

## A Study on Gap Analysis of Employability Skills of Management Graduates of Tier-2, Tier-3 Cities in Karnataka.

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### Abstract

Globally, as per AICTE report 2018, there are 13000 plus business schools providing MBA program and India counts for one third of them which indicates there is an extensive growth of management education. However, the literature suggests that, there is dreadful situation in the quality of management education and employability of Management graduates. The present paper focuses on the issue of 'employability' of MBA graduates. ASSOCHAM (2015-16), report illustrates excluding graduates from top 20 colleges, only 7% of MBA students from other Management Institutes were employed after the completion of their course. CRISIL report exhibits that 85% of MBA graduates are from Tier-3, Tier-4 city - colleges which are considered to be producing only 7% employable graduates. Thus managing employability has become a serious matter. It is well-known that the present nature of employment gives lots of importance to soft skills and Interpersonal skills where most of the management graduates from this 85% population lack. With this back drop the present paper focuses on the Gap Analysis of Employability Skills of Management Graduates of Tier-2 and Tier-3 institutes of Karnataka. The findings explore that the most essential skills the employer thrust upon were soft skills, Team-Work, Leadership Skills, Social Skills (Interpersonal Skills), Values, and Personal Grooming as they were rated on very high side by both the Employers and Training and Placement Officers of the Institutes when compared to the ratings by the Management graduates. This highlights that though all the stake holders the Academicians, the Employers, know the lacunae of the skill sets of the Management graduates but still it is observed that there is mass movement of students for management programs in these colleges. Thus the paper reveals that there is a need to transform tier-2 tier-3 city MBA program; which triggered the need for training and skill development activities for MBA graduates of Tier-2 and Tier-3 city colleges of Karnataka.

**Index Terms**— Academia, Employability, skills/competency, Industry, Training and Placement officers (TPO), Employers/ Human Resource Managers (Hr)

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### I. Introduction

Post 1990s' economic liberalization by Indian government set the pace in opening door for not only business activities but also upbeat to harness management education by offering courses in management for both graduate and post graduates. India now produces more than 2 lakhs MBA graduates annually. It is the effect of liberal policies adapted by Indian government which reflected in mushrooming growth of business schools offering post graduate programs in management. Crisil in 2014, published a report - which estimated that tier-3 and tier-4 MBA Colleges collectively accounted for 85 percent of intake of the total MBA students in India. Though these colleges had good numbers in admissions of students yet they ran their MBA programs with lots of problems: in terms of not well equipped with Infrastructural facilities, lack of well qualified faculty members and no industry tie-ups. The report further stated that due to these reasons Indian employers will have to face problems in selecting of fresh graduates with strong basic skills. Central to this notion is the argument that the MBA program is not aligned with the realistic practical world which is ever changing. And the programs have become insignificant to the needs of practicing managers.

Mihail & Kloutsiniotis (2014), argue that though the MBA program contributes considerably to most of the managerial skills and helps graduates to find handsome jobs with good pay but criticisms regarding a gap between MBA programs and Industry needs are not baseless. In spite of these criticism MBA programs still adds value to graduates, giving them business-related knowledge, improve their employability, career advancement Baruch & Peiperl (2000). But Sturges, Simpson & Altman (2003), suggest that there is less known about the fact and research on what skills are acquired from an MBA program, and how it will contribute to their career development and in turn to the business organizations. Moreover, a research conducted by Saxena &

Bendale (2014), to investigate whether MBA's show better managerial skills or not in comparison to Non MBA's; their conclusion lead to identify that employers do not find MBA's better equipped with managerial skills than Non MBA's on performing managerial tasks on most of the competencies. Furthermore, Hodges & Burchell (2003), claims that, employers want graduates who are all rounder, that is graduates with wide range of skills and competencies. And at the same time they also place a prime importance on soft skills, and their ability to deal empathetically and effectively. The highlight of their study was though employers are generally satisfied with the performance of new graduates, but still there exists a performance gap in graduate competency levels between what required by employers and therefore what they would ideally like and what they experience. Another study conducted by Dhanawade & Bhola (2015), which claim to confirm the studies of previous researches that the level of employability skills of the MBA graduates as perceived by the industry is low when compared employability skills perceived by the students.

In order to overcome these shortcomings the Higher education especially the University MBA program has to tune up to the present business world. But it's rare we see that university MBA programs are slow to respond to these new business challenges and due to this: we can see a long gestation period in comprehending with these challenges and to create a skilled graduate – 'knowledge worker'. Thus it proves that there is a Gap between employers' expectations and existing skill sets of fresh MBA graduates. Rao C.N.R (2014), criticized that it is the unplanned expansion of education without any objectives either in education or for employment, unplanned growth without thinking of the future of young people which has become very detrimental to India. He says, not much is been thought about this but there exists reports – about issues of employability. At one end we claim that India would rank 3<sup>rd</sup> among all countries by 2020 in higher education. But on the other side there are employability issues for these educated youngsters. On top of that the Governments agenda is create and give employment to these graduates. But the irony is that there are no openings. Therefore it has become too difficult to trade off between the situations regarding employment and Higher education expansion.

As a result, recent shifts in government policies regarding higher education have resulted in universities being placed under continuous pressure to produce employable graduates. However, contention exists regarding what constitutes graduate attributes which can foster employability for the students. This argument has cropped up in-between Industry and Academia as there was increase in demand of skills and students could not cope up with this demand which resulted in dissatisfaction of employers. This ignited a spark in higher education and now what we see is almost all the Universities have bothered to update their curriculum and re-examining which qualities / attributes should be possessed by their graduates and postgraduates so that it would ease in their graduates employability. Hence the study is undertaken with following objective.

### **Objective of the study**

1. To analyze the gap between employers' expectations and acquired skill sets of MBA graduates of Tier-2 and Tier-3 City colleges of Karnataka.
2. To ascertain the need of placement, training and skill development activities for MBA Graduates of Tier-2 and Tier-3 City colleges of Karnataka for better employability.

## **II. Literature Review**

Business graduates are normally placed in different employment capacities and the norm of the day is that they need to possess certain competencies which will enable them to move from a graduate to a successful employee.

A momentum has gathered to understand what constitutes 'Graduate attributes', within the role of higher educational institutions and the Universities world-wide to promote employability skills, same goes with the Indian Universities as well. This momentum triggered many Australian and Britain universities to designate and develop - Graduate Attributes (GAs) or generic skills in their students. This got due importance because of community pressures making students more accountable, and by this perceptions – it will make students more employable Kate Chanock (2008).

Harvey (2001), Mc Quaid & Lindsay (2005), define Employability skills are those skills that are directly related in getting work and sustaining it for future. They are comprised of generic skills and discipline-specific skills required for performance in a work. Generic skills are transferable skills which includes skills such as information literacy, working with technology, written and verbal communication, working in teams and numeracy. These skills are most widely acknowledged as 'employability skills' in the universities, policy and employer graduate attribute lists - such as the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Business Council of Australia (BCA), (ACCI & BCA) 2002. In the literature, these generic skills are referred to as core skills, employability skills, life skills, soft skills, transferable skills, workplace competencies and key competencies. Despite these generic skills are referred by different labels of competencies but they are normally referred as those skills and attributes which are useful across different job contexts. Therefore candidatures who

have excellent generic competencies have greater demand to get employment than those with subject-specific or technical skills. This was revealed by Richens & Mc. Clain (2000), in their study done with 400 Australian employers from a variety of industries who were asked which skills they considered to be the most important at the workplace. The outcome of their study highlighted that employers favoured workers with generic competencies such as sound interpersonal awareness over those with strong technical competence.

More than a decade ago, a report by Harvey et al. (1997), revealed that employers were satisfied with the disciplinary skills of graduates, but less happy with their development of generic skills that were communication, team-working and time management. This exemplifies that the emphasis is on communication and interpersonal skills.

Furthermore, the competencies which are considered to be paramount for the employment of business graduates generally are written communication, oral communication, planning and organizing skills, leadership, negotiating and persuading skills, investigating and analyzing skills, cooperation, and numeracy quantitative aptitude. But how these factors work in the interests of a diverse student population is in question as students come from various different backgrounds. Some may come from vernacular medium and some are first generation where their parents never went to school or may have studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> Standard. Therefore, measuring teaching and learning at the classroom level is a key component to ensure continuous improvement of educational outcomes Grygoryev & Karapetrovic (2005). Margaret Mac Namara et al (1990), emphasized on action learning in management education as management institutes focus more on theory and on quantitative techniques and analysis. They suggested that management education should be active learning, problem oriented, experiential learning-based and should be modified by the feedback and action learning which will serve the purpose. Basu Sharma et al (1996), pointed out that business schools have to raise their standards to compete internationally. The dimensions considered by them in internationalization of management were change in curriculum, more research activity based learning in terms of relevant content delivered and executive development programs. Boyatzis et al. (2008), conducted their studies on six full-time and three part-time cohorts of business schools. The study revealed that cognitive and emotional intelligence competencies could be developed in MBA students, but not within a typical MBA curriculum. Gill & Lashine (2003), opined management education is under sharp scanner due to globalization and advancement in information technology. Therefore, it is paramount for the business schools to align their education that is their teaching-learning impartment with the requirements of the global market.

Furthermore, lot of Indian management institutions follow US model of Business education but its essence is not penetrated in our Indian management schools. In view of this 'Working group on management education' was formed by National Knowledge Committee, 2005, to strengthen management education in India. They framed various committees - like the Nanda Committee, The Kurien Committee, The Ishwar Dayal Committee, and The Management Education Review Committee to take a critical review and the overall growth of Business Education in the country. Though these committees suggested improvements in management education but its trigger was not felt in tier-2 and tier-3 institutes. It is quite clear that management education in India shows inconsistency when it comes to Tier-2 and Tier-3 colleges. They lack in contributing to the body of knowledge.

With all said above, we need to also notice what else is happening in the business arena. The business environment is changing significantly, the pace at which technology has evolved is at lightning speed. The current industrial revolution has brought in automation wherein advanced robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning have swept away many jobs – wherein manual work is replaced by robotics and automation with most accuracy. Furthermore, the trend in mobile internet technology and cloud technology are already impacting the business world at large. What we see and learn is certain that the future managers will have to keep in pace and align their skill set in this VUCA Volatile Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous world. Therefore it is paramount for management education to take up these challenges of rapid changing times and technologies in its stride .

### **III. Research Methodology**

A pretested questionnaire survey based on Rating scale was administered: '5' being Very High, '4' being High, '3' being Neutral, '2' being Low and '1' being Very Low (through electronic way by using Google form) and data was elicited from 126 MBA Alumni in Karnataka, India across tier 2 and tier 3 colleges, who had work experience of less than one year to know how they valued Importance of Communication Skills, Team-Work, Domain Knowledge, Leadership Skills, Managerial Skills, Social skills, Values and Personal Grooming

Furthermore, we also surveyed 96 Employers (again administration of questionnaire was based on Rating scale was done through Google form) to understand how they rated the same above factors in regards to their functioning of their organisation.

Further, we surveyed 74 Training and Placement officers (TPOs') of different Institutions and Universities (administration of questionnaire was based on Rating scale was done through Google form) who rated the same above factors in drawing their perception - from the perspectives of how the employers judge MBA graduates in terms of the skills requirement for successful employment.

**Table 1.0 Findings based on Data Analysis Consolidated Data Analysis**

Factor Name	MBA Graduate			Employer			TPO		
	Mean	SD	SE	Mean	SD	SE	Mean	SD	SE
Communication Skills	3.661	0.507	0.04523	4.35	0.340	0.04837	4.5946	0.449	.05221
Team-Work	3.849	0.540	0.04819	4.56	0.501	0.07066	4.5676	0.513	.05973
Domain Knowledge	3.579	0.448	0.03996	3.80	0.371	0.05167	3.9054	0.468	.05451
Leadership Skills	4.301	0.560	0.04995	4.54	0.422	0.07375	4.2770	0.670	.07795
Managerial Skills	4.274	0.511	0.04556	4.50	0.441	0.06272	4.4223	0.520	.06045
Social Skills (Attitude)	4.266	0.596	0.05314	4.55	0.502	0.07025	4.5270	0.514	.05981
Values	4.119	0.563	0.05016	4.57	0.482	0.06745	4.6301	0.417	.04855
Personal Grooming	3.891	0.630	0.05620	4.59	0.472	0.06687	4.6667	0.523	.06085
Combined Factor	<b>4.2100</b>	<b>.41441</b>	<b>.03692</b>	<b>4.41</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<b>0.04749</b>	<b>4.4488</b>	<b>.42520</b>	<b>.04943</b>

➤ MBA Graduates have signified High importance on **communication skills** with a mean of 3.66, whereas Employers have a higher edge on communication skills and they perceive Very high importance with a mean of 4.35 as they view it as most important skill to carry out the tasks successfully. While Training and placement officers have set out Very high importance on communication with mean of 4.59 as they perceive that they are most important skills to manage people.

➤ With reference to **Team work** MBA Graduates have specified High importance with a mean of 3.849 whereas Employers / Hr have specified Very high importance on team work with a mean of 4.56. This infers Organizations benefit from employees who display a high adaptability, valuing others opinion – as people come from different backgrounds. While Training and placement officers have set out Very high importance on team work with mean of 4.5676. TPOs' want that MBA students / graduates should inculcate the habit of working in a team, get adapted to the conditions with diverse team members.

➤ With reference to **Domain Knowledge** MBA Graduates have highlighted High importance with a mean of 3.579, whereas Employers / Hr have specified Very High importance Domain Knowledge with a mean of 3.80 while . Training and placement officers have set out High importance on Domain Knowledge with mean of 3.90. This infers Domain knowledge was rated on only High importance compared to other Skills. But Information and Communication Technology and Marketing stream specifically was more stressed in domain compared to other this reveals that the most of the business in today's environment are run on the ERP Platforms for which IS and ICT knowledge is must.

➤ With reference to **Leadership Skills** MBA Graduates have exhibited Very high importance with a mean of 4.301. This presumes that MBA graduates have good learning on this skill. Whereas Employers / Hr have also specified Very high importance Leadership Skills with a mean of 4.54 and Training and placement officers have also set out very high importance on Leadership Skills with mean of 4.2770. This infers Leadership Skills was given equal importance by all the stake-holders.

➤ With reference to **Managerial Skills** MBA Graduates have exhibited Very high importance with a mean of 4.274. This presumes that MBA graduates theoretical knowledge is sound whereas Employers / Hr have also specified Very high importance Managerial Skills with a mean of 4.50, While Training and placement officers also have set out very high importance on Managerial Skills with mean of 4.4223. This infers Managerial Skills was given equal importance by all the stake-holders.

➤ With reference to **Social Skills** MBA Graduates have exhibited Very high importance with a mean of 4.266. This presumes that MBA graduates knows that social skills that is Interpersonal skills, building rapport, connect with business environment are important at work-place. Employers / Hr have also specified Very high importance Social Skills with a mean of 4.55 While Training and placement officers also have set out very high importance on Social Skills with mean of 4.5270. This infers Social Skills was given equal importance by all the stake-holders.

➤ With reference to ‘**Values**’ MBA Graduates have exhibited Very high importance with a mean of 4.119. This presumes that MBA graduates are aware of ‘Values’ that is being honest, having harmony at work place, being respectful, empathy etc. and its’ important at work-place. Employers / Hr too have specified Very high importance on Values with a mean of 4.57. While Training and placement officers have also Perceive very high importance on Values with mean of 4.6301.This infers ‘Values’ was given equal importance by all the stake-holders which is indeed very much required to set a sound culture and conducive environment at the work-place.

➤ With reference to ‘**Personal Grooming**’ MBA Graduates have exhibited High importance with a mean of 3.891. Whereas Employers / Hr have specified Very high importance ‘Personal Grooming’ with a mean of 4.59. This infers Employers are looking for employees who are physically fit – well-groomed in appearance and confident. While Training and placement officers perceive Very high importance on ‘Personal Grooming’ with mean of 4.667. This infers TPOs’ weighed very high on personal grooming attributes Physical fitness and Physical appearance and confidence followed by Action Oriented that is Setting Targets and achieving results, accepting responsibility.

**Testing of Hypotheses - Gap Between Employers’ Expectations and Acquired Skill Sets of MBA of Tier-2 and Tier-3 City colleges of Karnataka for better employability**

➤ **H<sub>0</sub>**: There is no significant gap between employer’s expectation and acquired skill sets of MBA Graduates of Tier-2 and Tier-3 City colleges of Karnataka.

➤ **H<sub>a1</sub>**: There is a significant gap between employer’s expectation and acquired skill sets of MBA Graduates of Tier-2 and Tier-3 City colleges of Karnataka.

**Table-1.1 Summary Independent ‘t’ test - MBA Graduates and Employers with respect to Skills / Competency that augment employability**

Factor Name	Acquired skill sets of MBA Graduates		Employer’s Expectation		t-value	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Communication Skills	3.66	0.50	4.35	0.34	11.625	0.001*
Team-Work	3.84	0.54	4.56	0.50	10.160	0.001*
Domain Knowledge	3.57	0.44	3.80	0.37	4.128	0.001*
Leadership Skills	4.30	0.56	4.54	0.42	2.686	0.008*
Managerial Skills	4.27	0.51	4.50	0.44	2.822	0.005*
Social Skills	4.26	0.59	4.55	0.50	3.089	0.003*
Values	4.12	0.56	4.57	0.48	5.036	0.001*
Personal Grooming	3.89	0.63	4.59	0.47	7.164	0.001*
<b>Combined Factor</b>	4.21	0.41	4.41	0.33	3.099	0.002*

\*Significant at 5% level

The summary Independent ‘t’ test was used to ascertain the views of MBA Graduates and Employers with respect to factors that augments employability.

The results were obtained by comparing the responses of MBA Graduates and Employers on select factors to make the gap analysis and it was observed that the calculated t-test value is more than the standard table value of 1.96 at 5% level and also the p-value is less than the standard alpha value of 5% (p-value < 0.05) for all the select factors as listed above. Hence it is observed that all select factors were significant from employability gap analysis perspective.

Therefore, the **null hypothesis** “There is no significant gap between employer’s expectation and acquired skill sets of MBA Graduates” is **rejected** and the **alternate hypothesis** “There is a significant gap between employer’s expectation and acquired skill sets of MBA Graduates” is **accepted** based on the significant outcome of the test statistics for all the factors as listed in the above table.

**Testing of Hypotheses - To Ascertain The Need of Placement Training/Skill Development Activities of Tier-2 and Tier-3 City colleges of Karnataka for better employability**

➤ **H<sub>01</sub>**: There is no significant need of placement training/skill development activities for MBA Graduates for better employability of Tier-2 and Tier-3 City colleges of Karnataka for better employability

➤ **H<sub>a1</sub>**: There is a significant need of placement training/skill development activities for MBA Graduates for better employability of Tier-2 and Tier-3 City colleges of Karnataka for better employability

**Table-1.2 One-Sample Test for Placement Officers' rating on Various Skills for MBA Graduates**

Factor Name	One-Sample Test					
	Test Value = 3					
	t-test	df	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Lower					Upper	
Communication Skills	30.540	73	0.001*	1.59459	1.4905	1.6987
Team-Work	26.244	73	0.001*	1.56757	1.4485	1.6866
Domain Knowledge	16.609	73	0.001*	.90541	.7748	1.0140
Leadership Skills	16.383	73	0.001*	1.27703	1.1217	1.4324
Managerial Skills	23.528	73	0.001*	1.42230	1.3018	1.5428
Social Skills (Attitude)	25.530	73	0.001*	1.52703	1.4078	1.6462
Values	33.576	73	0.001*	1.63007	1.5333	1.7268
Personal Grooming	27.391	73	0.001*	1.66667	1.5454	1.7879
<b>Combined Factor</b>	29.312	73	0.001*	1.44883	1.3503	1.5473

The one sample t-test results for all factors along with the combined factor indicates that the calculated t-test value is more than the standard table value of 1.74 at 5% level and also the p-value is less than the standard alpha value of 5% (p-value < 0.05), further the mean difference lies between the lower and upper bounds as observed in the above table. Therefore, **the null hypothesis** “There is no significant need of placement training/skill development activities for MBA Graduates for better employability” **is rejected** and the **alternate hypothesis** “There is a significant need of placement training/skill development activities for MBA Graduates for better employability” **is accepted** based on the significant outcome of the test statistics.

**IV. Conclusion**

The outcome of this paper highlights that there is an apparent ‘skill gap’ between the skills possessed by MBA graduates of Tier-2 and Tier-3 MBA schools and the requirements of the world of work.

Secondly, the inference drawn when compared to findings of Alumni MBA Graduates and the Employers on different skill for employability disclose many facts Table-1.0. With reference to the perception of communication skill though MBA graduates rated it high but when compared to Employers’ perception on this skill it was not enough. Same goes along with other skills / competencies like the Team-Work, Domain Knowledge, Leadership Skills, Managerial skills, Social Skills Interpersonal Skills, Values and Personal Grooming. This ensures that there is a Gap between what is expected by the employers and what skills are possessed by the MBA Graduate. The summary Independent ‘t’ test (Table-1.1) also ascertains that there is a gap. Therefore, students need to begin very early in preparing for Higher Education MBA program and MBA graduates should be realistic about their roles for which their MBA program will qualify them. Here the Institutions / Universities have to support providing needful information relevant to the career options that one opts for.

Third, the most essential skills as this study explores for the employability of MBA graduates are: Communication Skills, Team-Work, Leadership Skills, Social Skills Interpersonal Skills, Values and Personal Grooming as they were rated on very high side by both the Employers and Training and Placement Officers. What we infer from this exploration is that they are Generic Skills and the literature of ‘employability’ concentrates on stressing more on Generic skills then technical skills. As many researchers’ view is that technical skills can be taught by giving training at later stage but generic skills should be existing in a candidature for successful employment and career progression.

Furthermore, though theoretically MBA graduates were aware of ‘Essential Skills for employment’ yet they fell short when compared with the expectations of the employers. Therefore there need to be some transformation in MBA program, of Tier-2 and Tier-3 colleges, that is, instead of merely focusing on theoretical aspects - students should be trained on soft skills, experiential learning, action learning, Personal grooming and building of Social Skills (Interpersonal Skills) so that the students can match the expectations of current business world. Thus there is need of placement training/skill development activities for MBA Graduates of Tier-2 and Tier-3 city colleges - for better employability.

The ultimate conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that employers foresee: As soon as MBA graduates enter the workplace they have to 'hit the ground running'. Therefore MBA program needs to prepare holistic development of a student for the world of work.

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