

Building sustainability into your MBA program.
Models of success

The Triple-A MBA Program

Victor F. Araman

MBA Director | Olayan School of Business

American University of Beirut

Outline

- ▶ A Challenging environment
- ▶ Typical Steps
- ▶ Resilience: Triple-A MBA
- ▶ Work In Progress at OSB
- ▶ Conclusion

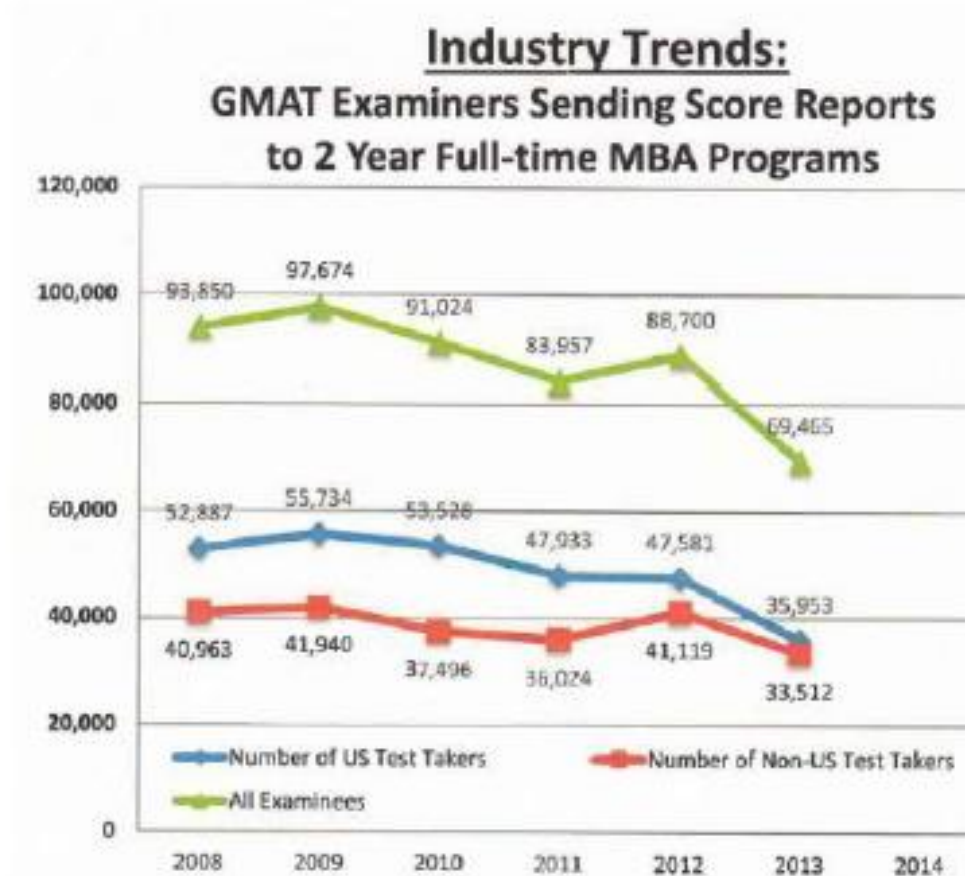
Typical MBA programs worldwide are going through an identity problem. They are seeing their applications' numbers dropping due to a variety of external factors and increased competition

External Factors that are negatively impacting MBA programs

- ▶ Surge in number of alternatives
 - Specialized Masters (in Finance, Management, Supply Chain, Analytics, ...)
 - Specialized MBAs (in Finance, Health Care, Hospitality, ...)
 - E (evening and executive) MBA
 - Increased competition - in developing and underdeveloped countries
- ▶ High environment risk and lack of “sophisticated” opportunities
 - Difficult economical setting | (risk of) recession
 - Political instability
- ▶ Development in Technology
 - MOOCs and the alike. A free MBA?
- ▶ High Cost – ROI?
 - MBA fees are souring
 - Sustainable Economic model?
 - Lack of awareness of what an MBA holder is capable of



The number of GMAT examiners sending score reports to Full-Time MBA Programs have sunk recently in the US but also worldwide



A Step back. The MBA value chain is comprised of four phases, *Admission, Curriculum, Life during the MBA, and Placement.* Often these activities work in “silos” driven by.... goodwill

▶ Admission (A)

- Criteria
- Marketing
- Awareness
- In Take



▶ Curriculum (C)

- Design
- Variety
- Relevance
- Delivery



▶ Placement and beyond (P)

- Job fairs | Job opportunities
- Communication
- Awareness capabilities
- Alumni services

▶ Life on and around Campus (L)

- Corporate events
- Social events
- Space inducing for innovation
- Fun

Of course, now that the environment has changed, one should review the value proposition and how it is being executed.

- ▶ Rethink or Reinforce your value proposition
 - A *relevant* and rigorous degree that “transforms” students into confident, knowledgeable, and capable (future) leaders
- ▶ Build the needed capabilities
 - Infrastructure
 - **But, is this how we go about Sustainability?**
 -
- ▶ *Assure learning and manage quality*
 - Continuously review your curriculum (how do you do that?)
 - Accreditation e.g. AACSB new standards: **impact | engage | innovate (?)**
 - Build internal synergies and external partnerships (How? On which basis?)
- ▶ Question your model
 - Sustainability (economic | social | environment)
 - Clinical faculty (teaching and consulting vs research)
 - Specialized MBA? | What about modular? (how do you go about deciding?)

Today, the environment is more prone to dynamic changes and great volatility. Thus, Sustainability in an MBA program would require built-in Resilience, a “Triple A” type-model

Triple A MBA program

- ▶ **Agile** (in reacting to uncertainty throughout the academic year)
 - Able to react to major news (panel discussions – faculty in the news)
 - Handle effectively quality issues (plan B)
 - React to drop in demand (networking)
 - React to drop in Placement (networking)
- ▶ **Adaptable** (in reacting to trends in the environment)
 - New digital landscape
 - New methods of delivery
 - Ways to hire in relevant topics
 - Ways to meet market needs (curriculum)
- ▶ **Aligned** (with the different stakeholder: students | university | faculty | companies | society)
 - Incentivize | communicate | Listen

These three drivers can each be matched with AACSB main framework of **Impact** | **Engage** | **Innovate**. Yet they come with their list of challenges

Triple A MBA program

▶ Agile

- React to major news (relevance + exposure)
 - Create incentives for faculty and students
 - Allocate budget and simplify the process
 - Bring it into the culture
- Improve students satisfaction
 - Offer new courses based on demand: send surveys and have a flexible supply
 - Act on quality of delivery (implement mid term evaluation as early signaling | have plan B's)
- Act on drop in placement
 - get early signals – involve more companies in MBA projects (availability of network/alumni)
 - Get feedback from interviewers
- Act on drop in demand
 - Get early signals – involve alumni and network – marketing

▶ Challenges

- A degree of independence from university and a level of integration in the school
- Involvement of strong network of faculty and partnering schools
- Involvement of strong network of companies (through MBA projects | speakers series | etc..)
- Involvement of strong alumni network

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Triple A MBA program

▶ Adaptable

- MBA *Process view* .Have processes (end to end) in place that are preparing for the next wave: move away from silos
 - Committee responsible of looking into new threats and opportunities such as MOOC
 - Conduct Focus group to listen to needs of corporate world match with curriculum
 - Benchmark
 - Schedule Students Town meetings
 - Question the viability of your model
- Start acting on those (e.g.)
 - Introduce clinical professor
 - Bring more practitioners to the classroom
 - Reduce your core courses increase your electives
 - Introduce a 1 yr program

▶ Challenges

- Empowerment of MBA leadership
 - Governance structure
- Availability of resources
- Scalability
- Continuity

These three drivers can each be matched with AACSB main framework of **Impact** | **Engage** | **Innovate**. Yet they come with their list of challenges

Triple A MBA program

▶ Aligned

- Create incentives for different stakeholders
 - Financial (university | student ROI | Companies ROI | faculty)
 - Engaging the society, companies (curriculum, MBA projects, send their best employees)

▶ Challenges

- Governance structure
- Scalability
- Politics

In conclusion...

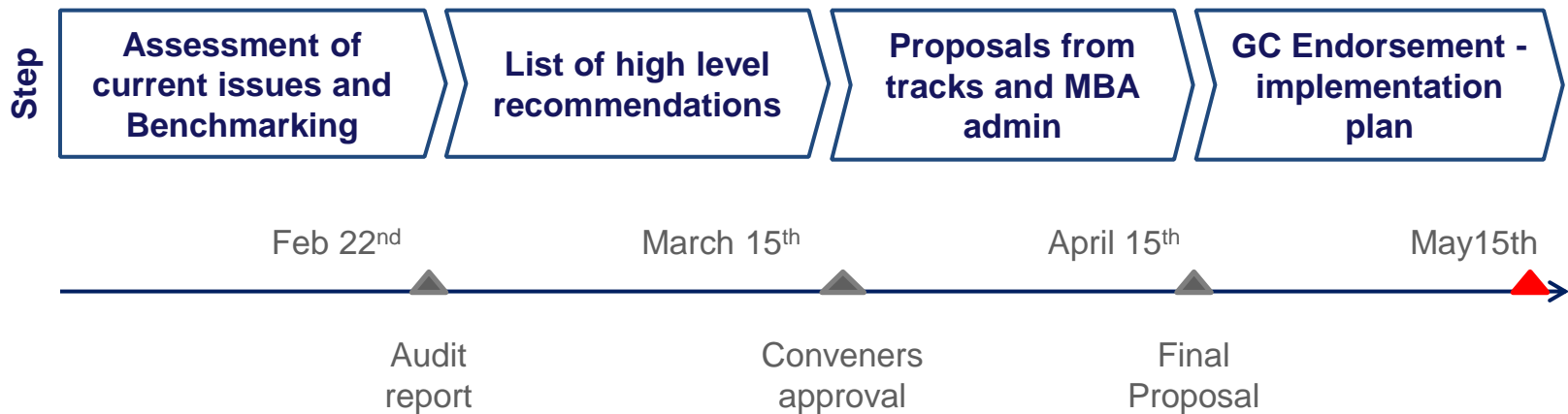
- ▶ MBA programs have a tough road ahead. Can they be sustainable?
- ▶ Sustainable MBA program must be able to re-invent itself as needed
- ▶ More flexible structure is a must to respond to today's challenges and increasing uncertainty and environment changes
- ▶ Triple-A model can help achieving that by
 - Bringing the different phases together into one integrated process
 - Admission | Curriculum | Life on Campus | Placement (and more)
 - Allowing them be more agile, adaptable and aligned with their direct environment

Appendix

An example of adaptability implemented at OSB

The MBA-OSB undertook recently a curriculum review as part of a continuous improvement process. It ended with a set of recommendations and an implementation plan starting Fall 2014

- ▶ It is an OSB policy to undertake every four years a curriculum review of each of its programs. The last review for the MBA program was undertaken during the last accreditation process in 2008-2009
- ▶ the following process was followed to undertake the curriculum review. The recommendations have started to be implemented in Fall 2014



In order to assess the situation and put it in context, we listened to various stakeholders and performed an intensive benchmarking and research analysis

- ▶ **Benchmarking**
 - Interviews with industry leaders holding internationally renowned MBAs
 - Benchmarking with
 - top tier, peers and aspirant schools
 - Geographically diverse
 - One and two years programs
- ▶ **Faculty feedback**
- ▶ **MBA candidates feedback**
 - Course evaluations: scores and written comments
 - Exit surveys
 - Town meeting
- ▶ **Personal research and ground experience**
 - Interviewing different directors of MBA schools

We asked the interviewees: How did their MBA contribute to their success and what do they look for in an MBA holder

- ▶ Features expected from successful MBA holders
 - Solid understanding of all functions of a business and how these are integrated with the company's strategy: A | C | L
 - Business “generalist” C
 - Ability to talk the language of the different constituents of an organization
 - Maturity and creativity A | C |
 - Confidence and credibility A | C | L
 - Analytical thinking | Structure | Problem solving A | C
 - Ability to recognize a problem A | C
 - Strong communication skills (presentation) A | C
 - Team player C | L
 - Well roundedness and general knowhow A | C | L
 - Curiosity/ able to stimulate A | L
 - Able to integrate a diverse environment (international exposure) L
 - Strong network of people L
 - Focus and driven | Ambitious A | L

In summary, we identified a list of issues with the current program. Some of these are critical and are jeopardizing its identity. Some are strategic, others are tactical or operational

▶ Curriculum Issues

- Content of courses
- Delivery of courses
- Lack of courses variety
- Lack of Program structure
 - Too flexible | duration and cost unknown. Too many possible scenarios
 - Lack of transparency/visibility: what and when courses are offered ?
 - Lack of cohesion: How is everything making sense (story line for the employer)
 - Incite a sense of individualism
- Lack sometimes relevance (too theoretical) and exposure to industry. Not practical enough
- Lack of emphasize on soft skills
- Lack of extracurricular activities with corporate and beyond

▶ Placement issues

- Misunderstanding of MBA (and potential) | Little opportunities | (Some) Candidates lack leadership skills/ambition
- Lack of strategy

▶ Admission issues

- Low ROI | No great record | Too long and confusing | Not exciting enough | Is it a real MBA?
- Lack of a strategy

Probably the most pressing strategic issue is the **GAP** between what is expected and what is offered. An MBA should be first and foremost a transforming *experience*

What is NOT

- ▶ A Masters
- ▶ One step closer to a PhD
- ▶ A set of independent courses that are rigorously delivered
 - A number of credits in business/management
 - A program where the objective is to get a high GPA
- ▶ A title that guarantees a
 - salary increase
 - promotion

What is an MBA

- ▶ A well designed, integrated, coherent *experience* that transforms candidates into managers and leaders
 - Strengthen their confidence in their capabilities and their knowhow
 - Leverage on their initial (analytical) skills or/and business maturity to
 - Build a structured way of thinking
 - Institute the ability of recognizing a problem, framing it, analyzing it and recommending a practical solution
 - Contribute to a well-rounded knowhow in business and beyond
 - Reinforce
 - Ability to work effectively in teams
 - Ability to integrate diverse backgrounds
 - Ability to communicate effectively ideas

At this point, our recommendations were focused on the curriculum (structure, design and delivery) including detailed Teaching Guidelines for all courses. Other recommendations on Admission, Life and Placement would follow

- ▶ Structured MBA – Coherent and transparent
 - Core courses offered first followed by electives

Fall intake (Full time 16mo.)

Period 0 August	Period 1 Fall	Period 2 Spring	Period 3 Summer	Period 4 Fall
Acct & Fin	Leadership & OB	Corporate Finance	Elective 1	Elective 4
Team Building Business Context	Decision Models	Operations Management	Elective 2	Practicum
Basic Statistics	Marketing	Strategy	Elective 3	MB Project
	Mg. & Fin. Accounting	Pricing & Markets		Workshops

All programs are now structured. We also introduced an accelerated one year program, besides the Full time program of 16months and a Part time of 32 months

▶ Possible tracks

- Accelerated track **AT** (1 yr) 5 | 5 | 4
 - targeting *mature* candidates who do not want to leave work for more than one year
 - Possibly companies sponsoring some of their employees
- Fast track **FT**: 16 months (1.4 yr)
 - Graduate Assistantship
- Part time Track **NT**: 32months (2.8yr)

Courses offering and delivery were reviewed. Core courses are revamped, new electives are offered based on themes. Detailed teaching guidelines are shared with each faculty.

- ▶ Themes for Electives requires more brainstorming and market study
 - Offer always two electives (max three) for them to pick one from
 - This is not a specialization. But helps having a more coherent story with employer
 - Suggested themes.
 - Entrepreneurship & Innovation (including family business)
 - Professional Service Management (inc. consulting, banking, media, retail, NGOs)
 - Generic

- ▶ Course content and Delivery
 - General rule: “Best Possible” faculty for all core courses
 - Pre foundation | New electives | Tweaking of Core courses
 - Include: Communication | Analytical skills | Team work |
 - **Teaching guidelines**
 - Delivery mode | Benchmarking|

More specific changes to the curriculum were stemmed from employers, faculty and students feedback

- ▶ Pre-foundation
 - Team building
 - Business Context

- ▶ Increased the number of electives (45% of credits)
 - Introducing new ones
 - Change management | Business law | Negotiations |

- ▶ Practicum (flexible core)
 - Companies linked courses (consulting | entrepreneurship & innovation)

- ▶ Workshops
 - Public speech + presentation skills
 - CV + mock interview
 - Simulation (strategy)
 - Speakers series (meet the company)