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Gap Analysis for Future Skill Mapping

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Abstract

One of the biggest issues facing MBA graduates in the Indian corporate environment is the growing disconnect between professional competency requirements and academic preparation. Targeting MBA students and entry-level professionals (0–2 years experience) hoping for positions in Sales & Business Development and Finance/HR/Operations across the Banking & Financial Services (BFSI) and Information Technology (IT) sectors, this study performs a structured Gap Analysis for Future Skill Mapping. Over the course of eleven weeks, from December 8, 2025, to February 22, 2026, the study was carried out using a mixed-methods design that included a secondary literature review, weekly longitudinal self-assessment through eleven Weekly Progress Reports (WPRs), and a structured primary survey of 257 respondents (28 questions). Important findings show concerning shortcomings in a number of competency categories. 47.1% of respondents are still at the novice level of Excel, 52.9% have never utilized data visualization tools (Power BI/Tableau), and 100% of respondents lack practical CRM competency. In behavioral competences, 68.1% of respondents never or never seek feedback, which directly hinders their own learning velocity, and 52.9% of respondents give up when confronted with customer objections—a crucial gap for sales responsibilities. Most remarkably, 77.4% have not mapped their skill gaps against the needs of their ideal employment, and 37.4% devote 0 hours per week to upskilling. Ten important gaps are ranked by prevalence, commercial effect, and urgency in the Priority Skill Gap Matrix, which is introduced in the study along with the SKILL BRIDGE structure. The results are combined to create a 90-day actionable skill development plan and suggestions for people, businesses, and educational institutions. The study comes to the conclusion that organizational mentoring design, institutional curriculum reform, and coordinated individual behavior change may all help close the significant, multifaceted skill gap.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian labor market is undergoing significant structural change in the twenty-first century. According to the World Economic Forum (2023), automation will eliminate 85 million jobs by 2027 while simultaneously creating 97 million new positions that need completely different skill sets. Over 1.5 million MBA graduates are produced in India each year, but according to a 2023 NASSCOM research, only 45% of them are deemed instantly employable due to inadequacies in essential interpersonal, digital, and analytical skills in addition to technical knowledge. The fundamental issue driving this research is the stark discrepancy between what business schools offer and what industry requires. A precise tool for closing this gap is skill mapping, which is a methodical assessment of current abilities matched to both present and future position needs. It allows for individualized, evidence- based judgments on where learning investment offers the most career return, in contrast to generic training programs. This approach is essential for MBA students during the critical academic-to-professional transition. Through a rigorous eleven-week mixed- methods research engagement, this study explores the extent, makeup, and addressability of skill gaps among this population, offering a ground-level empirical picture of where the most critical deficiencies lie and what focused interventions can most effectively address them.

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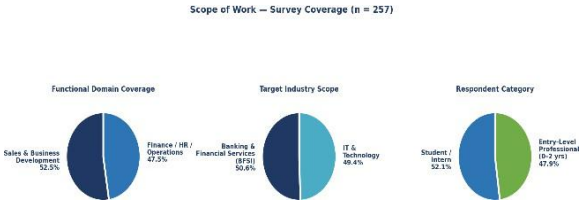
II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To use a standardized 28-question main survey to evaluate respondent competency in technical abilities (Excel, CRM, BI tools, Digital Marketing, AI), sales and marketing competencies, and behavioral soft skills.
- To assess respondents' self-awareness of career preparedness and the degree to which they have compared their own skill gaps to industry demands.
- To examine upskilling habits, including as learning time, preferred learning techniques, and PDP status.
- To assess knowledge of how macrotrends like automation, artificial intelligence, and the gig economy are changing the need for skills in the future.
- To create a 90-day actionable skill development roadmap and a Priority Skill Gap Matrix for recent MBA grads.
- To provide suggestions on curriculum reform and mentoring program design for corporations and educational institutions.

III. SCOPE OF WORK

This study focuses on MBA students and entry-level professionals (0–2 years experience) in the Amity University, Lucknow ecosystem who hope to work in two functional domains: Finance/HR/Operations (47.5%) and Sales & Business Development (52.5%). The target industries that were looked at include IT & Technology (49.4%) and Banking & Financial Services (BFSI) (50.6%). Technical/digital skills, sales and marketing competencies, behavioral and soft skills, self-awareness and personal development planning, and future trend preparation are the five competence aspects covered by the research scope. Senior-level professionals, non-business fields, and sectors other than BFSI and IT are not included in the research. Geographically, the study is focused on Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India, although it may be applied to similar tier-1 and tier-2 city MBA ecosystems around the country.



IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Spencer and Spencer's (1993) core competence modeling approach, which separated deeper behavioral reasons and attributes from superficial knowledge and abilities, serves as the theoretical basis for gap analysis in human capital development. A purely technical evaluation ignores the behavioral abilities that most strongly predict professional achievement, which is why this difference is still crucial to modern gap analysis. In order to guarantee alignment between learning investment and business goals, Rothwell and Kazanas (2011) expanded this concept into systematic organizational training design, contending that needs assessment and gap analysis must happen before any training intervention.

The problem of the talent gap has drawn a lot of attention from academics and business in India. According to the McKinsey Global Institute (2023), in technology-related roles, the technical skill half- life, or the amount of time before a particular technical skill becomes outdated, has decreased to less than five years. This shortens the window for effective skill development and increases the urgency of ongoing learning. According to Deloitte's 2024 Human Capital Trends study, "learning agility"—the ability to pick up and use new skills quickly—is the best predictive factor for career resilience in a time of increasing upheaval.

The employability gap is concentrated in application-layer competencies rather than foundational knowledge, according to NASSCOM (2023) data specific to India. These competencies include the capacity to use CRM systems, gain insights from data visualization tools, carry out structured sales interactions, and persuade others in professional settings. These results are consistent with the LinkedIn Global Talent Solutions (2024) study, which lists communication, problem-solving, and technological adaptation as the top threequalities that Indian hiring managers most commonly point out as lacking among recent MBA recruits, rather than subject expertise.

Noe (2020) emphasizes the increasing significance of self-directed learning (SDL) in contemporary professional development, pointing out that people who proactively identify their own gaps and create individualized learning programs have noticeably better competency growth velocity. Given that SDL theory identifies learning time as the primary input variable in

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skill development, the result that 37.4% of our sample devotes 0 hours per week to upskilling is quite concerning. Cascio (2018) goes on to say that companies should invest in infrastructure for skill development rather than relying solely on individual initiative, especially for early-career professionals who might not have the self-awareness to recognize their own inadequacies in the absence of organized organizational assistance.

V. STUDY AREA

This study was carried out in one of the top private university systems in India, Amity University, Lucknow campus (Malhaur Railway Station Road, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh 226028). The study focuses on the MBA student body and recent graduates of Amity Business School, Lucknow, an NAAC-accredited school that produces about 300 MBA graduates a year. The campus is located in Lucknow, the state capital of Uttar Pradesh, one of India's fastest-growing Tier-1 cities with a rapidly expanding startup, IT, and BFSI ecosystem. This makes it a highly relevant laboratory for researching the problem of the academic-industry skill gap that India's emerging professional workforce is facing. during January and February of 2026. Respondent Profiling (Q1–Q4), Technical & Digital Skills (Q5– Q10), Sales & Marketing Competencies (Q11–Q16), Behavioral & Soft Skills (Q17–Q22), and Career Planning & Future Readiness (Q23–Q28) were the five theme topics addressed by the questionnaire.

VI.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive and exploratory mixed-methods research strategy is used in this study. A standardized 28-question survey instrument was used to gather the primary data, and it was distributed via GoogleForms to 257 MBA students and entry-level workers

Purposive and convenient sampling methods were used to target the specified population in a non- probabilistic manner. WEF Future of Jobs papers, NASSCOM publications, McKinsey Global Institute research, and LinkedIn Talent Solutions papers were the sources of secondary data. Eleven Weekly Progress Reports (WPR-1 through WPR-11) covering the whole research period served as a supplemental longitudinal component, offering a self-assessment dimension that contextualizes and confirms survey results.

Frequency distribution and percentage analysis were used to examine the survey data for each of the 28 variables. To find trends between functional cohorts (Sales vs. Finance/HR), cross-tabulations were carried out. Each identified gap was scored on three dimensions to create a Priority Gap Matrix: Prevalence (percentage of respondents exhibiting the gap), Business Impact (criticality of the skill for target roles, evaluated against published job description analysis), and Urgency (time-sensitivity in the current market). To facilitate pattern discovery and publication-grade communication of results, chart visualizations were created for five major finding areas.

Parameter	Detail
Research Design	Descriptive & Exploratory; Mixed-Methods
Primary Data	Structured 28-Q Survey via Google Forms
Sample Size	n = 257 respondents
Sampling Method	Non-Probability – Purposive / Convenience
Data Collection Period	January – February 2026
Longitudinal Component	11 Weekly Progress Reports (WPR-1 to WPR-11)
Analysis Method	Frequency Distribution, Percentage Analysis, Gap Matrix Scoring
Secondary Sources	WEF, NASSCOM, McKinsey, Deloitte, LinkedIn Reports

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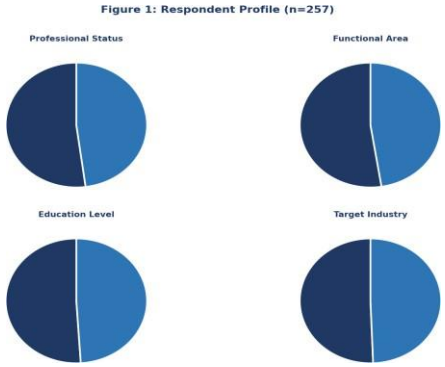
VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

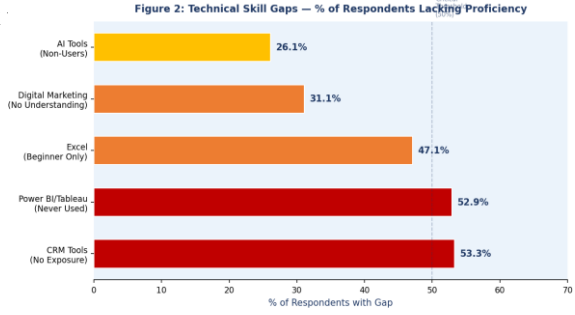
1. Respondent Profile

There were 257 valid replies in all. The sample is almost perfectly balanced: 52.1% students/interns vs 47.9% entry-level professionals; 52.5% targeting Sales & BD versus 47.5% Finance/HR/Operations; 51.0% postgraduate versus 49.0% undergraduate; and 50.6% BFSI versus 49.4% IT hopefuls. All subgroups are guaranteed analytical validity because to this symmetry.



2. Gap in Technical and Digital Skills

Data visualization and CRM tools have the biggest technological limitations. Despite the fact that Power BI and Tableau are typical operating needs for Sales and Finance jobs, respectively, a startling 53.3% of respondents had no exposure to CRM and 52.9% have never used them. 52.9% of people are intermediate in Excel, while 47.1% are beginners. 31.1% of people have no comprehension of digital marketing at all. Adoption of AI tools reveals a bimodal split: 31.1% utilize AI on a daily basis, while 26.1% do not, indicating an increasing skill difference. Responses to a question on overall technical adequacy were nearly evenly split, indicating overconfidence among the 49.8% who think



3. Gaps in Sales and Behavioral Competencies

All sales competencies are inadequate. Just 33.5% of people are confident enough to make an independent sales proposal. When confronted with client concerns, a crucial 52.9% quit up, which is a clear performance failure for sales positions. 70% of negotiators are at a novice or growing level. 67.3% of lead generation strategies are unstructured, making it reactive. 68.1% of people in soft skills never or never ask for feedback, which is the most significant behavioral gap found since it slows down all development. Technology adaptation is poor; 61.1% of people are unable to pick up new skills on their own. There is little autonomy in problem-solving; 76.3% do not independently assess and handle workplace situations.

4. Self-Awareness and Perception of Career Gaps

Knowing exactly what to develop is a fundamental prerequisite for successful skill development. A significant lack of self-awareness is revealed by this study: 77.4% of participants had not compared their present skill set to the requirements of their ideal career. In spite of this, 41.2% of respondents accurately identified soft skills as the major obstacle to their career, greater than technical skills (26.8%) or domain knowledge (31.9%). The structured developmental answer does not match this self-awareness on the gap category since the same respondents are primarily the ones who devote 0 hours per week in upskilling.

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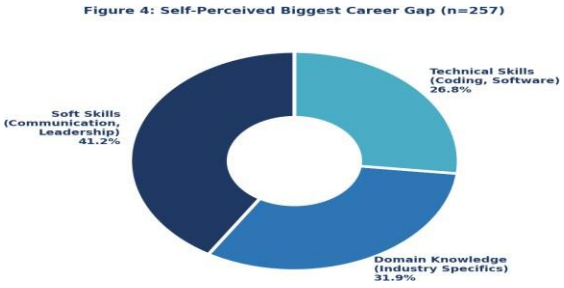

5. Habits of Learning and Planning for Development

The investment in learning is really modest. The greatest category of upskilling time is 0 hours per week (37.4%), with just 31.1% committing three to five hours, which is the minimum that learning science research considers useful. merely 33.1% of people have a comprehensive written PDP with deadlines, compared to 37.0% who merely keep a conceptual plan. Online courses (28.8%), classroom instruction (27.2%), reading/case studies (22.6%), and mentorship (21.4%) are the most popular learning strategies. The four levels of future trend knowledge are equally divided, with almost half (48.6%) not knowing enough about how macrotrends are changing their workplace.

CONCLUSION

This study offers solid empirical proof that there is a significant, multifaceted skill gap between MBA preparation and industry readiness in India that cannot be explained by a straightforward technological shortcoming. The data presents a more complex picture: students underestimate the behavioral aspects of the gap (only 41.2% correctly identify soft skills as the primary barrier, but few act on this), overestimate their technical sufficiency (50% believe themselves fully sufficient despite universal CRM absence), and structurally underinvest in their own development (37.4% invest zero learning hours weekly). The feedback avoidance culture (68.1% seldom or never seek feedback) is the most significant conclusion. Without feedback, even the most driven learner is blind. Feedback is the essential mechanism via which all skill deficiencies are detected and rectified. According to the study, closing this gap necessitates coordinated intervention at three levels: organizational program design (structured onboarding skill diagnostics, mentorship matching, and psychological safety for feedback), institutional curriculum reform (CRM and BI tool integration, behavioral competency coaching), and individual behavior change (structured weekly learning time, documented PDPs, proactive feedback-seeking).

LIMITATIONS

Self-report bias: The survey's self-assessed competency scores are susceptible to Dunning-Kruger overconfidence effects and social desirability bias.

Higher validity would result from objective skill evaluations (such as role-play scoring and standardized testing).

Constraints on categorical responses: A Likert-scale or continuous-score instrument would produce richer data; the forced-choice survey format would not be able to capture fine-grained skill gradations.

Temporal limitation: The 11-week research period only provides a snapshot; a longitudinal design that follows the same cohort for two to three years after graduation would show if gaps are truly filled in practice and which treatments work best.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- For Specific Professionals

Immediately perform a written gap analysis by comparing current competency to three desired job descriptions. Without this fundamental step, 77.4% of people are unable to make strategic learning decisions. Make a commitment to devote at least three to five hours per week to organized upskilling utilizing free trial tools like CRM and Power BI on online venues like Coursera and LinkedIn Learning. Instead of making a mental note, create a written Personal Development Plan (PDP) with precise 30-, 60-, and 90-day skill goals and review it once a month.

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Transform feedback from a danger to a tool for development: Create a regular feedback cycle with a minimum of two mentors or supervisors each semester.

- Regarding Educational Establishments

Include CRM and BI tool labs (HubSpot, Power BI) with a minimum 12-hour practical lab requirement as essential components of the MBA program rather than electives. Create organized Industry Mentorship Programs that match students with professionals in the industry they want to work in for a whole semester. As graduation-track core modules, including behavioral competence training (sales presentation, addressing objections, and negotiating simulation), which is evaluated through role-playing rather than written exams. To monitor cohort progress and find systemic curricular gaps iteratively, use biannual objective skill gap tests rather than self-reports.

- For Establishments

Redesign new recruit onboarding as a systematic skill gap bridging sprint. Prior to client-facing deployment, undertake a two-week skills diagnostic and provide focused development in CRM tools, data reporting, and professional communication. Establish a psychologically safe feedback infrastructure by holding formal manager-to-hire feedback discussions on a monthly basis. This will normalize developmental feedback as a routine operating practice rather than an exception to performance reviews. To recruit and accelerate entry-level talent, provide CRM certification routes (Salesforce/HubSpot) as part of new-hire growth programs.

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