



In a Rapidly Changing Global Market, Growth Mindset Becomes the Strongest Response

China Executive Education Guide 2026

By

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Cover Story

In today's fast-evolving professional landscape, continuous learning and self-development have become essential strategies for working professionals seeking both stability and progress. To help learners in Hong Kong and Mainland China better understand continuing education options, we interviewed a human resources management expert and President of the Hong Kong Talent Management Association to analyse key learning trends for 2026. We also invited several Mainland professionals living and working in Hong Kong to share their personal experiences, offering reference points for readers as they navigate their learning and career journeys together.

Building long-term competitiveness

With more than twenty years of experience in human resources management, **Elsie Yung (翁慧雯)** has held senior HR roles across multiple multinational corporations. Guided by a desire to support others, she left her corporate role in 2020 to establish her own consultancy. Since then, she has taken on the role of a "corporate doctor", helping small and medium-sized enterprises diagnose people-related challenges and develop practical solutions to improve workforce management.

Looking ahead to 2026, Elsie observed that the rapid mainstream adoption of artificial intelligence has made the choice of further study particularly critical for middle and senior professionals.

"In recent years, economic conditions have remained challenging, and with AI advancing quickly, many organisations have already completed restructuring or paused hiring," she explained. "Over the next three to five years, companies will reassess how they invest in talent, concentrating resources on individuals with clear potential. For working professionals, continuing education should not be viewed simply as an academic upgrade. It requires a reassessment of one's positioning and a deliberate effort to build long-term competitiveness."

Three key considerations for middle and senior leaders

While AI has become a major focus across industries, Elsie noted that its current level of maturity does not allow it to fully replace human work.

"AI does not replace jobs. It replaces capabilities," she said. At present, AI still depends heavily on large volumes of data for learning. Its strengths lie primarily in process optimisation, certain forms of prediction, and task automation.

Against this backdrop, the key issue for middle and senior leaders is not whether to learn about AI, but how to strengthen their overall capability profile. When considering further study, Elsie highlighted three factors that deserve particular attention:



- **Decision-making and judgement**
Whether the programme enhance decision quality, judgement, and the ability to make sound calls in complex situations.
- **Cross-functional and cross-disciplinary capability**
Work today is rarely confined to a single function. The ability to collaborate across departments—and even across professional domains—is increasingly important.
- **Understanding how technology supports work**
Whether the programme helps participants understand how technology can assist and enhance work, rather than treating it as a purely technical subject.

“Technology is already embedded in everyday life,” Elsie emphasised. “Even someone studying literature may need to use technology in the learning process, such as using AI to support language acquisition.”

She added that middle and senior professionals should avoid focusing solely on technical skill development unless their career path is clearly oriented towards becoming a subject matter expert. When evaluating programmes, it is equally important to consider whether the curriculum integrates business thinking and talent development perspectives.

Looking beyond rankings and reputation

When selecting master’s programmes, many candidates prioritise institutional reputation or international rankings. Elsie suggested that equal attention should be given to the following considerations:

- **Practical relevance**
Whether the programme aligns with real workplace needs and contributes meaningfully to improved effectiveness after completion.
- **Contemporary programme design**
Whether the curriculum reflects current realities rather than relying on outdated frameworks.
- **Faculty with practical experience**
Teaching teams with real-world exposure and strategic insight help ensure learning remains grounded rather than overly theoretical.

AI cannot replace the human element

Elsie noted that MBA, EMBA and DBA programmes offered by **The University of Hong Kong**, **The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology**, and **City University of Hong Kong**, as well as a range of general management programmes, already incorporate these elements to varying degrees.



She added that programme selection should also take networking opportunities into account, as relationship-building plays a critical role in long-term career development.

Referring to the idea of “timing, location, and people”, Elsie observed that while timing and circumstances are often beyond individual control, strong professional relationships can create momentum and open doors.

When offering advice to those considering further study, she suggested slowing down and reflecting carefully on future direction. Drawing from her own experience, she shared:

“I once believed my career could only develop within the HR function. Through further learning, I transitioned into consulting and now also teach at university. This journey reinforced my belief that skills are transferable and can continue to grow over time.”

She concluded that adjusting one’s pace, reassessing direction, and exchanging perspectives with mentors or trusted peers can often lead to valuable and unexpected insights.