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Russian MBA Confers Question Mark

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Getting a Russian MBA may have helped half of graduates to advance in their careers, but it is unclear in what ways, according to a recent study.

A total of 52.2 percent of Russian business school graduates thought that the MBA has had a significant impact on their careers, according to the study by Begin Group, a private Russian consulting company that specializes in education issues.

But at the same time, 43.5 percent of respondents said their professional development was affected insignificantly, and 4.3 percent did not think that getting an MBA had any impact on their subsequent career and professional development.

The study included 32 former students who completed MBA programs within the last two to three years. It is the first study to try to measure the degree of satisfaction among those who have gained an MBA in Russian-based programs and the impact it had on their careers.

The graduates were split on whether the MBA was worth it.

When asked what they consider to be the main achievement of their MBA, most respondents mentioned a new ability to give structure to fragments of prior knowledge. The second most popular response was an ability to solve specific problems within a business, followed by an increase in income, career advancement and the acquisition of networking opportunities.

Business schools were not surprised at the study's results, even though critics could question whether it was sufficiently representative or argue that the financial crisis has adversely affected career opportunities in a way that has nothing to do with whether an employee holds an MBA.

"If as many as half the graduates feel that the qualification has given them some advantage, this is a pretty good result," said Yury Tazov, president of the Russian MBA League, a nonprofit organization.

He said the issue is not the relevance of Russian MBAs but the content and quality of teaching in Russian MBA programs.

“Without an active working partnership with business, many programs reflect the opinion of business held by people who have barely ever set foot outside of the educational community,” he said.

Sergei Myasoyedov, dean of the Institute for Business and Management at the Academy of the National Economy, said the cumulative effect that an MBA has on someone's career peaks six to eight years after graduation. ”I have no doubt that those who have not yet appreciated the usefulness of their education will do so in the days to come,” he said.

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