Chinese tycoons among NUS, NTU alumni

The Straits Times China Bureau

Beijing - The National University of Singapore (NUS) has produced more Chinese tycoons than any United States college, like Yale, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Duke.

In the past 15 years, it has produced four Chinese multimillionaires, mostly from its business school.

On a list of foreign university alumni, Chinese multimillionaires, NUS came in at No. 3, just behind Harvard and Stanford.

NUS produced six tycoons, and Stanford five.

MIT was ranked fourth, and Nanjing Technological University (NTU) did well too, producing two Chinese tycoons to tie for fifth place with eight other schools.

The two Singapore universities were the only Asian colleges on the US-dominated list which appeared two weeks ago in a report by 21st Century Talent, a newspaper, and Cnua.net, a website that serves Chinese university alumni organisations.

Covering Chinese tycoons worth over 100 million yuan ($20 million) who had appeared on other rich lists such as Forbes and Hurun over the past 10 years, the report analysed their personal attributes such as place of birth, industry and the universities they graduated from.

Of the nearly 2,000 tycoons covered, some 130 had studied in universities abroad.

Of the four tycoons who studied at NUS, three went through the doors of its business school.

Mr Chen Duan, 44, was the wealthy of the four. Mr Chen Duan of Evergreen Group, who started dealing in real estate and then ventured into property development and infrastructure, and Mr Xu Linrui, who heads business software firm Zongma.

Mr Chen and Ms Yang had done NUS Asia-Pacific executive master’s in business administration (EMBA) programme, which is conducted in Chinese.

The fourth graduate, Dr Lan Weilang, holds a PhD from NUS chemistry department, where he remains an adjunct associate professor.

The two multimillionaires from NTU - property magnate Geng Jianming and Wang Zhenghua - completed its Chinese-language executive MBA programmes, which take in 50 students from China every year.

The listings are a boost for both Singapore universities, especially their executive MBA programmes.

NUS’ programme was ranked 11th globally last year, up from 30th in 2006, according to the Financial Times.

The good showing by the business school’s graduates, said its dean Bernard Yeung, “attests to the rigorous, relevant and rewarding education that we consistently provide to our students as NUS’ leading global business school”.

NTU’s business school dean Gillian Yeow too said she was proud of its successful alumni. She added that the school’s course curriculum “has helped to develop business acumen and leadership skills of our graduates”.

Chinese education experts backed their comments, saying that the latest rankings bode well for Singapore’s reputation as an educational powerhouse.

A survey last year by China’s top overseas education consultant, EIC showed that Singapore was the most preferred destination in Asia among China’s students, beating Hong Kong and Japan.

Globally, the Republic was ranked fifth after the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

“Among prospective Chinese business students, Singapore is even more attractive because schools there can teach them how to combine the international and Asian ways of doing business,” said EIC analyst Tan Chao.

This is something lacking in American and British business schools.