

## ARE GRADUATES OF INTERNATIONAL MBA PROGRAMS IN BANGKOK MEETING THE MANAGEMENT NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS?

John Barnes<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*There are many criticisms of the generic MBA degree, one being that administration can be taught in schools and universities, whilst management must be learnt through practice in the work place. Many critical studies have been performed in the United States and the United Kingdom, but as far as can be determined, none has been undertaken and published in Thailand. This research contributes to the debate by means of twenty confidential qualitative interviews with employers: in general their comments match those identified in overseas studies, apart from the criticism that ‘graduate mobility is seen by employers as a sign of disloyalty’, a proposition they discounted. Six new issues were identified, suggesting that although many criticisms apply to the generic MBA per se, others apply to specific locations.*

**Key words:** *International MBA graduates, MBA graduate employment, qualitative research interviews, QSR NVivo Software.*

### **Introduction**

This paper is the seventh by this author in a series on the subject of Bangkok-based international MBA programs and on graduates of those programs. It records a survey of employers in the public and private sectors in Bangkok and explores its findings. The survey was designed to determine whether MBA graduates are meeting the management needs of their organizations. ‘International MBA program’ are to be understood as ‘MBA program conducted in English’

This paper is the first known published study to record employers’ evaluation of international MBA graduates’ management skills in the Bangkok context. Indeed, to date, literature critical of MBA graduates and their programs has generally focused on British and American programs.

The survey consisted of twenty semi-structured, face-to-face qualitative interviews, performed in English at a variety of service, manufacturing, trading, and consultative organizations in Bangkok. The numerous and extensive comments which overseas studies have yielded were used to construct a guide for these interviews.

This paper uses thematic analysis developed by employing NVivo 6 to identify linkages between issues identified by employers as key to graduate’s success in the work place. Employers’ comments and criticisms were analysed, evaluated and compared with those identified in the American and British literature. It was then determined which of them apply to generic MBA programs and graduates specific to Bangkok.

This paper will first briefly review overseas literature regarding employer criticisms of MBA graduates’ management skills and competencies and address both the methodology employed and

---

<sup>1</sup> John Barnes, Ph.D. teaches at Assumption University, Graduate School of Business.