

五道口

校友 通讯

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P08 师者风采
知者不惑，仁者不忧，勇者不惧
——访清华五道口金融学院陈耀先老师

P20 人物专访
低调内敛的大师兄
——访 1981 级硕士校友魏本华

P76 值年园地
道口九六 20 周年聚会前杂感

为了更广阔的世界

——访 1993 级硕士校友卫红



卫红与参加夏令营的孩子们

INTRODUCTION

人物介绍

卫红，五道口1993级校友。1995年入职中国人民银行开始职业生涯，曾任央行处长，后加盟89级校友蒋锦志创建的景林资产管理公司，任董事总经理。景林资产以旗下基金长期大幅超越市场的骄人业绩，成为中国对冲基金中最受广泛认可的机构之一，优秀的投资业绩在业界有着非常优秀的声誉与品牌。2013年，卫红已在金融领域的高管职位上奋斗了十余年，这一年，她力图寻求事业上的进一步发展，毅然决然选择出国留学，入学英国伦敦商学院，成为了一名斯隆学者。

For a wider world

Interview of Vera Wei, 1993

By Dai Ping, Tsinghua PBC School of Finance Alumni Office

With intrigue I meet Vera Wei. At first, I first observed her short dark hair and slight frame, and then her smile enthused me. Her energy filled the room and our hour-long interview proved to be an adventurous and dynamic whistle-stop tour of financial and inter-cultural educational insights. Vera has fostered her intellect and applied her zest for learning at top global institutions. She relishes challenge and after enjoying corporate success is now becoming an educational expert, impassioned to help Chinese children reach their potential through overseas educational experiences and the driver of a new entrepreneurial venture to achieve these goals. After five minutes of discussion, I was captivated. Her story is a must read.

“We graduates from the Finance and Banking Institute of China, now the UIBE Finance School, were very proud of our strength in English and Math”. After Vera graduated top in her class from the Institute, *“I wanted to push myself even harder. So, I decided with trepidation to take Wudaokou’s graduate admission exam.”* Wudaokou is the popular nickname of PBC School of Finance. Reflecting back she recalls her nerves; *“in the nineties it was extremely difficult to get admitted”.* Vera was thrilled to

be offered a place, and more than a decade on you can still feel her excitement and pride.

Recalling her early studies at PBC School of Finance, Tsinghua University, Vera remembers the unexpected rudimentary facilities *“It is often said that ‘ignorance is bliss’. The “Wudaokou” school was converted from a public health center of Dongsheng town, Haidian district. It lacked decent libraries and classrooms.”* Vera now considers herself a Wudaokou ambassador. She speaks with the confidence and reserve of a seasoned executive *“Wudaokou prepared and gave me a strong foundation, one I cherish, one till this day I draw inspiration from”*.

Vera built an impressive career in financial services throughout which she continued her links with education and interest in learning. Since graduating from Wudaokou in 1995, she has taught finance courses to senior executives from National Audit Office and become a visiting professor to the Graduate School of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Excelling academically is not solely about intelligence but resilience through commitment, effort, hard work and perseverance. In 2012 with nearly 20 years of experience, Vera decided to once again challenge herself, take the risk and disrupt her successful career, through international learning. Considering the strength of British professional education in management and administration, she chose London Business School and resolved to become a Sloan Fellow.

“I am particularly grateful to Honorary Dean Liu Hongru, senior alum George Jiang and many other senior alumni of Wudaokou, because it is their support and assistance that encouraged me to take the first step: to apply.” LBS is consistently ranked the top school in Europe and within the top three worldwide. Its admission process is highly selective and competitive, requiring an excellent GPA, outstanding GMAT and elite professional experience. The Sloan Fellowship is the most senior executive programme only offered at three schools worldwide, MIT, Stanford and LBS. To secure her place, after a busy day at work, Vera spent her spare time preparing for her application. Vera described how at the age of 40 she took the TOEFL test for the first time. *“A year later I took the GMAT”*. *“Being commended by George Jiang for my determination spurred me on”*. With the support from Wudaokou community she gained a coveted place at LBS and in 2013 flew to the UK.

London Business School boasts a first-class international teaching environment with excellent facilities. Located in central London its beautiful buildings are set in a spacious and peaceful campus next to Regents Park. As a center of elite business education LBS specialises in postgraduate learning for a range of professionals, including executives.

Many students have had successful careers and choose to improve their skill sets and broaden their horizons. Vera said, *“Most students have had a pretty decent career to date and decide to return to university. The principal reason is that they have a clear long term goal, and see the opportunity of one or two years at LBS as a key means of reaching that.”* Students have the opportunity to exchange ideas with industry experts. *“LBS emphasize great importance on ‘real time’ application of its taught material. This is the core characteristic of an elite professional education institution for graduate students and one which is worth other schools’ replicating.”* The experience of studying in London expanded Vera’s horizons and broadened her mind; *“We were taught within and without classrooms to apply the latest theory and frameworks into practice.”*

“I was equipped with 18-years of experience in the Chinese finance industry. My reason for going to LBS was to deep dive into Strategy and Leadership. The Sloan Programme opened my eyes.” With an intense course schedule, exacerbated by the differences in Chinese and UK financial markets and management systems Vera was faced with a set of new challenges. The school’s course is rigorous and pressurizing, *“it was during my time at LBS that my hair started to turn gray”*, Vera chuckles.

It is not easy to study in the UK, but Vera reports she had an excellent time at LBS. *“Students came from many different countries. In our class, classmates averaged 41 years old, and all possessed at least ten years’ senior management experience. I experienced a truly international atmosphere. I learned a lot by studying and communicating with my fellow Sloans.”*

Vera believes that studying abroad was a good choice, but that thorough preparation is necessary to truly gain from the experience. Selecting the right school is critical, as is defining a clear goal. She warns, *“One should not go abroad simply for the sake of going abroad. There is so much at stake”*.

Mind the gap: Success in trans-boundary entrepreneurship

Whilst a Sloan Fellow Vera researched and wrote a thesis entitled 'China strategy of leading UK independent schools'. Under the guidance of the marketing professor she visited and interviewed Headmasters from the top British boarding schools, spanning the boy's schools of Winchester and Radley College, Cheltenham Ladies College to co-ed Marlborough College. The project sharpened her appreciation of the challenges faced by Chinese parents and students when pursuing overseas education. From her pre-Sloan interest in specializing in overseas education, Vera developed her desire to remove these barriers.

"It is important to help others improve by passing on knowledge. Even smart people need help to make sound decisions when facing harsh challenges. I'm ready to pass it on. Education in its essence is, I believe, to help others achieve more." With an aura of passion and determination, she recounts her resolve to facilitate access for Chinese and western citizens to break through artificial transcultural and geographical boundaries to embrace the wealth of global learning opportunities. *"I have benefited a lot from an excellent education, as articulated by a Chinese proverb: 'when you cannot pay it back, you pass it on'."*

With the help of business mentors Vera has begun to do just this. She founded the 'Sloan Culture and Education Exchange' and delved into the overseas education market. Her objective is simple; to help Chinese children make the most of their overseas educational experiences.

"My experience of top Chinese and western education gave me a clear understanding of the gap between Chinese students and expectations on them." Yet Vera was dismayed to find domestic players lack the means or will or both to help their clients: young aspiring students. *"I also realized that career service for graduates is almost non-existent. There are various specific sectors in finance, which require a large amount of careers research. I understand the career paths young graduates may take, their dilemmas, and how to help them."*

She goes on, *"as it stands, there are few professional mentors who could give a positive relevant influence on students, and novel, innovative views on education are few and far between. A considerable number of students are confused and puzzled on stepping out of the top universities, while so much could be achieved. I am now in my*

40s. When I look back, while my career generally developed smoothly I still found myself lost and perplexed once in a while. One is lucky if someone gives you a helping hand, guides you to prepare for your expertise and career, or even passes a compliment. My career has been much more valuable due to such advice.”

As such Vera went a step further, in 2015 she secured investors and established Shanghai Sloan Education and Technology Co., Ltd. Vera reflected, *“It is not easy to raise capital. Luckily I had a sound track record and thus gave investors confidence in me and belief in my vision”*. In July 2015 Sloan Education sent 17 Chinese children, aged between 9 to 16 years old to join a one-month international English camp at Stowe School. Each day, the children spent their morning learning English and took part in a rich array of extra-curricular activities during the afternoon and evening. For most of the students, this was the first time in their life they realized learning English is for communicating with people from around the world, not just for passing exams! It brought English and the English culture alive.

At present, Vera is putting more efforts into developing her business. Choosing to pursue such enterprise is, in effect, choosing a lifestyle. One needs be brave enough to take on risks. Today, the economy poses considerable challenges to entrepreneurs. Vera thinks that the biggest challenge is not the scaling up of her business, but to remain true to its original intention, caring for students, whilst organically growing Sloan Education. *“This is a mission and children come first. We do need to make decent money but that’s the reward, not the starting point.”*

Wudaokou: From strength to strength

In her entrepreneurial, visceral and resolute mindset Vera then turned her attention to Wudaokou, as whilst the economy slows, employment opportunities lessen. *“Wudaokou possesses a pretty glorious history. As its students, you should be proud of it, but do not only take pride in what the senior alumni have achieved. Spiritually, you can take pride in it, but what you need to do is regard it as a means to advance further. Though you may not have obvious advantages over others, Wudaokou, from the first job students seek, provides an awesome platform. Its spirit, the guidance*

provided by the school, and access to the most up-to-date financial information and networks from alum raise its value. Within the first three years after graduating, Wudaokou reputation, which has been earned over many years by seniors, will benefit your career. Yet, the most important thing to know is that “to forge iron, one must be strong”. Vera reiterated, “One should keep working hard while sticking to the faith that “gold will glitter in the end”.

Secondly, Vera’s advice to students is that preparation is key. The competition for jobs is more severe as the number of finance students from different universities and colleges alongside overseas returnees increase. Vera agrees that students should emphasize their key skills and abilities to employers to make themselves competitive candidates. *“One of the best ways to achieve this is to increase experience. Nowadays, there is the tendency of Chinese companies and financial institutes to branch out across the world. Wudaokou provides many chances of international exchanges. Yet some students are convinced that the schedule for graduate students is short and tight, and they should focus on securing employment, as opposed to international exposure”.* Vera takes an alternative stance. She argues that international exposure is of little value and even heralds negative employment side effects *“if you dabble in it and regard it as a sightseeing tour”.* But from another point of view, Vera states *“if you go abroad as an exchange student, to fully understand the domestic financial system of another country, establish a global network, and then work in financial companies/institutions as an intern, it will aid you on your return and put your knowledge into practice”.* She takes the discussion further, *“At present, in the background of global expansion, the most talented professionals over 40 years of age are still sent to develop in international financial institutions. People in their 20s or 30s should therefore use their spare time to study abroad. You should not pay attention just to the present, but should be far-sighted.”*

China has an increasing role in the global financial system. Talented individuals with a global outlook, latest financial knowledge at their fingertips, the ability to communicate with people of different cultural backgrounds, and an understanding of western commercial rules are rare in China. As such, Vera is optimistic that Wudaokou is fast becoming one of the world’s top financial schools and will train individuals to meet these commercial needs.

As for the promotion of the school, Vera contends that while Wudaokou has global reach its influence needs to be strengthened. *“As a top education institution in the Chinese education sector, ‘PBC School of Finance, Tsinghua University’ needs effective international promotion on a larger, more global scale. Wudaokou has advantages of a good reputation, alongside credible experience and capabilities to cultivating top talents.”* To close Vera gesticulates *“as the leader and forerunner of financial education industry, our school must be distinguished from others, and establish its core competitiveness in China and beyond.”*

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