
Global and Local Integrated Teaching Approaches for International MBA Programs: Marketing Management Perspectives

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Abstract: International MBA programs strive to develop better managers to deal with international experiences in the future. This paper aims at exploring how to cultivate and improve International MBA programs through the integration of global and local teaching-learning approaches. First, this paper explains why global and local integrated approaches are needed. Second, it analyzes how to integrate Western teaching with Eastern philosophical concepts, through the selection of textbooks, teaching practices, and learning processes.

Keywords: Global and Local Integrated Approaches (GLIA), MBA, China

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1 Introduction

Although many multinational companies in China have used creative marketing advertisements to attract numerous Chinese consumers, some have made mistakes, applying domestic market strategies that have resulted in the misunderstanding of Chinese culture in their advertisements. These advertisements have led to cultural conflicts and negative impressions among Chinese consumers, in cases such as Toyota's Prado: "The Lion's Paw;" Nike's: "The Chamber of Fear;" and Nippon Paint's: "The Slipper Dragon." Because of negative consumer reaction, all of these companies made public announcements to apologize and withdraw their commercial advertisements. Chinese companies doing business abroad also experienced consumer problems when they began their internationalization process. Huawei, a famous Chinese B2B company, had to have its brand rebuilt, by changing its "Chinese Aardwolf" image (which attacked rivals with a low pricing strategy) into an "International Elephant" image, in order to attract global investors. The new brand value and image change finally helped Huawei to obtain long-term partnerships with many leading telecom operators in the world.

The above-mentioned marketing cases demonstrate that, with the accelerating pace of globalization, more and more international corporations are simultaneously striving for cross-border synergies and responding to local conditions. International managers need to evaluate the specific characteristics of their businesses when reconciling the paradox of globalization and localization (De Wit & Meyer, 2004). Achieving a balance between international uniformity and meeting local demands is the dominant theme in the literature on international management.

Many researchers have recognized the tension between international standardization and local adaptation. Well designed MBA programs can improve managerial competencies in terms of innovation, flexibility, and other managerial qualities needed for the contemporary business environment (Baruch, 2009). Global MBA programs should include a focus on the compatibilities between Western teaching approaches and Eastern thinking. In this way,

tensions and contradictions between “foreign” and “local” thoughts and practices will be minimized, which will result in fewer instances of inappropriate cross-border marketing. This paper is intended to bring added value to the knowledge and practices of global companies in the area of multinational marketing. Specifically, this paper focuses on multinational corporations marketing in China and Chinese corporations marketing in the United States.

2 GLIA in teaching

Carnall (1995) predicts that the third generation of MBA programs will emerge after the beginning of the twenty-first century. He identifies the main characteristics of third-generation MBA programs as the following: (1) curriculum: a balance between rational/analytical, intuitive, and judgmental approaches; (2) delivery systems: informational integrated delivery systems including action learning, projects, distance learning, and traditional methods; (3) learning and learning context: learning occurring both at universities and at businesses through practice, and the importance of partnership models for multinational learning opportunities; (4) assessment and evaluation: theory-practice, active learning, and focus on skills and competencies in addition to cognitive orientation and quality of international focus. Compared with the first two generations of MBA programs, third-generation MBA programs have more features of the International MBA (IMBA) programs, which emphasize developing business competencies, cultural skills, and a global mind-set as essential for success anywhere in the world.

By attracting excellent teaching resources from all over the world, many business schools in China are actively designing International MBA educational systems through the integration of Western and Eastern teaching-and-learning approaches. The MBA Education Center of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS), for example, founded in July 2007, is one of these institutions. The Center belongs to the university and is committed to International MBA (IMBA) education. With its dedication to “global vision and teaching in English,” the Center develops global managers with knowledge and insights from both Eastern and Western markets. The vision of this MBA program is to develop global business citizens who can apply their learning from both textbooks and practices to a multinational environment. Up until June 2012, more than 700 MBA candidates enrolled in the Center. Generally speaking, GDUFS IMBA represents most of the main characteristics of the third-generation MBA programs, by applying Global and Local Integrated Approaches (GLIA) in its educational practices. GLIA, in this paper, refers to Western and Chinese integrated approaches, combining Western theories with Chinese wisdom in the GDUFS IMBA program. This paper discusses the analysis of GLIA from the perspective of one of the IMBA modules: Marketing Management, based on the authors’ teaching experiences.

2.1 *Integrating global textbooks with input from Chinese scholars*

Drucker (1954) emphasizes that a business enterprise has only two basic functions: marketing and innovation. Marketing Management is one of the major fundamental modules for the GDUFS IMBA. In order to cultivate international MBA students with managerial competence, capture global synergies, deal with international situations, and differentiate the IMBA

program from most of the regular Chinese MBA programs, the Center uses the textbook, *Marketing Management in China* (2009), which was collaboratively written by Philip Kotler, Kevin L. Keller, and Taihong Lu. In October 2005, Philip Kotler said in Beijing (Kotler, Keller, & Lu, 2009, p. iv),

I've always felt that the book [*Marketing Management*] should be redone for different parts of the world. China is such a big and powerful country. Within China, there are so many differences, by region and by groups of demography and so on. I should work with Chinese scholars to write a book called *Marketing Management for China*. There is some chance we are going to do that.

Philip Kotler expressed his great appreciation of Professor Lu Taihong's devoted efforts and creativity in the adaptation.

Professor Lu, a PhD supervisor of marketing, a major lecturer of EMBA programs, and the Director of the China Marketing Research Center (CMC) at Sun Yat-sen University, is highly regarded and influential in marketing, academic, and business circles in China. This textbook assists Chinese corporations to grasp the latest marketing theories and practices, and strengthens their marketing skills for entering the global market more effectively. The book also assists global corporations to gain a better understanding of China's developing market; it informs them how to create, communicate, and deliver value to Chinese customers. Lu acknowledged that he benefited from Kotler's research and knowledge, and also from earlier scholars, such as Peter Drucker's idea that "Practice is more important than knowledge;" K. Poper's scientific philosophy, and the Chinese philosophy of Taoism and Confucianism (Kotler, Keller, & Lu, 2009, p. iv).

Marketing Management in China is appropriate for both business executives and marketing students. It provides instructors with good material for effective course preparation. It is a landmark work, because it takes MBA students on a journey into a truly Chinese view of marketing management. With the contents designed to reflect the world's fastest growing economy, this textbook helps marketing students to understand China, not only through international marketing theories and principles, but also through hard-to-find and well-researched cases from China that offer insights into local marketing. These cases cover a wide variety of subjects, ranging from international corporations operating in China to Chinese companies that are beginning to venture overseas. This textbook is not an "American" textbook and it is not a "Chinese" textbook. Rather, it is a textbook for multicultural use, because it combines research and thinking from multicultural sources in both the Western world and the Eastern world.

2.2 *Integrating Western theories with Chinese wisdom*

In traditional Chinese culture, there are many ideologies, philosophies, and traditional nuggets of wisdom with the same meanings as modern Western management concepts, principles, and theories. Some of these Chinese concepts can even be found in Western business ideas about strategy, marketing, environmental protection, and corporate social responsibility.

Sun Tzu's *Art of War* has positively influenced many management strategies all over the world. Many famous business schools, such as Harvard, have initiated marketing management courses for students of different majors. Kotler, Keller, and Lu (2009, p. 3) argue that good marketing is no accident, but a result of careful planning and execution. Marketing is both an "art" and a "science"—

there is a constant tension between the theoretical and creative sides. In order to help MBA students to understand the dilemma of “art or science,” Sun Tzu’s famous saying may be applied:

There are not more than five musical notes (*gong, shang, jue, zhi, yu*), yet the combinations of these five give more to melodies that can ever be heard. There are not more than five primary colors (blue, yellow, red, white, and black), yet in combination they produce more hues than can ever be seen. There are not more than five cardinal tastes (sour, acrid, salt, sweet, bitter), yet combinations of them yield more flavors than can ever be tasted. (Giles, 2009)

We can therefore say that theoretical marketing principles are scientific and limited. However, there are innumerable ways to apply them to marketing practices. It depends on each individual’s creative ability to apply those skills.

The philosophy of Confucianism is a cornerstone of social structures in much of Asia. Chinese, Japanese, and Korean corporations are all influenced by Confucianism, and they accept and advocate the concept of Confucian business practices, which originate from traditional Chinese culture. These practices uphold that commercial activities should be imbued with Confucian thinking. For example, the ideal ethics of “Confucian Businessmen” are summarized as: “Place righteousness over benefits; emphasize commitment and reliability; play fair without cheating; and insist on high quality with reasonable prices” (Kotler, Keller, & Lu, 2009, p. 585). The philosophic insights of Confucius emerged thousands of years ago, yet they coincide with the Western modern concept of cause-related marketing or corporate societal marketing.

Many Western businesses today emphasize business ethics and corporate social responsibilities. Western business leaders often try to find the answer to the question, “How can a company stay viable forever?” The ancient Taoist classic, *Tao Te Ching*, gave the answer thousands of years ago. Lao Tzu says, “Heaven is external and the Earth everlasting. How come they are so? Because they do not exist for themselves, and thus have a long life” (Kotler, Keller, & Lu, 2009, p. 585). These words indicate that the world does not exist for its own interests alone, but for the creatures on earth, and so it is eternal. In a similar vein, the viability of a company depends on its corporate responsibilities to serve its stakeholders (Kotler, Keller, & Lu, 2009, p. 589).

Successful value creation needs successful value delivery. Not only are marketers looking at their suppliers and at their distributor’s customers, they are also looking at how to organize company resources to best meet the needs of target segments (Kotler, Keller, & Lu, 2009, p. 375). Decisions about the marketing channel system are among the most critical issues facing management. Building channels also represents a substantial opportunity cost¹ because companies not only serve markets, they also make markets. The corporations must decide how much effort to devote to push versus pull marketing.² In Chapter 3 of the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu says:

¹ Opportunity cost is the cost of any activity measured in terms of the value of the next best alternative forgone (that is, not chosen).

² A push strategy involves the manufacturer using its sales force and trade-promotion money to induce intermediaries to carry, promote, and sell the products to end users. A pull strategy involves the manufacturer using advertising and promotion to persuade consumers to ask intermediaries for the product, thus inducing the intermediaries to order it.

Therefore the sage, in the exercise of his government, empties their minds, fills their bellies, weakens their wills, and strengthens their bones, and always keeps the people innocent of knowledge and desire. Thus the clever is afraid of meddling, acting through inaction, he leaves nothing ungoverned. (Mitchell, 2000)

This saying can be implemented as one of the most effective channel-control strategies. Corporations can govern their channels by emptying their minds, which means sending their own marketing department team to the distributors to offer as much help as possible, to relieve them of worry about handling complicated inventory management and business promotions such as Point of Purchase (POP). To “fill their bellies” means to help the distributors earn money; “to weaken their wills” means to ensure the distributors avoid troubles and focus on their logistics; and to “strengthen their bones” means to care about or help the distributors to conduct good management. Therefore, marketing strategists can command cooperation from distributors in connection with displays, shelf space, promotions, and even pricing policy. Distributors will lose part of their business function and will depend on the manufacturer, thereby instilling loyalty.

2.3 *Integrating global and local cases*

The case study method is the dominant form of instruction at major MBA programs around the world. A business case study is “a description of an actual situation, commonly involving a decision, a challenge, an opportunity, a problem, or an issue faced by a person (or persons) in an organization” (Erskine & Leenders, 1997). Cases have long been used to give MBA students and executives an opportunity to practice some of the arts of management. Cases contain relevant data about issues related to the key person in the case, plus background information about the organization. A case adds value to the process of continuing improvement in management education. In order to cultivate International MBA programs with GLIA, the marketing management cases are chosen not only from textbooks, but also from recent business practices. Large proportions of these cases are based on China’s market and emphasize comparisons between multinational and Chinese corporations. In addition, cases based on the markets of other countries are also used.

Four categories of cases are used, based on the global market, China’s market, multinational corporations, and Chinese corporations. In order to meet MBA program preferences, principal cases are chosen from chapter cases, innovative marketing cases, and marketing-in-China cases (Kotler, Keller, & Lu, 2009, p. xliii). All of these cases are carefully selected from longer cases and discussion questions are attached, while some short and regional examples are also provided. These cases can often enlighten MBA students. For example, in the author’s Marketing Management class in the spring of 2010, a real case was used to illustrate how to modify price-setting logic. The case happened in Yangjiang District, Guangdong Province, when a Chinese businessman applied a by-product pricing strategy and took a big order from an MNC. Although all the other manufacturers thought that the businessman would lose money, he earned millions in profit. In May 2010, this case inspired one of the author’s MBA students, Ms. Jinghuan Tan. Ms. Tan took the lessons from this case and suggested that her company (Guangdong Futina Electrical Co., Ltd.) implement this strategy to earn extra profit, by saving the by-products of copper and steel. This would save the company tremendous cost. She persuaded her manager to adopt her suggestion and this resulted in her company reducing at least ten

percent of the total cost, saving several million yuan annually. Her company used this approach when they developed new moulds, and she has been promoted to a higher position because of her contribution.

3 GLIA in learning

Each subject in the MBA program aims to impart knowledge about specific components of the total picture of management today. Foundation knowledge gained in accounting, economics, law, management, and related fields provides a platform from which one can embark on an exploration of contemporary marketing management and appreciate the interdependency of business functions.

In a literal sense, marketing management is the function which focuses the entire organization on its critical relationships with its markets and the public. The ability of the marketing manager to foster effective and efficient exchanges of value to both buyer and seller depends on the extent to which marketing strategies and tactics are appropriate for prevailing market conditions. Based on many years of teaching experience, the author has adopted a "3 x 1/3 approach," as follows: (1) 1/3 learning by the individual; (2) 1/3 learning by teaching; and (3) 1/3 learning by the group. Learning takes place both on campus and at businesses, through practices, partnership models, and multinational learning opportunities. The learning methodology is a combination of learning theories and applying actions from specific cases, in order to connect theory and practice.

The author's course, Marketing Management, implemented GLIA because of several ideal factors. First, the goal of the course was to promote multicultural thinking, combining Western and Eastern theories. Second, the course's students numbered around 20 (ideal for group discussions); many of them had several years of business experience (average age was 27 years old); and they represented professionals from Chinese as well as multinational companies.

3.1 Learning by the individual

All the students learned individually through proactive (preparing) and reactive (reviewing) learning activities. First, the students read the textbook's whole contents to gain a general understanding, not only of the book's major ideas but also of the individual topics in the subject matter. They acquired an overview of the basic theories, components, and terminologies of the author. Second, they read case studies to get acquainted with the basic themes and then researched the Internet to solve case studies. Third, they recorded their questions about the textbook content or case studies from a Chinese marketer's perspective and brought these questions to class for discussion. And finally, they assessed their personal understanding of the subject by taking tests, provided by the lecturer, on each chapter.

3.2 Learning by teaching

Every MBA student has their own business or management experience in certain fields. But just as the well-known management researchers Mintzberg, Lampel, and Ahlstrand (1998) point out, they may be correct as an expert in one aspect but not in another, like the several blind men trying to describe an

elephant. There is a Chinese saying: “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, but teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime”.³

Learning is not just teaching what to think, but how to think and how to do. The class lecture presents the whole picture and the nature of marketing management by making the text and language concise and accessible without losing the author’s depth and insight on the subject. The lecturer’s role should be as a devil’s advocate, challenger, defender, and protagonist or leader, to facilitate the discussion, draw out the issues, analyze, and recommend from case demonstrations and marketing plan presentations, in order to cultivate the students’ critical thinking and problem-solving capabilities. Besides discussing the textbook’s contents, the lecturer guides the students to read journal papers and literature about marketing insights, marketing in China, and innovative markets from a global perspective. The lecturer makes the classroom environment engaging, motivating, and truly dynamic as a place to learn.

3.3 *Learning by the group*

Mintzberg (2004) argues for “managers not MBAs;” he set out to change management education in 1996. Unlike the traditional approach, he founded an IMPM curriculum (International Masters Program in Practicing Management). IMPM advocates that leaders cannot be created in classrooms, and management is neither a science nor a profession. It is a practice: it has to be appreciated through experience, in context. IMPM is a way to help managers learn from their own experiences rather than from textbooks.

In order to practice the IMPM approach, one of the characteristics of the Marketing Management course is built around group learning so that MBA students will work with, and learn from, other MBA students who bring different experiences to the classroom. The typical group-learning assignment is implemented by two kinds of learning-by-the group activities: case studies to cultivate critical thinking capabilities, and marketing plans to cultivate problem-solving capabilities. The students are divided into several groups; one half of the groups conduct case studies and the other half make marketing plans. They both work on these theory–practice integrated assignments. This is a learning-by-doing approach to enable the students to participate as both active learners and practitioners. They do the assignments, step by step, to keep pace with each section of teaching content, and then they present each section of their group work in class to the rest of the students with the teacher providing critical comments and suggestions. Finally, they make a class presentation with PowerPoint and turn in a report.

Learning also occurs outside the classroom walls by implementing real-world learning in businesses—the class moves into a corporation. This moving class is designed around the actual experiences and needs of the participating managers and their organizations, as well as the need of MBA students to connect informational skills with delivery systems. It is a hands-on, learning-by-doing, action-oriented style of decision-making that immerses MBA students in complex, real-world business environments. During the in-company program, learning takes the form of a constant-action learning process of exchanging ideas and insights, as MBAs move back and forth between management concepts and real-life experiences, reflecting upon them individually and collectively.

³ This old saying has been passed on in China for generations, but academics have different opinions about its origin.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, as Western MNCs have entered China, Western management and marketing theories have been introduced into Chinese enterprises and Chinese universities. It is also becoming increasingly apparent that emerging-market MNCs are leaving their own footprints of globalization, like the Chinese companies Lenovo and Huawei. Emerging-market MNCs (EM-MNCs) are changing the landscape of the global economy. We believe that the management teams of Chinese MNCs not only learn and absorb Western management theories but also use their indigenous wisdom and cultural heritage to successfully lead their corporations in domestic markets and abroad. By applying the GLIA, the author's marketing management course became the international MBA students' "favorite MBA course – as refreshing as a spring breeze" (Y. Liu, interview with Professor Du Yuping, 2010). Therefore, GLIA is one important teaching approach in delivering China's IMBA education. To meet that goal, lecturers should choose the latest textbook, about China's major marketing opportunities and challenges from a local and global perspective. Then, an innovative teaching approach using both textbook contents and case studies should be applied. These should be accompanied with off-campus learning in business corporations, so students can learn both as individuals and in groups to grasp the essence of the latest marketing theories and practices and prepare themselves for effectively entering global markets in the future. The implementation of GLIA into MBA programs brings added value to the learning experiences of a new generation of business managers and leaders in China.

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