

Step toward the goal

If I see my classmates stretching next to me in the study room at daybreak or if I can talk to my classmates through MSN messenger for 24 hours, then it means the exams are coming. During last a few weeks before the Easter holiday started, I spent most of my time in that way. Sometimes when I lost concentration, I thought of what I had done at this time last year. I received letters of acceptance from three UK MBA schools in February 2004 and weighed which school would be the best option for my future career development. From that time on the more serious concern about how to fund myself for my studies abroad arose. I started preparing for my MBA studies in November 2003 and thus I had already missed most of the scholarship application deadlines. To make matters worse, I was disappointed with the unsuccessful result of the 2nd round interview for the Chevening Scholarship from the British Council. Admittedly this was a consequence of my pre-matured planning and due to a comparatively shorter preparation time than what most MBA candidates normally do. Thereafter, I searched for other remaining scholarship opportunities and was introduced to the scholarship programme of the Europe-Korea Foundation. The final result was informed to me in June. Even though I knew that year would not be the only chance for me to study MBA abroad, I became more obsessed with wanting to start studying that year after I received admission from the business schools. Furthermore, I thought it would be great if I could acquire an MBA degree before I turned 30, if I seriously wanted to consider a career change. Hence, from February to June, I was more than desperate to get a scholarship as a complimentary source to fill the hole in my budget.

I believe God made me clearer about the purpose of studying by letting me rely on Him and pray to the end. I truly hoped that I would be a precious instrument for His good work wherever I go and whatever I do. Because I decided to apply to MBA courses in November 2003, took GMAT in January 2004, and received admissions in February of the same year, I really did not have time to think of the real motivation other than the things that I wrote in my essays for the applications. Furthermore, I excelled the process before I built a realistic budget plan for the studies abroad. It was like going through an endless dark tunnel. Finally, when I got a call from the Europe-Korea Foundation, I could not but doubt my ears and did not tell anybody until I verify the fact through the meeting with Diageo Korea, the company that supported me through the foundation.

Why Manchester Business School

There were three reasons I chose Manchester Business School. First, I wanted to be an Asia-Europe Business professional. As a Trade and Investment Specialist and a Manager of the US State of Washington Korea Office, I was well aware of the importance of business relations between Korea and the US. Accordingly, there is a large number of US business experts in Korea. On the contrary, there were fewer experts of European businesses and industries, even though the foreign direct investment from European Union had increased over time. I thought I would be able to add value in the job market in Korea if I studied in the UK and experienced at least several years in the country after graduation. Hence, I short-listed four schools out of the top-ten UK business schools. Second, among the three schools that gave me a placement offer, Manchester Business School had the longest programme of 18 months. I thought it would be better for me to choose the longer course to learn more

about Europe considering that I had no background in the region. Finally, I was attracted by the Manchester Method based on group dynamics, presentations, and real projects rather than textbook based individual assignments. The Method emphasizing the learning by doing real projects seemed most suitable to me thinking of a career change after my studies.

Pre-MBA Stage

The four-week pre-MBA stage started from August 31, 2004. Statistics and accountings were intensively taught for the first two weeks of the stage. While I did not have many difficulties with statistics thanks to my studies during my undergraduate years, the accounting courses covering subjects such as balance sheets, income statements, and cash flow statements was more than difficult for me. Several chartered accountants have become stars in the class throughout the year not only in the pre-MBA but also in the diploma stage.

Because the core of the Manchester Method is in its various projects based on teamwork, the school puts lots of effort to build up team spirit of the class and develop leadership of each individual from the beginning. In that, one of the most distinguished programmes was a three-day training in Brathay. This was very similar to self-discipline training that most Koreans experience through secondary education. Selecting a right leader according to the characteristics of each task and cooperating with one another were more than essential for a good performance of the team throughout the programme in Brathay. The people in the same team had a chance to become very close friends by working out physically and by challenging hard tasks together. And that was the end of the warming-up allowed to the students.

2004 Autumn Term

Found myself thrown into a job market

With the start of the autumn term, I had to realize how fierce the competition of the job market was. The school organized a series of 'Career Safaris' whenever there were time slots. Reflecting the interests of the majority, alumni working in investment banks and consulting firms kicked off the career fair. In addition to that, various students clubs such as investment banking, consulting, marketing, and retail clubs were formed by the initiative of students in the class. I became a member of the investment banking society because I had been interested in business development, internal investment analysis, and corporate valuation. The clubs generally invite professionals who have been successful in the related field and help members get critical information for their career development.

Sound body, sound mind

Another important extracurricular activity for me was sports activities. I want to emphasize how crucial it is to maintain mental stability and a nutritious balance throughout the MBA studies. In the first term, I had five subjects consisting of marketing, financial reporting, organizational behaviour, organization design, and micro/macro economics. Every lecturer assigned an enormous amount of readings and I was usually already stressed out as soon as I checked the syllabus. For the first few weeks, I could barely follow the schedule with very little amounts of sleep. However, it could not last long as soon as I started group presentation preparation. Hours of discussions close to argument wore me out everyday and all the other group members

became very sensitive toward the end of the work. I had three assessed and two non-assessed presentations during the term, and could not have imagined being mentally and physically stable, if I had not regularly exercised in sports clubs.

Art of war

There is no argument why to pick Gordon Mandry's marketing lecture as the best one in the autumn term. Gordon is a senior lecturer and expected to retire in a few years. He is not even a Ph.D. or professor but he is known as one of the best marketing strategy lecturers in Europe and North America. I was lucky to be in his lecture before his retirement. In his class, I felt as if I was in a marketing battlefield and shivered with the aggressive and thorough strategic approaches. I could understand why the <Art of War> was displayed in the business section in Waterstone's bookstore.

ATKearney competition

I was excited to become a student again because I knew there would be lots of privileges and opportunities only allowed to that special group of people. During the first term, there were many competitions for the first year MBA students; competitions organized by consulting firms, such as ATKearney and McKinsey; MBA schools, such as the University of Washington and Thunderbird; publishers like the Economist; and multinational companies like L'Oréal. Among those, I chose to be in the automotive business development case competition organized by ATKearney for two reasons. One was because classmates with good potential approached me to form a team and work together and the other was because business development complied with my background and interest for my future career. Throughout the in-school competition for about two months, the three best teams competed in the semi-final. The winning team then participated in the European competition. My team was successful until we compete in the semi-finals, but our team had to give way to another team in the end. Nevertheless, it was a good thing that the team representing Manchester Business School won over other top European schools and competed for the World Prize with Kelly Business School of Indiana University. Even though Kelly that was supervised by a professor throughout the competition became the final winner, the entire class including me were very proud of the Manchester Business School team.

While I was in the whirl of the hectic life, my first winter in the UK was silently overdrawn by the darkness after 4 in the afternoon.

2005 Winter Term

Back to school

First year students had to come back to Manchester before the two-week Christmas holiday ended because of the pricing strategy assignment given by Gordon. The submission due was 9 a.m. on the first day of the winter term and thus the MBA centre was already crowded with people writing their coversheets for their reports when I arrived at school quarter to nine. I could see that many of them worked until a few hours before the deadline and emailed the softcopy to the centre. Besides the first year students, the second year students who came back to school after finishing a three-month exchange student programme at sister business schools all over the world made the school livelier than the previous term had been. All the second year students, however, would disappear again quickly because they had to remain in project rooms

all day long working with their teams for the bidding preparation of international business projects, which is what distinguishes the Manchester Method from others.

Pleasure of learning

As soon as the winter term started, summer internship application became more than serious to all students, except for those who were studying MBA through company sponsorships. It was such a great pressure to give every try for internship opportunities while I had seven subjects in the term, including strategy, corporate finance, corporate valuation, management international business and systems, management information system, operations management and decision modelling, and directed personal development program. Among the winter term subjects, Dr. Gary Davies' strategy and Dr. Martin Widdicks' corporate finance were regarded as the best lectures. Discussion with Gary in every lecture was very exciting and made presenters extremely nervous when the given case was based on his real consulting experience. Furthermore, Manchester Business School's real option team led by Dr. David Newton and Dr. Martin Widdicks has world reputation. It is such a shame that I will not have a chance to experience the real option team because the real option team is one of the elective courses and does not focus on my area of interest. But I will enjoy the advanced strategic management course by Kevin Jagiello, which is also known as one of the best lectures in the school and I do not want to miss it.

Bitter life, endless challenge

The winter term was more manageable than the term before, but I had to deal with the anxiety of getting an internship and with shocks from a series of rejection emails from institution after institution. Usually, Japanese students in business schools get sympathy from the rest of the class because they suffer the most due to language barriers, but soon they are envied by the others because they receive the best internship offers, including high payment, travel and accommodation expense, from top-tier investment banks and consulting firms in Japan either in the end of the first or the beginning of the second term. My school was not an exception and many students could not but admit that Japan should be proud of having the 2nd largest world economy with such a big demand for MBA students. Following the Japanese students, native speakers such as British and North American students found internships. And then, thanks to the economic boom, Chinese students followed them. By that time, whoever did not have a clear picture of their summer became restless. There is such a limited number of institutions offering summer internship programmes in Korea and clearly most Korean employers have an overall preference for US MBAs than European MBAs, regardless of the ranking of the business school. Of course, I did not think to get an internship would be easy. If I had been a person pursuing easy paths in my life, I should have stayed in the stable life that I had in Korea and I would not have come to the UK to study MBA. Life is worth living because it provides new challenges all the time and God will show me the best way as long as I walk with Him.

City of Manchester

The city of Manchester is known as the place where the industrial revolution started but it lost its glory in the last half of the 20th century. However, the city has received a large amount of investment in order to be regenerated as an industrial, research, and business centre of the Northwest of the UK. With a population of 2.5 million and a workforce of 1.2 million, Greater Manchester creates a quarter of the Northwest region's wealth. Drizzling raindrops falling on the old redbrick Victorian architectures

in the city make people a bit melancholy, but more than 3000 pubs around the city are filled with the laughter of students dreaming of a brighter future giving Manchester the buzz of a modern city.

Manchester Business School

Experiencing 'real' diversity

The class of 2006 consists of about 100 students from 27 countries with an average age of 31 and 7 years of work experience. The students all come from different backgrounds ranging from finance, consulting, economics, sales, marketing, engineering, entrepreneurial, government, to medical and law. Sometimes listening to classmates about their work experiences in various parts of the world is more exciting than learning from the lectures. I believe studying and working with these people is beneficial for me to become a better and more effective team player and to develop leadership skills, which are essential for success in today's multinational environment.