

Most of the 2,000 MBA schools in India are running on 20-40 pc placements. During and after campus, students appear in three-six interviews but fail to get a decent job due to lack of skills. Make yourself employable...

### Nishant Saxena

**A**RE you an MBA looking for a job? Have you applied in multiple companies but don't seem to get selected? If you are repeatedly meeting a roadblock in your quest to hunt for that dream job, you may be unemployable!

The harsh reality is that most of the 2,000 MBA schools in India are running on 20-40 per cent placements. And during and after campus, most MBA students appear in at least three-six interviews but often fail to get a decent job. Why is this happening?

Of course, there are larger issues of student input quality (anyone who can spend Rs 5 lakh can get an MBA/PGDM degree without any entry level selection criteria) and education quality (most run-of-the-mill colleges spend less than 5 per cent of their revenues on actual academic delivery!), but that doesn't help students who have already enrolled. Here is what these students can do now:

To find out why our MBAs are not employable, Elements Akademia, a chain of finishing schools, conducted an intensive nation-wide research amongst the CEOs, HR heads of more than 40 companies from various verticals, 60 MBA / PGDM colleges across 12 cities and more than 3000 students and MBA aspirants.

This research brought us face-to-face with some startling revelations. It showed that the current education system in India has an inherent flaw in that it often offers degrees but not jobs. The industry needs

garh at the PHD Chambers of Commerce. Our research – and inputs from industry and academia representatives in the seminar – suggests that the gap between industry requirement and academic curriculum was mostly in the nine areas of:

- ◆ **Attitude:** Often students say no to target based jobs, or have unrealistic first salary expectations or have pre conceived notions about sectors like Insurance.

- ◆ **Big picture thinking:** Most students from Tier II Business schools are unable to grasp big picture business issues.

- ◆ **Business communication:** English is usually very poor, since most students hail from Tier II and III towns.

- ◆ **Grooming/personality/confidence:** Due to lack of exposure, students find it difficult to fully articulate their views and are often not presentable to clients.

- ◆ **Corporate exposure:** Knowledge of what's happening in the industry and understanding of real world corporate requirement is missing.

- ◆ **Domain knowledge:** Practical skills in Marketing, Finance, IT, Operations and a deep knowledge of core concepts is completely missing.

- ◆ **Sales and customer service:** While most entry-level jobs involve either Sales or Customer Service, most students lack practical, street smart skills on it.

- ◆ **Basic managerial skills:** Critical skills like Accountability of results, ability to work in teams, openness to feedback etc. are missing.

- ◆ **Ethics:** Companies immediately reject

# Missing elements in an MBA



MBA colleges need to adopt these.

Similarly, attitude change happens but requires understanding of the brain-based learning model. Our brain's Limbic system – responsible for behavioural changes – learns only through constant motivation, extended practice and regular feedback. So a 10 minute story telling based pedagogy by an inspirational faculty – when continued every day for six months – can bring about a change. But not one off pedantic lecturing criticising the students.

dream job, you may be unemployable!

The harsh reality is that most of the 2,000 MBA schools in India are running on 20-40 per cent placements. And during and after campus, most MBA students appear in at least three-six interviews but often fail to get a decent job. Why is this happening?

Of course, there are larger issues of student input quality (anyone who can spend Rs 5 lakh can get an MBA/PGDM degree without any entry level selection criteria) and education quality (most run-of-the-mill colleges spend less than 5 per cent of their revenues on actual academic delivery!), but that doesn't help students who have already enrolled. Here is what these students can do now:

To find out why our MBAs are not employable, Elements Akademia, a chain of finishing schools, conducted an intensive nation-wide research amongst the CEOs, HR heads of more than 40 companies from various verticals, 60 MBA / PGDM colleges across 12 cities and more than 3000 students and MBA aspirants.

This research brought us face-to-face with some startling revelations. It showed that the current education system in India has an inherent flaw in that it often offers degrees but not jobs. The industry needs certain skills beyond the AICTE/University curriculum before it can hire a candidate. However, the academia continues to teach what it has been teaching for many years (70% of MBA faculty in India have little or no quality industry experience) versus teaching the key skills industry needs.

This results in today's classic paradox: Corporate world continues to have jobs but keeps complaining that there are not enough "employable" candidates. And students keep complaining of lack of jobs despite degrees. Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink...

Elements has been trying to organize seminars on this subject in many Tier II cities where this gap is widest and we recently organised a similar one in Chand-

get based jobs, or have unrealistic first salary expectations or have pre conceived notions about sectors like Insurance.

◆ **Big picture thinking:** Most students from Tier II Business schools are unable to grasp big picture business issues.

◆ **Business communication:** English is usually very poor, since most students hail from Tier II and III towns.

◆ **Grooming/personality/confidence:** Due to lack of exposure, students find it difficult to fully articulate their views and are often not presentable to clients.

◆ **Corporate exposure:** Knowledge of what's happening in the industry and understanding of real world corporate requirement is missing.

◆ **Domain knowledge:** Practical skills in Marketing, Finance, IT, Operations and a deep knowledge of core concepts is completely missing.

◆ **Sales and customer service:** While most entry-level jobs involve either Sales or Customer Service, most students lack practical, street smart skills on it.

◆ **Basic managerial skills:** Critical skills like Accountability of results, ability to work in teams, openness to feedback etc. are missing.

◆ **Ethics:** Companies immediately reject candidates if they have the slightest doubt on character. But often students try to bluff in interview to act smart.

The good news is that these skills can be taught. But it requires a concerted attempt and a very structured scientific process. For example, on something so basic as English, there is no evidence to suggest that simply hiring an English trainer for two months can actually improve the level of English of MBAs. Some polishing perhaps yes, but the students can still not do intelligent conversations with the hiring companies in English. We require a scientific and rigorous process like the 160 hour English curriculum followed in many top BPOs which is proven to improve spoken English levels by at least 50 per cent on a Nasscom scale.

MBA colleges need to adopt these.

Similarly, attitude change happens but requires understanding of the brain-based learning model. Our brain's Limbic system – responsible for behavioural changes - learns only through constant motivation, extended practice and regular feedback. So a 10 minute story telling based pedagogy by an inspirational faculty – when continued every day for six months – can bring about a change. But not one off pedantic lecturing criticising the students.

When this is done right, results are brilliant. Prof Khurshid Ali, director, Business School of Delhi, and former vice-chancellor of NAAC Accredited A+ grade University of Kashmir, said, "We decided to embed a formal employability course to make all our 400 students more employable. It has been a fantastic experience. In the last confidential survey, 100 per cent of students found their training good or excellent. The commitment of at least 50 per cent improvement in English on Nasscom scale is also unique. 25 per cent training was delivered by IIM alumni or faculty, significantly improving our industry interface".

*(The author is CEO of Elements Akademia and guest faculty at IIM-Lucknow)*

