

**MBA GRADUATES FROM BANGLADESH OPEN UNIVERSITY WITH
EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS: PERSPECTIVES
FROM EMPLOYERS AND STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study to find out the employable skills that companies value in recent MBA graduates and to explore the opinions of BOU MBA graduates on the curriculum for the program. This study used a mixed-methods approach to research, with a descriptive survey and focus group discussions (FGDs) as aspects of the methodology. Data study revealed that different firms observe MBA graduates' employability skills from different angles and with distinct expectations. The most significant conclusions of the research indicate that earning an MBA benefits MBA graduates as well as the companies that employ them. The knowledge and abilities obtained through the process of enrolling in academic courses for the figure degree serve as the basic source of this value. MBA graduates also indicated several other areas in which they may enhance their employability skills regarding the findings.

Keywords: Employability, Master of Business Administration, Employability Skills.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs is increasing globally. Annually, a multitude of students are enrolled in MBA programs in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, it appears that only a select few prestigious universities garner media coverage for their MBA programs. According to The Wall Street Journal, the United States is potentially facing a crisis of unemployment, but the students at Harvard Business School aren't too worried about their job prospects (Korn, 2011). They also pointed out that about 95 percent of the graduating class of 2011 had job offers by the middle of September 2010. Moreover, many theories explicitly connect the importance of education as one of the means of investment in human capital formation that could result in economic development and productivity growth (Janer, Deri, Dio, Marbella, & Ricafort, 2015). Master of Business Administration (MBA) is a program meant for those students who are preparing themselves with the skills and competency in functional areas such as business and business law, accounting and finance, marketing and management, strategic decision-making process, and other matters about societal issues (Meñez, 2014). The goal of the MBA program is to add value to the graduates and provide them with certain competencies to make them better managers and leaders (Baruch, Bell, & Gray, 2005). It has assisted participants in developing basic management and administration skills (Temtime & Mmerek, 2011). This is seen in increased managerial skills, self-confidence, and several aspects of career development (Baruch & Leeming,

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2001) The program must focus on academic development, employment opportunities, and leadership capability (Macatangay, 2013). Several studies have been conducted to determine the potential advantages of obtaining a Master of Business Administration degree, and all of these studies have one benefit in common: an MBA degree helps the success of a firm. On the other hand, there has been a paucity of studies conducted to investigate whether or not MBA graduates and their employers experience a return on investment. The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not MBA graduates and their employers see a return on their time and finances. This was done with the intention of determining whether or not MBA graduates had improved prospects and performance. In addition, one of the key objectives of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program at BOU is to enhance the employability skills of MBA graduates. As a result, it is of the utmost importance to examine the qualities that employers look for in MBA graduates at the entrance level, as well as to investigate the perspectives of BOU MBA graduates regarding the MBA program. To find answers to these research questions, this investigation was carried out.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recently, the concept of employability has become popular. How should one approach employability? There is debate on this issue till the time. In a general sense, employability means having been employed. For example, employability refers to a person's capability of gaining initial employment maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment if required (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). The primary goal of the BOU MBA program is to enhance the employability capabilities of its graduates. It is crucial to examine the current employability capabilities of BOU MBA graduates. Furthermore, it is important to consider the employer's expectations of MBA graduates at the initial stage and evaluate the level of satisfaction among MBA graduates regarding the teaching methods employed in the BOU's MBA program. This literature review aims to provide a rationale for this existing gap.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study's primary goals were to investigate how employers see BOU MBA graduates' employability skills and to ascertain MBA graduates' views of the effectiveness of the present MBA program's instructional strategies in providing graduates with skills that employers find desirable. To achieve this goal there are some specific objectives:

- I. To investigate and comprehend how employers view the employability skills of BOU MBA graduates.
- II. To evaluate how satisfied MBA graduates are with the way the BOU MBA program is currently taught; and
- III. To assess the aspects that go into acquiring employability skills.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research problem has been defined in the above section states that research questions should be developed based on the research problems because research questions always influence the different steps of an investigation (Tomy & Pardede, 2018). That's why the investigation requires to development of the following questions to complete the requirements of the study:

- i) What are the key employability skills that employers perceive as essential for BOU MBA graduates to succeed in today's job market?
- ii) How satisfied are BOU MBA graduates with the teaching methodologies and curriculum of the program about their perceived preparedness for professional roles upon graduation?

iii) What factors and experiences positively impact MBA students' employability skills?

The present status of the employability skills of BOU MBA graduates

Assessing the post-graduation outcomes of students is a fundamental responsibility of all higher education institutions to evaluate the effectiveness of certain academic programs. The concept of employability is multifaceted rather than simplistic, for example, Hillage and Pollard (1998) asserted that employability is a phrase employed in various contexts with diverse interpretations, and it can lack clarity and accuracy as a practical idea. Employability refers to the capacity of a graduate to secure a fulfilling employment opportunity. Employability refers to possessing a specific set of skills, knowledge, understanding, and personal traits that increase the likelihood of an individual selecting and obtaining professions in which they can experience satisfaction and success (Pool & Sewell, 2007). Similarly, Hillage and Pollard (1998) stated that the capacity to move independently within the labor market to achieve potential through long-term work is known as employability. On the other hand, Ghorbani, Esmeili, and Zareian (2022); Minten (2008) said that employability is the creation of skill- and adaptability-rich workforces, in which everyone who can work is urged to acquire the information, abilities, and technological know-how necessary to find and hold down employment for the duration of their working lives. In short, Lankard (1990) stated that personal appearance, interpersonal abilities, and positive attitudes and behaviors are all examples of employability skills. Therefore, since employability is a comprehensive concept, it needs to be defined in the context of Bangladesh. In Bangladesh to present a complete picture of the complicated employability issues, the viewpoints of graduates, employers, and tertiary education providers as stakeholders would need to be solicited (R. Ahmed & Crossman, 2014). Now based on this concept, this study tries to explore the present status of the employability skills of BOU MBA graduates because there is much research in this area (F. Ahmed, Qin, & Aduamoah, 2018) (Ahmed & Crossman, 2014; Milon et al., 2021), however, none of this explores the present status of the employability skills of BOU MBA graduates.

The attributes expected by the employer of MBA graduates at the entry-level

Employability skills are those skills, attributes, and behaviors, e.g., communication skills, problem-solving, organization, and planning, that bridge most disciplines, industries, and employing organizations. They have the greatest impact on the sustained, productive, successful employment of graduates. Gandhi (2013) cited a study on Employability Skills in Management Students- An Industry Perspective and found that students don't possess the required employability skills from the point of view of industries, and hence management institutions should take the necessary steps to improve their pedagogy. Singh and Singh (2008) state that employability is skills required not only to find employment but also to advance within an organization develop one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions. Therefore, the ability of an individual to secure and sustain employment and progress within the workplace, recognizing that different types of employment have different 'employability' requirements. Broadly employability underpins a set of skills, knowledge, and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation(s) to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy (Rae, 2007). In this regard, according to Nawaz and Reddy (2013) enhancing employability skills in management education is considered an important task by all universities and colleges. Again, employability skills required for management graduates are language competency, cognitive skills, functional and people skills, etc. (Zehrer & Mössenlechner, 2009). However, El Mansour and Dean (2016) researched as perceived by employers and university faculty in the fields of Human Resource Development (HRD) for entry-level Graduate Jobs". They found out that there exists a gap between the expected level of industry and the presentation skills level of students. This research also was focused on

this context. Hence, at present it is essential to explore the attributes expected by the employer of MBA graduates at the entry level in the Bangladesh context. There are some studies in this area (R. Ahmed & Crossman, 2014; Akter, 2020) however BOU MBA graduate context study is rare. Hence this study is needed.

Employability concerns for employees and MBA graduates

Employability of the graduates is one of the factors that determine the effectiveness of the delivery of services of an academic institution and its effort to provide quality in all its endeavors, hence, identifying employers' perceptions toward employability is important to determine the strengths and weaknesses of certain curricular offerings (Morley, 2001; Støren & Aamodt, 2010). Educational institutions are expected to prepare students for the employment or practice of a profession (Dewey, 1904; Jusoh, Simun, & Chong, 2011). Thereby, MBA graduates have many job opportunities to be considered in the labor market where the structure of every organization is grounded in business concepts and management principles. Although career options continue to be broader than in many other fields and the acquired skills marketable in just about any industry, new MBAs are entering a tight, competitive job market. U.S. citizens who graduated from two-year MBA programs, moreover, the employment rate was a whopping 95 percent, the highest level in the past five years and up from 91 percent in 2012 (Buenviaje et al., 2016). They are technically capable of handling jobs assigned to them; their skills acquired from the school help them to be productive in their present positions as mostly are frontline employees. They were treated with respect, which gave them a sense of accomplishment. Their behavior in work and quality outputs are acknowledged as their commitment to the attainment of goals. Meanwhile, the study by Menez in 2013 revealed that 96 percent of the MBA graduates of LPU-Batangas are gainfully employed and handled supervisory positions in their respective organizations. Besides, according to Jackson (2009), MBA graduates are consistently expected to add value to an enterprise and ultimately the knowledge economy, entrenched in environmental awareness, social responsibility, and effective diversity management the knowledge and skills acquired from the MBA program provide direct and indirect impact on the graduates in terms of personal and professional growth.

Therefore, investing in advanced education to match the competencies to the demands of the work assignments is necessary. With a growing number of employees, new graduates must be fully equipped with knowledge and skills to be competitive in their respective fields, and the educational attainment of the individual is given great emphasis (Dotong, 2014; Ungui et al., 2014). Students focused on the ongoing development of personal skills such as professional attitude, self-motivation, leadership, and the ability to work in a team (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008). Competencies, skills, and work-related values must always be strengthened since these are very useful to employment (Macatangay, 2013). All of these studies explore the employers' perceptions toward MBA graduate employability from an international perspective and there are very few studies in this area in the context of Bangladesh (R. Ahmed & Crossman, 2014) and most importantly none of the studies had carried out in the context of BOU MBA graduate perspective. Therefore, this study will fill this gap.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-method research design, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative phase involved extensive literature reviews. Following this, the quantitative phase encompassed field research, which involved gathering data from 93 respondents using self-administered and adapted questionnaires (Baruch & Leeming, 2001). Additionally, focus group discussions were conducted with MBA graduates and employers from various organizations to assess the employability status of the School of Business's MBA program at

BOU. The study utilized convenience sampling, a form of non-probabilistic sampling, to select participants.

Sampling, Data Collection, and Data analysis

Due to the lack of comprehensive data, it is extremely difficult to accurately determine the population size of employers and MBA graduates or alumni from the School of Business (SoB). The examination division and the website of Bangladesh Open University (<https://bou.ac.bd/>) were consulted to collect information about the students. In the study, the sample sizes are listed in *Table 1*. The investigation was conducted using a convenience sampling method, which is classified as a non-probabilistic sampling method. During the process of carrying out the survey, a significant amount of effort was put forth to solicit participation from employers and graduates based on interviews and survey participation. As a consequence of this, based on their availability, each individual who fell into either of these two groups was approached for being included. Obtaining a list of MBA grads and alumni from convocation records, employing the snowball approach among alumni, and beginning communication through mobile or email accounts were some of the strategies that were utilized to create contact. Additionally, the list of employers was gathered from MBA graduates/alumni, and direct communication was created with these firms by physical interaction, mobile communication, or email. Using these approaches, the research was able to successfully collect responses from a total of thirteen employers and eighty Master of Business Administration graduates or alumni.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample Stakeholders

| Types of Sampled Stakeholders | Sample size |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| MBA Graduates/ Alumni (SoB) | 80 |
| Employer | 13 |
| Total | 93 |

The instrument was pre-tested to determine its suitability. Twenty MBA graduates and five respectable corporate employers were selected. After pre-testing, changes were made and a Likert scale was created to make the study more accessible and validate the findings. Intervening variables included time management, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, financial abilities, career management, research skills, etc. (Saba, Mahmood, Khalid, & Aslam, 2011). Statements were chosen for the questionnaire to collect dependent and independent variable replies. The results of this questionnaire-based poll show graduates' self-perceptions of the most important MBA course components. Graduates were asked demographic information in the first section of the questionnaire using completion questions. In the second phase of the study, respondents assessed how an MBA had improved their employability and career prospects, including compensation, by improving managerial abilities (Baruch & Leeming, 2001) This evaluation used a Likert scale with 1 indicating no influence and 5 indicating great impact.

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research intended to collect information about the improved abilities of MBA graduates from Bangladesh Open University by using specific questions designed to clarify these abilities and their significance. The most important associated skill categories for evaluating employability are shown in *Table 2*. Knowledge, interpersonal skills, communication skills, and job skills are the most important competencies that are seen to be crucial in a manager's workplace. The findings show that most businesses place a high value on "IT knowledge," along with "job knowledge" and "innovative knowledge." Furthermore, the data indicates that the majority of companies place a high value on all aspects of communication skills, including written, oral, and presenting abilities.

It also shows that the majority of employers place a high value on teamwork abilities, empathy, and adaptability in addition to leadership qualities, motivational abilities, dependability, and an understanding of ethical principles. The results also clearly show that the majority of employers place a high value on all components of work skills-including time management, problem formulation, solving, and decision-making abilities, the capacity to connect theory to practice, discipline, and a sense of responsibility-aside from "judgment."

Table 2: Percentage distribution of employers according to their perception of the relative importance of different skills as required by the employers for successful performance of assigned jobs.

| No. | Dimensions of Quality | Not at all important | Less important | Important | Very Important | Extremely Important |
|--------------------------------|--|----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------|
| A. Knowledge | | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Job knowledge (knowledge of subject matter) | | | 3 (11.55) | 6 (23.1) | 4 (15.4) |
| 2.2 | IT Knowledge | | | 3.5 (13.45) | 2.5 (9.6) | 7 (26.9) |
| 2.3 | Innovative knowledge | | 1 (3.85) | 4 (15.4) | 4.5 (17.3) | 3.5 (13.45) |
| B. Communication Skills | | | | | | |
| 2.4 | Oral communication | | | 1.5 (5.75) | 4 (15.4) | 7.5 (28.85) |
| 2.5 | Written communication | | | .5 (1.9) | 4 (15.4) | 8.5 (32.7) |
| 2.6 | Presentation skills | | | 3.5 (13.45) | 2 (7.7) | 7.5 (28.85) |
| C. Interpersonal Skills | | | | | | |
| 2.7 | Ability to work in teams | | .5 (1.9) | 1 (3.85) | 6 (23.1) | 5.5 (21.15) |
| 2.8 | Leadership | | | 2 (7.7) | 4 (15.4) | 7 (26.9) |
| 2.9 | Empathy | | | 2.5 (9.6) | 6 (23.25) | 4.5 (17.3) |
| 2.10 | Motivation Ability | | .5 (1.9) | 2 (7.7) | 5 (19.29) | 5.5 (21.15) |
| 2.11 | Reliability | | | 1.5 (5.75) | 3.5 (13.45) | 8 (30.75) |
| 2.12 | Appreciation of ethical values | | | 1.5 (5.75) | 3 (11.55) | 8.5 (32.7) |
| 2.13 | Adaptability | | | 1.5 (5.75) | 7 (26.9) | 4.5 (17.3) |
| D. Work Skills | | | | | | |
| 2.14 | Time management skills | | | 1 (3.85) | 2.5 (9.6) | 9.5 (36.55) |
| 2.15 | Judgment | | | 1.5 (5.75) | 7.5 (28.85) | 4 (15.4) |
| 2.16 | Problem formulation, solving, and decision-making skills | | | 2 (7.7) | 4 (15.4) | 7 (26.9) |
| 2.17 | Collecting and analyzing appropriate data | | | 2.5 (9.6) | 5 (19.25) | 5.5 (21.15) |
| 2.18 | Ability to link theory to Practice | | .5 (1.9) | 3.5 (13.45) | 4 (15.4) | 5 (19.55) |
| 2.19 | Discipline | | | .5 (1.9) | 3.5 (13.45) | 9 (34.6) |
| 2.20 | Sense of Responsibility | | | .5 (1.9) | 3 (11.55) | 9.5 (36.55) |

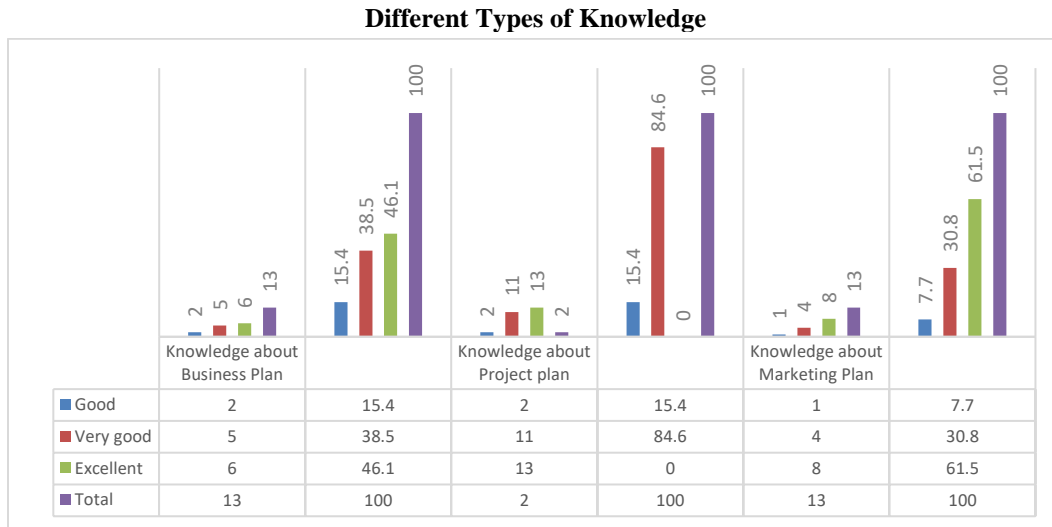


Figure 1. Percentage of different types of theoretical knowledge.

Figure 1 demonstrates that of MBA graduates, 46.1% have excellent theoretical knowledge of the business plan, 38.5% have very good business plan knowledge, 84.6% have very good knowledge of project plans, 15.4% have good but excellent knowledge of project plans, and 61.5% have excellent knowledge of marketing plans, 30.8% have very good knowledge, and 7.7% have good knowledge of marketing plans. It appears that you have offered statistical information about the proficiency of MBA graduates in some areas, including project management, marketing, and business planning. Employers note a gap in graduates' capacity to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world situations, even though a sizable portion of graduates have strong to excellent theoretical understanding in these areas. It is suggested that more practical elements such as industrial trips, internship programs, company collaborations, and other hands-on experiences be included in the MBA program to close this gap. With the help of these practical orientations, students should be able to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world situations by getting exposure to the working world. This method supports the notion that real-world experiences can enhance classroom instruction by helping students acquire the skills and abilities needed to succeed in the workplace beyond a basic understanding of theory.

Managerial Skills

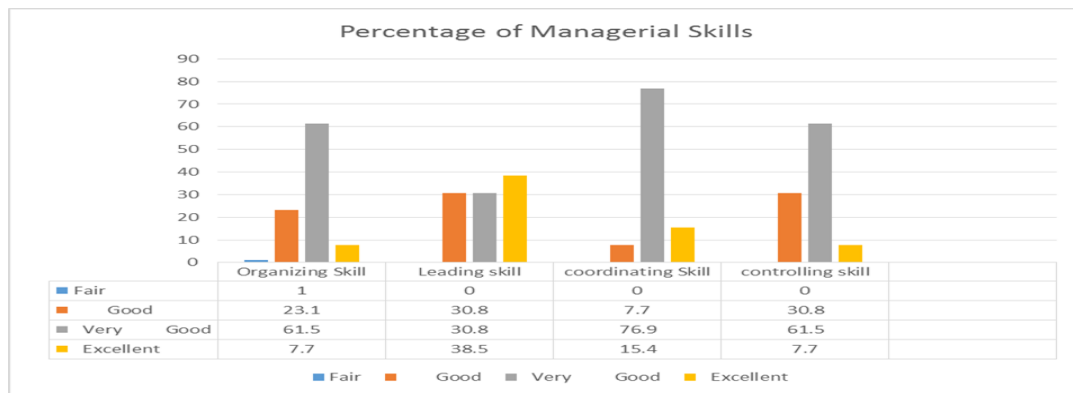


Figure 2. Percentage of Managerial Skill

Figure 2 shows that about 61.5% of MBA graduates are very good at organizing skills, and 38.5% are very good at leading people. Furthermore, 76.9% demonstrate a great ability to coordinate tasks, and 61.5% demonstrate very high control skills. According to these statistics, MBA graduates typically have strong managerial abilities. But it also points to a weakness, namely in their leadership abilities. Furthermore, the data indicates that although MBA graduates perform exceptionally well in a variety of managerial domains, including planning, directing, and organizing, their leadership skills may use some refinement. By working in teams and taking on project implementation tasks, they could improve their leadership skills. Graduates can bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical applications by being given opportunities for practical experiences in these fields, which will ultimately support the development of their leadership skills.

Communication Skills

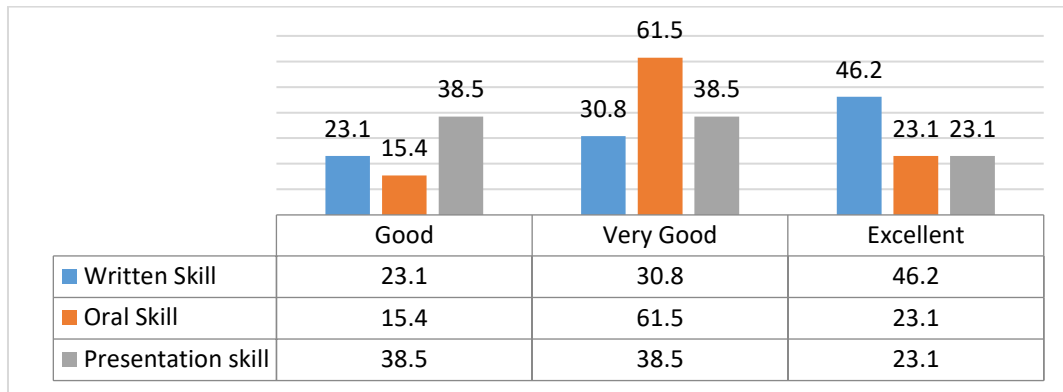


Figure 3. Percentage of Communication Skills.

According to Figure 3, out of MBA graduates, 46.2% have excellent written communication skills, 23.1% have excellent oral communication skills, and the same 23.1% have excellent presenting skills. This data shows a significant difference, indicating that their level of presentation skills and expertise is quite low. It's vital to remember that developing all three of these skills—written, oral, and presentation—is essential for increasing employability.

Interpersonal Skills of Graduates

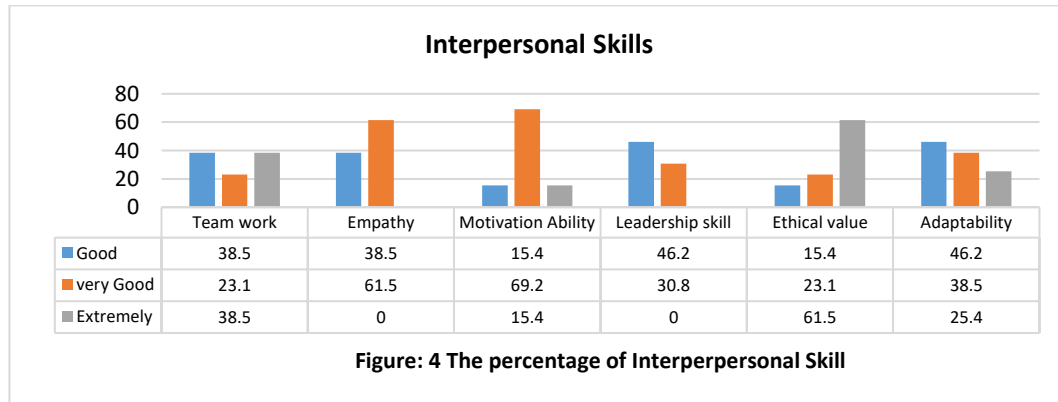


Figure: 4 The percentage of Interpersonal Skill

Figure 4 indicates that the evaluation of interpersonal skills in MBA graduates highlights the following areas of proficiency: Teamwork skills were assessed as extremely good by 38.5% of respondents. Empathy skills were rated as good by the same percentage. Motivation ability skills were rated as very good by 69.2% of respondents. Leadership skills were rated as very good by 30.8% of respondents. Ethical value was rated as extremely good by 61.5% of respondents. Adaptability skills were rated as very good by 38.5% of respondents. Nevertheless, the data demonstrates that there is a need for improvement in the areas of teamwork, leadership abilities, and adaptation skills, as they are now below the desired levels.

Work skills of MBA graduates



Figure: 5 Work skills of MBA graduates.

Figure 5 shows that the major findings of the MBA graduates’ work skills like, time management skills, judgment skills, decision-making ability, and discipline are satisfactory. But the ability to link and sense of responsibility skill should improve.

MBA graduates’ opinions regarding the gap between the perception of the employer and the MBA graduates on employability skills.

The perceptions of graduates on governance are discussed in Table 3:

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Graduate According to their Views of Governance

| Aspects of Evaluation | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|-------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. The objectives of the entity are clearly stated. | 1 (1.2) | 0 (0) | 5 (6.2) | 44 (55) | 30 (37.5) |
| 2. Academic decisions are taken by the entity with fairness and transparency. | 0 (0) | 1 (1.2) | 13 (16.2) | 40 (50) | 26 (32.5) |
| 3. Classes are held timely by the semester calendar. | 0 (4.0) | 1 (1.2) | 5 (6.2) | 44 (55) | 30 (37.5) |
| 4. Examinations are held timely by the semester calendar. | 9 (1.2) | 1 (1.2) | 6 (7.5) | 39 (48.0) | 33 (41.2) |
| 5. Results are published timely in compliance with the semester calendar. | 6 (7.5) | 12 (15) | 5 (6.2) | 32 (40) | 25 (31.2) |

Source: Field study

Table 3 compiles the MBA alumni’s perspectives on governance, showcasing significant consensuses across various facets. Notably, 92.5% of respondents agree on the explicitness of the entity’s objectives, while 82.5% affirm the prevalence of fairness and transparency in academic

decisions at all levels. A substantial 92.5% commend the School of Business for providing comprehensive guidelines aligned with the semester calendar and facilitating structured class schedules. Additionally, the department earns praise for nurturing a conducive learning environment. On the timeliness front, 89.2% confirm that examinations are conducted following the semester calendar. Despite these positive evaluations, concerns are raised by about 30% of respondents regarding the discrepancy in the publication of results not following the semester calendar. These collective insights from MBA graduates and stakeholders serve as crucial indicators, shedding light on the governance practices at BOU.

MBA Graduates’ Opinions over Curriculum Design

A well-defined and specified course of study, courses, and activities that students must complete to meet the requirements for earning a degree is referred to as the curriculum. The curriculum is essential to the university's mission and goals, as well as to achieving the desired learning outcomes and improving students' employability. A Curriculum Committee is responsible for initiating all academic activities, including establishing and redesigning curricula, following the Bangladesh Open University Act, of 1992. The following perspectives on curriculum creation and review are offered:

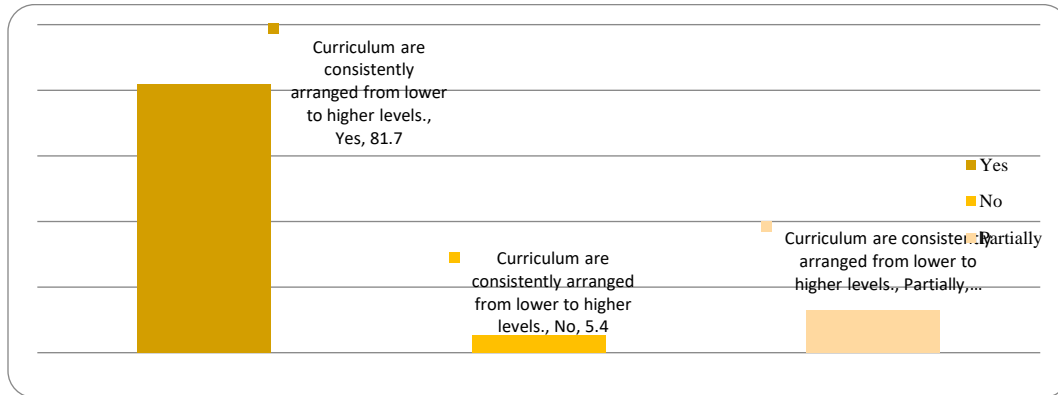


Figure- 6: Percentage distribution of graduates' views over Curriculum consistency.
(Source: Researcher’s Survey)

Figure 6 presents the percentage distribution of learners as per their assessment regarding the existing curriculum consistency of the MBA program of the School of Business. Results show that about 82% of the learners believe that the program curriculums are consistently arranged from lower to higher levels. Very few percent of respondents talked about the rearrangement of course. They think that some applied-oriented courses should be included.

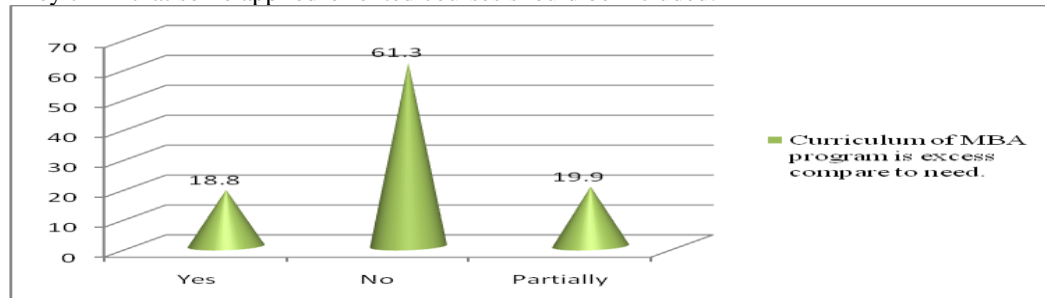


Figure-7: Percentage distribution of graduates' views over curriculum load (Source: Researcher's Survey)

The distribution of learners' perspectives on the curriculum load of the MBA program is depicted in Figure 7. The results indicate that a significant majority, almost two-thirds, believe that the current curriculum load aligns well with the program's requirements. However, approximately 40% express the view that certain courses, such as Operations Management and Marketing Management, should have reduced syllabi compared to their current extent.

Despite the curriculum load being deemed optimal, its completion within a single semester poses significant challenges. There's a consensus that the curriculum necessitates updating, particularly to emphasize job-oriented courses. To achieve this, it's essential for the school to actively involve faculty and tutors in the curriculum update process. Views from alumni, employers, and academic experts imply that the School of Business lacks a sufficiently job-oriented curriculum content design and review. Identified weaknesses within both BOU and the School related to issues surrounding the curriculum load and the consideration given to enhancing employability during curriculum updates.

MBA Graduates' Views of Teaching and Learning

The opinions of MBA graduates on teaching-learning are summarized in the following figure 8 as follows.

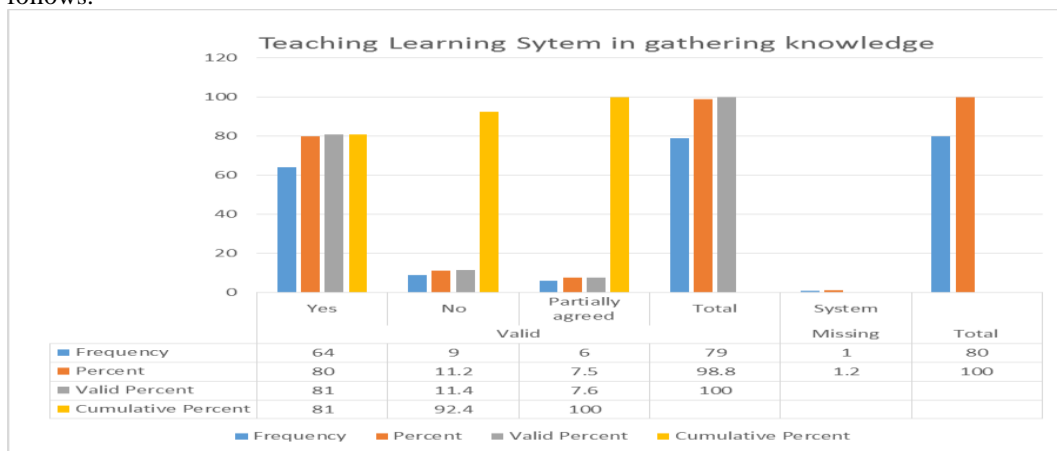


Figure: 8 MBA graduates' opinion on teaching-learning (Source: Researcher's Survey)

According to Figure 8, the graduates' perception of the teaching-learning system for acquiring knowledge is as follows: approximately 80% responded affirmatively ("Yes"), 11.2% disagreed ("No"), and 7.5% held a partially agreeable stance. Therefore, the predominant view among the alumni is that the current teaching-learning system is favorable and conducive to knowledge acquisition.

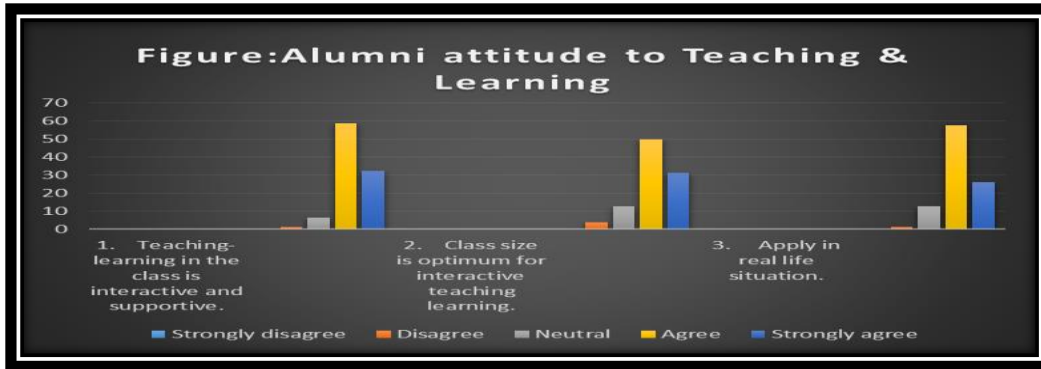


Figure 9: Percentage Distribution of graduates According to their Views of Teaching-Learning. (Source: Researcher’s Survey)

Figure 9 illustrates the MBA graduates’/ alumni’s view of teaching and learning in this school. The majority of responders, specifically 58.8%, concur that the classes are both engaged and supportive. The other factors include an optimal class size for interactive teaching and learning (50%), as well as ample chances provided by the department for practical exercises that may be applied in real-life circumstances (57.5%).

MBA Graduates’ Opinion over the Assessment Process

It is a rigorous process that involves acquiring, assessing, and interpreting information to evaluate the degree to which the desired learning goals, such as knowledge and skills, have been achieved. Other steps in the process include evaluating the information. A methodical procedure that involves acquiring, analyzing, and interpreting information is what constitutes an assessment of the performance of a student. As a result of the fact that it is of the utmost importance to evaluate the degree to which learning outcomes and skill development have been realized, it is vital to create a technique of performance evaluation that is not only efficient but fits the requirements of the situation. Now is the time to answer the most crucial question that has to be answered, which is whether or not the learning assessment tools are adequate for boosting employability, and whether or not they are acceptable in our open and distance education. The majority of former students and employers were notified, following the collection of comments from both groups, that assessment instruments are not suitably adapted to increase employability. After examining the feedback, this was the conclusion that was arrived at.

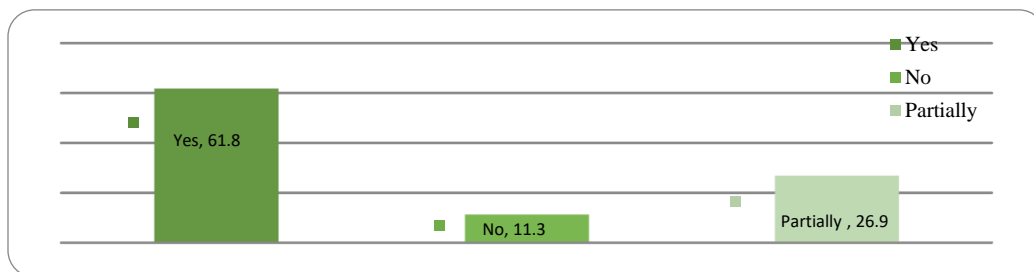


Figure 10 Percentage distribution of alumni views over the assessment system (Source: Researcher’s Survey)

According to the data presented in Figure 10, 61.8% of students believe that they are provided with adequate information regarding assessment systems at the beginning of the semester. On the other hand, a sizeable percentage of people (26.9%) are just partially content with this.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's conclusion synthesizes the various lines of investigation prompted by the research questions, uncovering the symbiotic relationship between employers' perspectives, graduates' encounters, and the key determinants that impact the employability and professional achievements of BOU MBA graduates. The initial inquiry into the crucial employability skills emphasized by businesses elucidated the significance of a wide range of competencies, encompassing knowledge, communication, interpersonal skills, and industry-specific experience. These abilities were deemed indispensable for graduates to thrive in the contemporary job market, underscoring the significance of adaptability, teamwork, and critical thinking in enhancing employability. Simultaneously, the examination of graduates' satisfaction with teaching methods and educational programs unveiled the significant impact of interconnected factors in forming graduates' readiness for professional paths. Robust leadership, innovative curriculum design that seamlessly incorporates both theoretical and practical elements, diverse assessment methods, and captivating teaching techniques have become vital elements in fostering graduates' holistic development and equipping them with the knowledge and skills that employers highly esteem. The establishment of a relationship between these research issues underscores the congruence between the demands of employers and the experiences of BOU MBA graduates. The correlation observed between graduates' assessments of readiness and the competencies anticipated by employers underscores the importance of a curriculum that combines theoretical knowledge with practical implementation, thereby fostering adaptable skills that are crucial for achieving success in contemporary work settings. In addition, the third study question reveals that the experiences and characteristics that contribute to the development of employability skills among MBA students at Bangladesh Open University (BOU) encompass a range of significant components. These encompass experiential learning experiences through collaborative projects, internships, and mentorship programs that enhance their capacity to adjust, communicate, and resolve issues. Their employability skills are enhanced by the integration of real-world scenarios into the curriculum and the active involvement of industry experts in the teaching process, fostering a comprehensive understanding of industry requirements. The BOU MBA program's focus on critical thinking, diverse assessment methods, and dynamic teaching-learning frameworks enhances graduates' employability by ensuring they possess a wide array of abilities that are highly valued by organizations for achieving success in their careers. The findings validate the urgent requirement for higher education institutions to consistently adapt and enhance their instructional methods to sustain a mutually advantageous connection between graduates' employability and their academic proficiency. Ultimately, the perspectives of employers and MBA graduates/alumni highlight the critical roles that well-crafted curricula, varied assessment methods, and creative teaching techniques play in producing graduates who are not only academically strong but also have the adaptable skill set required for success in their chosen fields.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The current study used a limited number of MBA graduates and employers as its sample population. To conduct future research, it is suggested that larger sample sizes be utilized, with master's degree holders from a variety of fields being included. With the intent of future research, it may be possible to investigate additional elements that influence the employability of graduates, which were not particularly addressed in this study. The balancing of labor supply and demand, cultural, social, and psychological capitals, participation in extracurricular activities, the influence of discipline-specific knowledge, institutional branding, company recruitment policies, the role of personal factors, and the impact of the local and global economy are some of the factors that are considered to be important. As a result, it is essential to carry out extra surveys to collect the viewpoints of employers on their expectations, requirements, and the requirements established by the organization. When taking into account the points of view of both students and employers, a more accurate picture may be accomplished.

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