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**Published and Printed by:** Institute for Social and Economic Change  
Dr V K R V Rao Road, Nagarabhavi Post,  
Bangalore - 560072, Karnataka, India.

**ISEC Working Paper No. 581**

June 2024

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ISBN 978-93-93879-79-0

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The Institute for Social and Economic Change,  
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Working Paper Series Editor: **Sobin George**

# EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTION OF SKILLS AND LEARNING MISMATCH OF MBA GRADUATES IN BANGALORE

Dinu Raj R<sup>1</sup> and Reimeingam Marchang<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

*The mismatch between skills and learning has been an area of academic interest in India. This study focuses on the skill and learning mismatch prevailing among MBA graduates in the city of Bangalore. The employer's perceptions of the MBA graduates' skill possession are captured in this study and also consider the required skills by the MBA graduates that the employers are looking for. The data was collected from the employers through questionnaires. The MBA programme, its curriculum, and syllabus are taken into consideration to bring in a few recommendations. The need and importance of these issues are to be inculcated in the minds of the MBA graduates so that they can work on their area of improvement and also the MBA institutions and universities to bring in the necessary changes in the curriculum and monitoring the implementations of these changes in the institutions and Universities. This will be a win-win situation for the graduates and for the employers as per their requirements.*

**Keywords:** Skill and learning mismatch, employers, MBA graduates, issues, required skill, possessed skill, syllabus and curriculum

## Introduction

Learning and skills mismatch is a discrepancy between the skills that are sought by employers and the skills that are possessed by individuals through classroom learning. It is a mismatch between skills supplied and required by the employers for the jobs. This means that education, learning and training are not providing the skills demanded in the labour market, or that the economy does not create jobs that correspond to the skills of individuals (ILO, 2020). In today's competitive business landscape, employers across various industries prioritise specific skills tailored to their unique operational requirements and if these requirements are not met then it affects employability, particularly for MBA graduates. This is what exactly has come across in this paper by analysing the perception of skill sets required by the employers and the skill sets acquired by the MBA graduates in Bangalore. The literature indicates that learning mismatch is a significant issue affecting employability and needs to be addressed (Albert *et al*, 2021, Senarath & Patabendige, 2014, Erti & Suharti, 2018, Mishra, 2014, Susaeta *et al*, 2013). This mismatch, along with issues such as lack of communication, soft skills, leadership, strategic thinking, analytical and problem-solving abilities, adaptability and flexibility, social networking, and interpersonal skills, are highlighted as major concerns. These issues are detailed in the literature review section, which frames the objective of this study to examine the learning mismatch among MBA graduates in Bangalore.

Both secondary and primary data are used in this study and a sample of 50 employers is drawn through snowball sampling method. The data provided offers valuable insights into the skill

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Acknowledgements: The paper is part of the ongoing PhD thesis at ISEC. The authors would like to thank the unknown reviewers for their comments.

preferences of employers in four distinct types of industries such as Information Technology (IT), Manufacturing (MFG), Factory, and Entrepreneurs. These data are analysed with a simple descriptive percentage method. This study aims to examine and critically assess the skills and learning mismatch within each sector, highlighting the requirement of employers, the implications for MBA professionals and enhance their employability. This study corroborates the findings of similar literature, as elaborated in the discussion section. It reveals that there is a skill and learning mismatch among MBA graduates, highlighting a critical need to address this issue. This mismatch significantly impacts the employability of MBA graduates in Bangalore.

## **Literature Review**

This section reviews the literature on communication skills, soft skills, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, analytical problem-solving, strategic thinking, adaptability, flexibility, social networks, and learning mismatches to form the basis for this study and to examine the issues of employability of MBA graduates.

Communication is the process by which information is exchanged between individuals or groups and is a fundamental aspect of human interaction. Several theories underpin our understanding of communication. Shannon and Weaver's (1948) model, one of the earliest and most influential, describes communication as a linear process involving a sender, message, medium, receiver, and noise. Another significant theory is Berlo's (1960) SMCR model, focusing on the source, message, channel, and receiver. It underlines the importance of the communicator's skills, knowledge, and attitudes in shaping effective communication. These foundational theories offer a framework for understanding the complexities of communication processes. Communication can take various forms, with verbal and non-verbal being the primary modes. Verbal communication involves spoken or written language, while non-verbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. Mehrabian (1972) suggested that non-verbal cues play a significant role in communication, particularly in conveying emotions and attitudes. And the same is required by the MBA graduates to be employable.

Cultural dimensions that impact communication are identified by Hofstede (1980), including individualism vs. collectivism and high-context vs. low-context cultures. These differences can affect how people interpret messages and respond to communication. Noise, as mentioned earlier, is another common challenge. It can be physical (background noise), semantic (ambiguity in language), or psychological (prejudices or biases). These factors can disrupt communication and lead to miscommunication or incomplete understanding (Klopf, 1991) and this is particularly true in the virtual jobs that MBA graduates in which they have to attend calls of clients and many times virtual meetings are scheduled. In business, communication is crucial for effective leadership, teamwork, and customer relations and MBA graduates ought to have good communication skills to lead the team and maintain healthy customer relations. Goleman (1995) introduced the concept of emotional intelligence, emphasising the importance of empathy and interpersonal skills in communication. Effective leaders must be able to communicate their vision and build relationships with stakeholders. In education, communication plays a central role in teaching and learning. GMAC's (2020) report states that communication is a very crucial factor for MBA graduates and will always remain important. This study

also corroborates highly with all that the literature says and even today communication is one of the major skills that is lacking among MBA graduates in Bangalore. Effective communication is particularly crucial as it enables managers to convey ideas, influence stakeholders, and foster collaboration within teams (Rao, 2014). The next focus for MBA graduates' employability is soft skills, leadership and interpersonal skills.

Soft skills are those talents which a person builds through experience unlike those which are learnt in some crash course or subjects in the classroom (Kaplan, 2023). Management graduates are increasingly valued for their soft skills, including communication, teamwork, and interpersonal abilities (Shirina, 2019). According to Jaques and Clement (1994), Leadership is that process in which one person sets the purpose or direction for one or more persons and gets them to move along together with him or her and with each other in that direction with competence and full commitment, and Strategic thinking is a mental process which involves creativity and observation to make a concrete pace in the market (Halevy, 2016; Mintzberg, 1994b). Employers seek management graduates with strong leadership capabilities and strategic thinking skills (Shirina, 2019). Leadership skills enable MBA graduates to inspire and guide teams, drive change, and foster innovation within organisations which boosts their employability. According to Goleman (1995), interpersonal skills form a core component of emotional intelligence, enabling individuals to understand and manage their emotions while interacting effectively with entrepreneurs. In professional settings, these skills are essential for teamwork, leadership, and customer relations. Research by Riggio and Lee (2007) emphasises that strong interpersonal skills contribute to better teamwork, higher job satisfaction, and improved productivity. Employees with well-developed interpersonal skills are more likely to build positive relationships with colleagues and navigate workplace conflicts successfully. The MBA graduates are required to possess multiple skills which also include analytical problem-solving and strategic thinking.

Analytical problem-solving is the process of moving toward a goal when the path to that is uncertain, it is one of the significant nature of how human beings live their lives (Martinez, 1998). Management graduates are expected to possess analytical and problem-solving skills to address complex business challenges (Shirina, 2019). Analytical skills enable managers to analyse data, extract insights, and make data-driven decisions to optimise business processes and enhance performance. Furthermore, strong problem-solving abilities empower managers to identify the root causes of issues, develop innovative solutions, and mitigate risks effectively (Bhagwan and Purohit, 2021). Moreover, strategic thinking allows managers to anticipate market trends, identify opportunities, and make informed decisions to achieve long-term business objectives (Halevy, 2016). The next focus is towards adaptability and flexibility.

Nowadays, MBA graduates are expected to be more adaptable and flexible as demanded by employers. Adaptability is the ability to accept whatever comes such as any change, adapt, and sometimes adjust to the various factors or environments and situations Nakib (2010). As per the Indeed editorial team (2023), flexibility is the ability to compromise and negotiate, in certain situations. In today's dynamic business environment, employers value management graduates who demonstrate adaptability and flexibility (Shirina, 2019). Adaptability allows management graduates to thrive in changing circumstances, embrace new technologies, and pivot strategies to meet evolving market

demands. Similarly, flexibility enables management graduates to navigate uncertainty, adjust to unforeseen challenges, and capitalise on emerging opportunities (Bhagwan and Purohit, 2021). These skills are often interconnected as effective teamwork requires interpersonal skills like communication, trust-building, and adaptability (West, 2004). All these skills enhance the employability of MBA graduates. The next focus for the employability of MBA graduates is social networks.

Social networks play a crucial role in facilitating job searches. Granovetter's (1973) seminal work on the "strength of weak ties" suggests that weak ties connections with acquaintances and distant contacts can be more valuable in a job search than strong ties, such as close friends and family. This is because weak ties tend to connect individuals to broader networks, providing access to new information and opportunities. The rise of professional networking platforms like LinkedIn has transformed the job search process. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), these platforms enable users to create professional profiles, connect with entrepreneurs in their industry, and showcase their skills and experience. LinkedIn has become a primary resource for recruiters and employers seeking talent and MBA graduates are nowadays advised to increase their LinkedIn connection to ease their job search. Research by Lin (2001) supports this idea, highlighting the resources accessible through social networks significantly impact job searches and career success. Social networks can provide job seekers with information about job openings, referrals, recommendations, and even direct access to hiring managers. These connections can be instrumental in helping MBA graduates find job opportunities that are not advertised publicly.

Social networks can significantly impact employment opportunities, particularly for those who face barriers to traditional job-search methods and this is commonly seen in MBA graduates from rural backgrounds. Individuals with extensive social networks may have greater access to employment opportunities and may benefit from referrals and recommendations. In a study on labour markets, Jackson (2019) found that social networks often contribute to labour market segmentation, where individuals with stronger networks have access to higher-quality jobs and more significant career advancement opportunities. Ragins and Kram (2007) found that mentorship and relationships within professional networks can positively impact career development, providing guidance, support, and advocacy. Sponsorship, where a senior professional refers a junior colleague, can open doors to career opportunities that might otherwise be inaccessible. By leveraging social networks effectively, job seekers can expand their opportunities and advance their careers, while employers can identify and attract top talent and this in turn corroborates with my study. It works well with the employers as they know the referee and are associated with them which the employers opined in the primary field survey of this study (2023) that this will also reduce their risk of a bit long procedure of the candidate verification before offering them the job in their company. The lack of all these skills, which are required by employers, affects the employability of MBA graduates because of their learning and skill mismatch.

The learning mismatch stated by Senarath and Patabendige (2014) and Asai *et al*, (2020), found in their study that there are two types of learning mismatch one is a vertical mismatch and the other is horizontal mismatch. Vertical mismatch is the one which happens due to over-education and under-education and at the same time horizontal mismatch happens when the skills that the graduates possess according to their education do not match for getting the job. This study focuses on the

horizontal mismatch that MBA graduates possess. Albert *et al* (2021) also talk about the learning mismatch of the graduates and its impact on future professional development and also focus on their willingness for job mobility, increasing their efficiency and employability skills. Erti and Suharti (2018) in their study say that there is a learning mismatch, and this can be resolved by the adapting learning organisation method, so that it would improve productivity and also help in enhancing competitiveness in the market. Mishra (2014) states that there is a huge mismatch in India and the graduates are not employable as they could not match the industry standards. She insists on the labour market information system in which the government can take initiative and bring all the stakeholders such as trainers, certified agencies, content providers, graduates and employers into one single platform of job matching.

There is a learning mismatch which can be dealt with by the government policies on vocational education, career counselling, bringing awareness on entrepreneurship and simulating the industrial model in management education as stated in (Susaeta *et al*, 2013). Hoon & Bills (2021) say that there is a learning mismatch and it is because of the changing trend in the job market, and it is mostly found where there is no stratified educational system. They also stated that there should be some financial assistance to those management institutions to encourage them to create graduates in a way that they could match the needs of the job market and can fully utilise their competencies and should have a proper formulation of education framework.

The employers expect that as soon as MBA graduates enter the plant, they have to hit the ground running. The MBA programme needs to prepare holistic development and recommends training, social networking, alumni networking, and internship programmes for bridging the gap in employability of fresh MBA graduates in Karnataka (Bhagwan and Purohit (2021). The most critical aspect set up is that there's always a gap in management graduates and employers which needs not only skill updation, but a complete change in strategy of institutes as to how they approach pupil placements and the applicability of the part of MBA graduates, faculties, placement officers and recruiters (Erti and Suharti, 2018). Mishra (2014) tried to understand the issues and challenges faced by MBA graduates and the reasons for the large number of employable management graduates. This study has made a sincere attempt to address these issues of the management graduates and academic community to get advantaged by the outgrowth of their employability.

## **Skills Required by Employers and the Skills Acquired by MBA Graduates: A Critical Analysis**

Table 1.1 shows the demand and supply gap prevailing in the market, the demand of the employers and the supply of MBA graduates in different industries such as IT (Information Technology), Factories, MFG (Manufacturing Industry) and Entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are those who run their own businesses. According to Castagna and Biglow (2021), Information Technology is the use of any computers, storage, networking, and other physical devices, infrastructures and processes to create, process, store, secure, and exchange all forms of electronic data. The commercial use of IT includes both technology and telecommunications. Aglodia (2023) says that Manufacturing is an industry that converts raw materials or semi-finished goods into finished goods or a new product. According to the

Factories Act, 1948, section 2, factory means any premises including the precincts thereof, whereon 10 or more workers are working or were working on any day of the preceding 12 months, whereon 20 or more workers in any part of which manufacturing process is being carried on but does not include a mine subject to the operations, a mobile unit belonging to the armed forces, railway running shed or restaurant or eating place. The entrepreneur, according to Hayes *et al* (2024), an entrepreneur is an individual who creates a new business, bearing most of the risks and enjoying most of the rewards. The process of setting up a business is known as Entrepreneurship.

**Table 1.1: Distribution (%) of skills required by employers and possessed by MBA graduates in Bangalore**

Skills Required by Employers and Acquired by MBA Graduates	Employers (Required Skills)				MBA Graduates (Possessed Skills)			
	Type of Industry				Type of Industry			
	IT %	MFG %	Factory %	Entrepreneurs %	IT %	MFG %	Factory %	Entrepreneurs %
Soft skills	70	40	100	66	43	40	100	62
Communication skills	100	100	100	100	20	40	0	16
Social network	97	100	100	92	54	20	100	85
Task quality	40	60	0	58	23	0	0	23
Punctuality & efficiency	57	100	100	31	80	80	50	85
Leadership	17	0	0	31	16	20	0	15
Analytical & problem solving	10	20	50	15	17	20	0	38
Interpersonal	67	80	50	54	20	40	0	16
Adaptability & Flexibility	7	0	0	0	27	0	0	15
All Skills Average	<b>52</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>60</b>

**Source:** Primary Data (2023 Aug-Sept, Bangalore)

### **All Skill-Based Analysis on the Different Industry Requirements and its Comparison with its Supply of MBA Graduates**

The data presented in Table 1.1 provides a comparison between the skills needed by employers in different industries (IT, manufacturing, factory, and entrepreneurs) and the skills possessed by MBA graduates. Communication skills are the most significant gap between employers' expectations and MBA graduates' capabilities. While employers across all industries demand high levels of communication skills (100 percent across the board), the actual possession of these skills among MBA graduates has a high mismatch. The IT sector, for example, sees a drastic mismatch: while 100 percent of employers demand strong communication skills, only 20 percent of them opine that MBA graduates meet this criterion. Similarly, the manufacturing sector also exhibits a significant gap, with only 40 percent of employers opining that MBA graduates possess communication skills. However, 100 percent of employers in this sector require this skill. In the factory sector, there is a 100 percent mismatch: all employers demand communication skills, but none of them feel that MBA graduates possess them. In the entrepreneur sector, the supply is just 16 percent according to employers' opinions, despite 100 percent of them requiring the same skill. There is a huge gap of 80 percent in IT, 60 percent in

manufacturing, 100 percent in the factory, and 84 percent in the entrepreneur sector. This stark disparity indicates a critical area for improvement in MBA education, where communication skills must be given more attention as stated by Mehrabian (1972); Hofstede (1980); Goleman (1995) and GMAC (2020) report,. The study corroborates with the literature and also plays a crucial part in the employability of MBA graduates in Bangalore. This gap suggests that MBA programmes may not be adequately addressing communication training, a key component of employability.

Social networking with alumni is the second largest demanded skill by employers which is 97 percent in IT, 100 percent each in the manufacturing industry and factory, and 92 percent in entrepreneurs. However, the supply, as per employers' opinion, is highly mismatched in IT with 43 percent, 80 percent in manufacturing, 7 percent in entrepreneurship, only the factory sector matches this skill requirement. The literature of Lin (2001), Boyd and Ellison (2007) and Jackson (2019) and Ragins and Kram (2007) corroborate this and emphasise the importance of networking for employability and how it helps junior colleagues by opening the doors of career opportunities that might otherwise be inaccessible. At the time of the survey among MBA graduates (2018) also, many graduates shared their stories of how social networking helped them in many ways. Most of it was friends and alma mater which actually helps the graduates to groom themselves according to the market demand and also many times have referred them for jobs in their companies they work and the task quality is another area where employers' expectations and MBA graduates' capabilities differ. Employers in the IT sector expect a high task quality of 40 percent, but the employers opine that only 23 percent of MBA graduates meet this requirement with a skill gap of 17 percent. In manufacturing, the expectation for task quality is 60 percent, yet the employers express a full mismatch in MBA graduates and in the entrepreneur sector at 58 percent. However, as per employers' opinion, only 23 percent of MBA graduates possess this skill having a skill gap of 35%. This discrepancy suggests that MBA programmes may not be effectively preparing students to meet industry standards for task quality. Leadership skills also exhibit a considerable gap where the employers require 17 percent in IT and 31 percent in entrepreneur, manufacturing and factory sector employers opined that there is no need of this skill. However, the IT and entrepreneur sectors see a skill gap of 1 percent and 16 percent respectively. At the same time, there is oversupply in manufacturing by 20 percent where there is no demand for this skill as per the employer's opinion. The IT sector, for example, shows a need for leadership skills at 17 percent which is much less compared to the other skillset contradicts the literature that the lack of leadership skills among MBA graduates may point to a need for more leadership development and training within MBA programmes and the same is corroborating with Halevy, 2016; Mintzberg, 1994b, Roberts *et al*, (2018)'s opinion. The study has come up with the reality check that is needed for MBA graduates and MBA institutions on how important it is to groom the graduates according to the needs of the market demand. This is especially critical for those pursuing roles that require leading teams and managing projects. It can also be because of sample bias as I have taken the sample of Tier II and private management institutions so that the study could get the real employability requirement of the MBA graduates as the employers from these institutions do not demand much leadership skills as there will be no much leading tasks that will be given to them initially. It takes some time for the employers to give such tasks to these MBA graduates after they prove themselves in their ability at the workplace.

This gap suggests that MBA programmes may not be providing enough opportunities for students to develop and practice leadership skills, which are crucial in many business roles. Punctuality and efficiency are skills where employers have expressed that MBA graduates perform relatively well compared to employer expectations, particularly in the IT and entrepreneur sectors. In the IT sector, 57 percent of employers expect punctuality and efficiency, while employers opine that 80 percent of MBA graduates demonstrate these skills. There is an oversupply of this skill by 23 percent. Similarly, the employers in the entrepreneur sector feel a high level of punctuality and efficiency among MBA graduates is 85 percent over the required 31 percent with an excess supply of 54 percent. Meanwhile, manufacturing and factory sectors expect 100 percent each but only 80 percent and 50 percent of employers opine that MBA graduates possess this skill with a skill gap of 20 percent in manufacturing and 50 percent in the factory sector. This alignment indicates that MBA programmes may be successful in instilling a sense of discipline and efficiency in their graduates, especially the IT and entrepreneurship sectors, which is also stated in the recent Economic Times article by Bhattacharya (2024).

Interpersonal skills and analytical and problem-solving skills are areas with mixed results. Employers in the IT sector require high levels of interpersonal skills as 67 percent of the employers opine that interpersonal skills are required for labour employability. However, there is a supply shortage of this skill as only 20 percent of the employers expressed that the MBA graduates possessed the same skill which has a gap of 47 percent. In manufacturing, the expectation is still high which is 80 percent of the employers, but only 40 percent of the employers opine that there is a supply with a gap of 40 percent. In the factory sector, 50 percent of employers require this skill but they express a full mismatch while in the entrepreneur sector, 54 percent of employers require this skill but 16 percent of the employers opine that MBA graduates possess this skill with a skill gap of 23 percent. Interpersonal skills are very important for MBA graduates as they are the future managers and have to interact and deal with a wide range of human resources in an organisation and also outside the organisation. It also corroborates with Goleman (1995), Riggio and Lee (2007) and Davis (1994) who highlight the importance of interpersonal skill in the job and how important is it when the managers deal with all other human resources of the organisation as needed by their job description for the HR specialised MBA graduates. Teamwork is inevitable for all domains irrespective of whichever specialisation the MBA graduates are from, if they have to achieve their targets then they should incorporate interpersonal skills in them. The employers at the time of the survey (2023) were concerned about MBA graduates not focusing on developing interpersonal skills, which actually is indirectly judged by the HR managers and the interviewer at the time of the interview process. In analytical skills, IT and entrepreneur sectors indicate an oversupply of 7 percent and 23 percent respectively. In manufacturing there is no mismatch for this skill at the same time the factory sector indicates a significant mismatch.

The gaps in critical skills such as communication, leadership, and task quality suggest that MBA programmes need to realign their curricula to meet employers' expectations better. The data indicates that while some skills are well covered, entrepreneurs require additional focus and development. MBA programmes should emphasize communication and interpersonal skills, offer leadership training, and provide practical experiences to ensure students are equipped to meet industry standards. Institutions could also consider implementing internships, mentorship programmes, and industry partnerships to

bridge these gaps and offer students real-world experience. By fostering a closer connection between MBA programmes and industry needs, graduates can be better prepared for the demands of the modern business world. The low demand for adaptability among employers might indicate that some sectors are more rigid in their operational processes, while MBA graduates possess a higher degree of flexibility. This discrepancy could suggest that MBA programmes focus on versatility, even if it is not explicitly demanded by employers. The critical analysis of the skills demanded by employers and possessed by MBA graduates reveals significant gaps in several key areas, notably communication, networking, and task quality. To address these gaps, MBA programmes must prioritise practical skills development and establish stronger industry connections. Emphasising communication training, hands-on experiences, and leadership development will help bridge the gap between employer expectations and MBA graduate competencies and all these corroborate with the literature in which the significance of all these skills is very much emphasised for being employable (Shirina, 2019, Jones & Johnson, 2019, Albert *et al*, 2018). This study has also come up with the results of the relevancy of all these skills by the employers' demand but are not complied with the supply of MBA graduates which has severely affected the MBA graduate's employability. Altogether, the data shows significant disparities between employer expectations and the skills possessed by MBA graduates. Addressing these gaps requires a concerted effort to redesign MBA curricula, focusing on critical skills that align with employer needs and ensuring that graduates are well-equipped to succeed in their careers and the same is witnessed in the literature as well.

## **Industry Based Analysis**

### **Information Technology (IT)**

In the IT sector, communication, networking, soft skills and interpersonal skills hold significant importance as 100 percent, 97 percent, 70 percent and 67 percent of employers respectively have expressed these requirements. However, 20 percent, 54 percent, 43 percent and 20 percent of employers opine that MBA graduates possess it. Hence, it has resulted in a wide skill gap of 80 percent, 43 percent, 36 percent and 47 percent respectively. Effective communication facilitates collaboration among diverse teams, while interpersonal skills foster positive working relationships. Additionally, adaptability enables IT professionals to navigate the rapidly changing technologies and evolving project requirements, ensuring flexibility in dynamic work environments as 7 percent of employers require this skill and 27 percent of employers opine skill is oversupplied and the same is the case for analytical and problem-solving skills where 10 percent of the employers feel the requirement of this skill. However, 17 percent of the employers express that MBA graduates possess the same skills. Hence, it has resulted in an oversupply of 7 percent. The data suggests a strong emphasis on soft skills such as communication and interpersonal abilities in the IT sector, reflecting the collaborative nature of IT projects and the importance of effective teamwork. Task quality is required by 40 percent of employers but 23 percent of them feel that it is possessed by MBA graduates with a skill gap of 17 percent. Punctuality is over-supplied by 23 percent, as 80 percent of employers opine that MBA graduates possess it but only 57 percent of employers expressed the required need for this skill. Altogether IT is highlighting the need for a balanced skill set that combines technical expertise with effective communication and adaptability

and this is corroborated by the literature of Rao (2014). This indicates the need for MBA professionals in IT roles to hone their technical proficiency and analytical skills to effectively address complex business challenges and drive strategic decision-making aligned with the organisational objectives with high communication, network, soft skills and interpersonal skills.

### **Manufacturing (MFG)**

In the manufacturing sector, communication, networking, punctuality, interpersonal skills and task quality are highly demanded by employers with 100 percent each in communication, network and punctuality, 80 percent in interpersonal skill, 60 percent in task quality, where 40 percent, 20 percent, 80 percent, and none of the employers express the skill possessed by MBA graduates respectively. Hence, it has resulted in a wide skill gap of 60 percent, 80 percent, 20 percent, and 40 percent in communication, network, punctuality, and interpersonal skills respectively. There is a complete mismatch in task quality. At the same time, employers express no gap in soft skills and analytical skills where the employers required skill and their opinion on the possession of the same skill by the MBA graduates fully matches but they express the oversupply of 20% in leadership which is not at all required by the employers. This corroborates with the literature as mentioned in the recent article in The Economic Times by Bhattacharyya (2024) that most of the manufacturing and FMCG companies are looking more for engineering graduates rather than MBA graduates as the latter lack these skills apart from the general management skills which are very crucial for the employability of MBA graduates.

### **Factory**

The Factory sector shows a high need for soft skills, communication, networking, and punctuality, with the employer's requirement of 100 percent for each skill and a moderate need of 50 percent each for analytical and interpersonal skills. In this 100 percent of the employers opined that MBA graduates possess soft skills, networking and punctuality. As much as 50 percent of the employers express that MBA graduates possess them but none of the employers express that communication skills, analytical skills and interpersonal skills are possessed by MBA graduates. These are very drastic observations on the employability of MBA graduates. However, the data suggests a lower emphasis on task quality, leadership, adaptability and flexibility in the factory sector and it contradicts the literature Shirina (2019) and Bhagwan and Purohith (2021) emphasise the need for leadership, adaptability and flexibility which will definitely help the MBA graduates to be employable.

### **Entrepreneurs**

The entrepreneur category encompasses a diverse range of industries, each with its own unique skill requirements. All employers in this category prioritise communication skills but only 16 percent expressed that MBA graduates possess this skill. Similarly, 92 percent of the employers opined that social networking is required but only 85 percent feel MBA graduates have it while 66 percent feel soft skill is required, however, 62 percent of the employers express that MBA graduates possess this skill. Hence, it has resulted in a huge skill gap of 84 percent in communication, a lower gap of 7 percent in social networking and 4 percent in soft skills, underscoring the importance of effective communication

and networking abilities across diverse business contexts. There is a considerable demand for specific skills among employers such as 58 percent in task quality, 54 percent in interpersonal skills, 31 percent each in punctuality and leadership, and 15 percent in analytical skills. However, 23 percent, 16 percent, 85 percent, 15 percent and 38 percent of the employers respectively express that MBA graduates possess these skills. Hence, it has resulted in a skill gap of 35 percent in task quality, 38 percent in interpersonal skills, 16 percent in leadership, and an oversupply of punctuality by 54 percent and analytical skills by 23 percent. However, the relatively lower importance placed on analytical and problem-solving skills and punctuality is oversupplied.

## **Discussion**

The learning and skill mismatch are found in the analysis and it is very important to address this entire mismatch. Khare (2014) has evidently said and many articles by Bhattacharya (2024), Mainga *et al*, (2022) while many recent reports in The Economic Times have repeatedly highlighted the mismatch of MBA graduates' employability. The study's significant finding reveals a critical gap between the skills employers demand and the skills that MBA graduates bring to the job market. Employers' prioritise competencies like communication, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and flexibility. However, MBA graduates often lack these crucial skills, indicating a disconnect between academic curricula and industry needs. There is a dire need to bring in some crash course or collaborative efforts by the MBA institutions and the corporate role must be made mandatory in MBA programmes. Universities should also play a major role in revising the syllabus and giving credits to the syllabus by considering the expectations of employers from MBA graduates. There is some subjects like OB which has several management theories which is a core paper with 4 credits. Either that has to be made as a practical-oriented experience by adding the present market demands or a subject like Managerial Skills should get more credits by enlarging the contents and units in it by enriching the skills demanded by the employers (Bangalore University Syllabus, 2020).

The gap between employers' expectations and the skills of MBA graduates points to a fundamental issue in the design and delivery of MBA programmes. Employers in the contemporary job market require graduates who can communicate effectively, work collaboratively, and adapt to changing circumstances (GMAC, 2021). Yet, MBA programmes tend to focus heavily on theoretical knowledge, with limited emphasis on practical skills. Communication, interpersonal, adaptability, and flexibility skills, critical in real-world business environments, are often not explicitly taught or practised within the MBA curriculum. The traditional MBA curriculum is heavily theory-based, with a significant portion dedicated to concepts, models, and case studies (Brown *et al*, 2004). While these theoretical foundations are essential, they may not be sufficient to equip graduates with the practical skills needed for success in the workplace. This mismatch creates a situation where graduates excel academically but struggle to meet the demands of employers in terms of communication and adaptability. Communication skills are consistently ranked among the top attributes employers seek in MBA graduates. This encompasses verbal and written communication, presentation skills, and active listening (Rao, 2014). The study's findings suggest that many MBA graduates lack these skills, which can hinder their ability to secure jobs and perform effectively in business roles. Employers value candidates who can articulate their ideas,

engage in meaningful dialogue, and work effectively in teams. When MBA graduates fall short in these areas, it reflects poorly on their readiness for the job market. Interpersonal skills are equally important, as they enable graduates to build relationships, manage conflicts, and collaborate with colleagues (Goodwin, 2019). Employers need graduates who can work effectively in diverse teams and adapt to different communication styles. The study indicates a significant gap in interpersonal skills among MBA graduates, suggesting that business schools should focus more on fostering these competencies through group projects, teamwork exercises, and practical experiences. Many employers at the time of the survey opined the same as they said that the graduates lack or sometimes do not even give any importance to interpersonal skills.

This study has found that the skills which employers demand in high proportion are significantly low in the supply side of MBA graduates. Especially communication, interpersonal, adaptability and flexibility skills are inbound which no proper subject deals with in detail but are abundant with many theories and book-based studies which have covered 90% of the syllabus (Bangalore University syllabus, 2020). There is a need for quick action which has to be taken to bring this awareness among MBA graduates as well so that only scoring in the examinations is not their sole target. They have to groom themselves to the demands of the job market. To address the skill gap, MBA programmes must undergo a fundamental shift in focus. A Times of India (2015) article and many entrepreneurs corroborate with the above stating the traditional emphasis on theoretical knowledge must be complemented by practical skill development. This requires a curriculum that balances theory with hands-on experiences, such as internships, role-playing, and real-world business projects (Panda, 2015). MBA programmes should also engage with industry professionals to ensure that their curricula align with employer expectations. By establishing partnerships with businesses and industry leaders, business schools can create opportunities for students to gain practical experience and develop the skills required by employers. Additionally, mentorship programmes can connect MBA students with experienced professionals who can provide guidance and help them build their communication and interpersonal skills (Chinnadurai, 2019).

The study's findings highlight a significant gap between employer demands and the skills possessed by MBA graduates. To bridge this gap, MBA programmes must focus on developing practical skills that align with industry needs. Communication, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and flexibility are critical for success in the modern business world, and business schools must ensure their graduates are equipped with these competencies. By reimagining the MBA curriculum to include more practical experiences and industry partnerships, business schools can better prepare graduates for the demands of the job market. This shift in focus will benefit not only the graduates but also the employers who rely on MBA talent to drive their businesses forward.

## **Conclusion**

There is a significant learning and skills gap between employer demands and the abilities of MBA graduates in areas such as communication, social networking, interpersonal skills, soft skills, task quality, punctuality, leadership, analytical problem-solving, adaptability and flexibility. The diverse needs of different sectors must be prioritised. Simply reimagining the MBA curriculum and incorporating more

practical experiences may not suffice to address these underlying issues. The curriculum changes alone are unlikely to bridge the gap effectively. Additionally, the structure and resources of Tier II and small private MBA institutions contribute to this mismatch, necessitating a more comprehensive approach to problem solving. A comprehensive approach should include informing students about the required skills, involving industry and corporate practitioners, fostering industry partnerships, promoting faculty development, implementing mentorship programmes, encouraging cross-institution collaboration, and addressing resource constraints. By adopting these strategies, business schools can better prepare their graduates for the demands of the job market and ensure that MBA programmes provide consistent and high-quality education across all tiers.

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