

Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

THE BIG MBA DEBATE

The words “MBA-on-going” have become a common sight on CV’s in Kenya. In fact, some would say having an MBA has become a local right of passage for management. As a recruiter, this becomes problematic as seeing a MBA on a CV no longer makes that candidate special and local courses are caught in a catch 22: the more successful they become, the more ‘common’ their qualifications are.

Seeing the words ‘on-going’ on a candidate’s CV presents an even bigger quandary for employers – how are we to assess if the candidate has just registered to be able to say they are doing an MBA; how are we to assess if they are committed and determined enough to finish the process?

What I have noticed, whilst interviewing or going through career guidance with candidates, is that there is now a section of Kenyan managers who wish to do something different and better value for their Masters. This group has become quite discerning and will either aim to save up the millions of shillings required for a full-time international programme or will look to do a quality correspondence course from abroad.

The first option is out of reach of many, considering the exorbitant fees, living abroad expenses, combined with opportunity costs of lost earning. For many women at the MBA stage of their careers, raising children is an issue too. What I would say is that I have met Kenyans who saved, got partial scholarships, convinced employers to loan fees and who did 1 year full-time MBA’s at the top schools abroad – and I have never met one who regrets doing this. In fact, many say that the reputation of the MBA gained, the international exposure, the network and interaction with world-renowned business authorities has led to career acceleration and doubling of salaries.

However, as mentioned above, for most this route is just not an option, so that means international correspondence courses have become very popular. As with anything, the quality of courses varies tremendously. One thing any correspondence course taker will need is lots of discipline. Unlike in a scheduled class scenario, correspondence courses rely on you setting aside your own times, and this way of learning does not always suit.

Some people learn best when seeing ideas being put into practice, or by implementing the theory – this is learning by observation or by ‘doing’. This only comes about in courses that offer interaction, experimentation and work-based assignments, which many correspondence courses do not. However, if you are the sort of person that absorbs information by reading and can quickly understand abstract concepts, then a long distance course could suit, especially if combined with an ‘e-learning’ option of logging into interactive classes on-line.

Those learning alone will have to be a lot more organized, willing to time-table study hours on a daily or weekly basis, and have a ‘meeting’ with themselves regularly to review progress made. Self-discipline in this scenario is key to ensure you are not just wasting fees on courses you will never finish.

So, is all the effort and investment to do an MBA worth it? Yes, definitely, but choose your course carefully.

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