productivity addressed the relationship issue. In addressing the team productivity issue, one team student commented that all members of each team were not sharing the tasks equally; “except for one member who contributed zero the rest of us were very cohesive etc.”

Findings - Output

GPA in Common Courses

The two classes took 7 courses in common. The courses varied in credit from 1 to 3

with the total being 15. The instructors were the same for both groups. The average GPA’s for both classes was 3.86. There were no significant differences in variances or means. The grades points are defined as: A (4.00), A- (3.7), B+ (3.3), B (3.0), C (2.0) and F (0.0).

The pattern of grades for the two classes was interesting. Grades were classified as A or either (A-,B+, or B). There were no other grades given. The result is shown in Table 2 presented below.

Table 2
Grade Pattern

Grades	21 month	1 -Year	Total
A	94	62	156
(A-,B+,B)	39	64	103
Total	133	126	

Using a χ^2 test of significant it is found that there is a significant ($p = .0004$). Thus it would appear that although the GPA’s were not significantly different, the distribution was. The 21-month received a significantly higher proportion of A’s.

Job Growth

On a three-point scale with 2 indicating “Some growth” and 3 “Little or no growth”, the average for the 21-month class was 2.12 and for the 1- year it was 1.93. On the student questionnaire this variable had the greatest mean difference, however the difference was not significant. Both classes indicated some to no growth.

Comments from the 21-month class included:

- “help in turn around of a troubled organization; from finance, to operations – lead turnaround in all areas”
- “I was not expecting any growth”

- “I was promoted and given new responsibilities”
- “Directly applied O.D., leadership + strategic planning to tasks at work. MBA program was a factor in obtaining promotion up to current position”
- “I received a new assignment. Obviously this is probably related more to job performance than to SJU directly:

Comments from the 1-year class included:

- “I have been given the responsibility to establish a world-wide customer service function”
- “Additional responsibilities for operations throughout the hospital”
- “started a new career”
- “Have been added to various committees....”
- “I keep my same position while in the program to ensure that I was able to complete the course-work as well. I will experience additional growth after the program”

Salary Growth

On a three-point scale with 2 indicating “Some growth” and 3 “Little or no growth”, the average for the 21-month class was 2.43 and for the 1- year it was 2.41. This variable had the least differences between the two classes. Both classes indicated some to no growth. The comments present a more positive picture.

Comments from the 21-month class included:

- “in past 2 years a doubling of income”

- “no change”
- “actually none due to economic conditions outside scope of job or responsibilities”
- “nice raise and stock options”

Comments from the 1-year class included:

- “none at this time because they paid 100%”
- “I am in salary discussions now. Hopefully I will recd a \$20,000 increase.”

Perception of Team’s Productivity

Students in each class provided an assessment of their team’s productivity on academic tasks. For the scale, 1 is for “Very good” and 5 for “Very bad”. The median of 2.00 was the same for both groups. The mean of the 21-month team was 1.64 and 1.41 for the 1-year. There were no 4’s or 5’s. There was no significant difference in the means.

Faculty tended to view both groups as average in their productivity. One instructor indicated that both groups did well on a challenging project.

Comments from the 21-month class included:

- “I had a good experience with my team, we were very productive”
- “except for one member who contributed zero the rest of us were very cohesive etc.”
- “good dynamics, shared work, intelligent & creative people”
- “we’ve worked together well – leveraging each other’s areas of expertise”

Comments from the 1-year class included:

- “we worked well together as a team”
- “three of us worked well together. The fourth person did very little work”
- “Dealt with early situations (1st Qtr) and felt that there was a concerted effort from those early problems to correct and work more like a team”

Personal Growth

On a three-point scale with 1 indicating “Very much growth” and 2 indicating “Some growth”, the average for the 21-month class was 1.18 and for the 1-year it was 1.21. The median and mode were 1.00 for both classes. This variable indicated the most positive results for both classes.

Comments from the 21-month class included:

- “my perspectives have changed in every area”
- “more than I expected”
- “more confidence, more objective, better evaluation + presentation of information”
- “I learned a lot about business and myself”
- “Development of close bond w/ team & class”

Comments from the 1-year class included:

- “I have grown in my appreciation of Leadership, strategy, and Finance”
- “working with team, managing projects, etc.”

Tuition value

On a five-point scale with 2 indicating valuable and 3 neutral, the average for the 21-month class was 2.23 and for the 1-year it was 2.06. None of the students responded with “Somewhat less than anticipated” or “Much less than anticipated.” Students were positive to neutral.

Comments from the 21-month class included:

- “I haven’t received any financial growth my investment yet.”
- “I don’t know yet”
- “My age and career position suggest that the program will not provide a good return. Good personal investment, not a good business one.”
- “My company paid my tuition. I’m certain that they received more than they invested in terms of my increased skills, productivity, leadership, and management ability and overall contribution.”

Comments from the 1-year class included:

- “It was cheaper than Penn and Villanova”

Summary and Conclusions

Tables 3 and 4 (located at the end of this article) provide a summary of the results of the analysis of the input and output variables considered. The only statistically significant finding was for GMAT scores. The 21-month program was higher.

The colleges students attended were diverse. In the 21-month class no two students

attended the same school. In the 1-year class four students (22%) graduated from St. Joseph's University. It may be concluded that there was some more homogeneity in the 1-year class due to this factor. Information on the field of study for the undergraduate degrees would be interesting, but was not available.

An analysis was conducted to look for any pattern of relative strengths of the variables. The 21-month class has the edge in GMAT, and in graduate degrees. The 1-year class is favored in work experience, management experience, and professional experience. The 21-month class has been away for an undergraduate experience for less time, but it is unknown if this is a plus or not? There is no difference between the classes in college attended and company size. With respect to input variables, the classes appear comparable.

The working relationships within teams appear to be comparable. Comments by both students and faculty indicate that this is a challenging area. Informal comments by faculty indicate that the 1-year class may have greater problems or team members do not choose to address problems and seek resolution. The 1-year students seem to feel that they can put up with problem for the short duration of their program, while the 21-month students feel a need to address problems.

Except for the grade pattern, there is a consistent NSD across variables. The grades for both groups are high. The pattern of grades for the two classes was interesting. Grades were classified as A or either (A-, B+, or B). There were no other grades given. Using a χ^2 test of significant it is found that there is a significant difference. Thus it would appear that although the GPA's were not significantly different, the distribution was. It might be argued that the 21-month class had an edge in grades in common courses.

While there is no significant difference in each of the remaining variables, the 1-year class consistently is more positive than the 21-month. It must be noted that these ratings are self-ratings. The comments made by the students are interesting and indicate no particular positive or negative tendency.

The most positive assessment according to the students in both classes is personal growth. Comments by students indicate personal growth is very important and that it is a significant outcome of the EMBA program.

The salary growth variable provides an interesting insight into the perceptions of some students. There appears to be a disconnect between some ratings and comments. The ratings are on the low side, but some comments are very positive. One student in the 21-month class indicated "some growth", but in a comment indicated a doubling of salary. A student in the 1-year program indicated "little or no growth", but commented an expectation of a \$20,000 increase. The latter student is technically correct, but the impression remains. Without an adequate research design, firm conclusions are not possible, only impressions.

Tuition value was considered positive with no significant difference between the classes. On a five-point scale with 2 indicating valuable and 3 neutral, the average for the 21-month class was 2.23 and for the 1-year it was 2.06. None of the students were on the negative side.

Summarizing the results for all 16 variables, there do not appear to be major differences in the input, process, or output variables. The only statistically significant results are for two variables: GMAT and grade pattern on common courses. These results favor the 21-month class.

Recommendations

From a research design perspective, the sample sizes are for the most part inadequate and the time frame is less than optimal. The study has provided a preliminary insight to the characteristics of the two classes. It is recommended that the study be replicated in future years to increase the sample size. It is further recommended that additional outcome data be collected after the two classes have graduated.

References

BusinessWeek Online, <http://bwnt.businessweek.com/embasearch/compare.asp>

Colleges and Universities, <http://www.petersons.com/ugchannel>

Umass Online, <http://www.petersons.com/Umassonline/graduate.html>

Graduate Programs, <http://www.lebow.drexel.edu/graduate/>

Program Type	GMAT	College Attended	Degree and Graduate	BA/BS to EMBA	Work Experience	Management Experience	Professional Memberships	Company Size
21-Month	496	No difference	3 grad degree	8.2 years	11.9 years	7.9	37%	No difference
1 - Year	432	No difference	Some courses	11.1 years	14.3 years	8.9	50%	No difference
	Sig. .04			NSD p= .17	NSD p = .23	NSD p = .61		

Program Type	GPA	Grade pattern	* Job growth	* Salary growth	* Team productivity	* Personal growth	*Tuition value
21-Month	3.86	- A 71% - other 29%	2.12	2.43	1.64	1.18	2.23
1 - Year	3.86	- A 49% - other 51%	1.93	2.41	1.41	1.21	2.06
	NSD	Sig. = .0004	NSD	NSD	NSD	NSD	NSD