

## **Aligning Career Training with Competency Based Curriculum in MBA Program of Indian Universities- Issues & Challenges in Implementation**

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### **Abstract**

Skill gaps in MBA student is one of the major reasons of employer's dissatisfaction leading to decreasing program value. Employers also complain of frequent switching of jobs by MBA freshers depicting their confused state of mind. Employers expect them to possess work ready competencies to perform the jobs of the future. Theoretical curriculum and unplanned career decisions are the prime reason behind for this problem. In this context, curriculum innovations have been the subject of interest globally with preference for competency-based curriculum. (CBC). This study aims at understanding the issues and challenges affecting the implementations of competency-based curriculum with career training in MBA program of Indian universities.

A total of 47 respondents (professors and HODs) from MBA department of Indian Universities were interviewed to understand their opinion on the subject. Themes and sub-themes were identified with the help of NVivo (12) Pro software for qualitative studies. Results revealed a total of Six themes; [1]Faculty Role Expansion, [2] Remuneration and Infrastructure Cost, [3] Leadership support, [4] Scheduling Barriers, [5]Faculty Personal Restraints and, [6]Curriculum Structure & Design as main concerns in the process of implementation. Solutions to overcome the issues was also identified which was later used to develop a model for implementation. Overall a positive outlook of all the respondents was registered for adopting CBC with career training in MBA.

Keywords; Competency based Curriculum, Career Training, MBA, Implementation, student centric, curriculum innovation.

### **Introduction**

Management education is one of the highest demanded post-graduation courses in India. The All India Survey on Higher Education 2018-19, by Ministry of Education (MoE) revealed that the second highest enrolment in post-graduation was for management after the social science stream. As per the Hays Global talent report 2021 management professionals' skills will be in demand considerably in the Asia Pacific region. However, as per the India skills report 2022 by Wheebox, about 75% of all the companies surveyed reported a skill gap in the MBA freshers.

The employability of the students graduating from college does not match industry requirements that results in loss of business opportunities and recurring cost on recruitment and trainings. As per the ISR 2022, the major issue with low employability of graduates is lack of innovation in curriculum and its alignment with student's competencies and interests. Bennis and O'Toole (2005) mentioned that emphasis of business school's curriculum is more on scientific research than aligning it with practical inputs which make it irrelevant in the fast-changing business world.

The ISR Report 2022 as well as other surveys conducted by AICTE and Hays, convey an urgent need for development of future ready competencies in students to make them employable. Students should be able to select competencies based on their self-assessments to develop natural interest in learning.

Students complain of their lack of interest in learning the MBA courses and the alumni question the relevance of subjects taught in MBA and raise concerns on the low-quality class room sessions leading to no value addition and skill development (Mishra, 2017). One reason for this is the influence of peers and family in taking specializations and internships that usually differ from their own interests and abilities. This is visible in their frequent job change, career transitions, and employer's dissatisfaction. Students pass out the MBA course without having a proper future path and planning that indicates the underrating of career planning to decide a pre-defined career path based on facts and results.(Shukla et.al. 2021)

Studies have found that “Self-awareness and opportunity awareness have the greatest influence on students’ employability, followed by decision-making skills, and then transition learning skills” (Okolie et.al. 2020). Pitan and Atiku (2017) found a positive influence of career guidance activities on students’ employability

Management of a career comprises of activities like provides students with exposure to labour market dynamics, job search capabilities, self-awareness and professional networking (Bridgstock, 2009). Supported with suitable vocational and skills training from time to time, a student is better able to understand their interests and weaknesses that makes way for planned decisions in what to study and which work to pursue? (D. Jackson. 2016)

The traditional methods of content-oriented teaching has to be replaced with a curriculum that provides a well expressed path with predefined competency indicators for different stages (e.g., primary; secondary; advanced) of skills to be developed. This will give students a goal to be achieved with visible performance outcomes. The lecture-based pedagogy is not suitable in a professional MBA course as it does not develop any skills. Instead student centric pedagogy catering to different students need have to be adopted. (Tomlinson, 2017; Tabrani ZA et al., 2023).

Dr.Bhimaraya Maetri Committee report , has mentioned the urgent need to revamp MBA curriculum to practical and skill-oriented learning, in its Model Curriculum for Management Program (MBA and PGDM) All India Council for Technical Education 2018. The committee outlined 21 pedagogical practices to develop MBA competencies in MBA/PGDM programs. The model is based on four key focus areas includes-employability, innovation, theory to practice, and connectedness.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2030 Future of Education and Skills Project: “We need to replace old education standards with an educational framework that combines knowledge with the 21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration.”

Competency development has been mentioned by the employers as the most desired solution and this they advise should be a part of the MBA curriculum. Countries like south Africa, U.S., Europe, Russia, Malaysia etc have successfully adopted the competency-based curriculum to overcome the dominant theoretical focus. Competency based curriculum is an extension of outcome-based education by Speedy which has been found effective in various professional programs across the world including engineering, nursing, medical studies etc. (U.K. Schlusmans et al.1999). The CBC is an extended version of outcome-based education that is already adopted in higher education in India universities through the National Education Policy’(NEP) 2020 guidelines emphasizing attainment of learning outcomes based on blooms taxonomy.

Competency based Curriculum if found to fulfill the main expectation of stakeholders i.e., visible changes in students’ performances in form of skills and competencies.

CBC is a student centric approach giving them autonomy to select what they want to learn? in how much time and by which pedagogy. It follows an entirely practical teaching method and assessments are performance based following the readiness indicators and not the traditional grade points (Sultanova. et al. 2017). According to Kim & Kim (2016), developing competencies consists of understanding of subject from industry perspective, developing competencies and its related content, creating practical assessment based on multiple assessor system to get a 360-degree approval of performance by all stakeholders.

Studies show that a career training program within the MBA curriculum can considerably lower the employability issues leading to sustainable career prospects.

CBC with career training is a novel idea that requires validation for the MBA program in India. The goal of this research therefore is to identify the issues and challenges that will affect its implementation. It is intended to understand what will be the major factors affecting its adoption. Can career training be aligned as a formal system in curriculum? What will be its impact on faculty and management and how can the problems be resolved?

## **Literature review**

### **Employability**

The employability of management graduates is always under scrutiny due to lack of skills and abilities. It has been found that the course curriculum of MBA is unable to cater to employer's needs. An important reason for mismatch between university inputs and corporate expectations is the use of obsolete knowledge centric pedagogy and course curriculum. (Shukla et al. 2021). Many authors have raised concerns on the quality dimension of the MBA curriculum which can be evaluated against the extent of subject mastery attained through acquisition of pre-defined learning goals. (Mishra.2017).

Both alumni as well as employer expect development of generic competencies in students that can be transferred from one job to another (Azevedo A. et al.2012).

The word competency is derived from well examined competency modelling research acknowledged by maximum researchers. (Boyatzis, 1982, 1998, 1999; Boyatzis and Kolb, 1991, 1995; Boyatzis et al., 1995). Competence therefore refers to unique personal characteristics like skills, social roles, traits, knowledge, self-image and motives, it comprises a mix of cognitive, motivational, volitional and disposition abilities. (Wienert,2000).

### **Competency based curriculum**

A Curriculum is the mix of experiences and opportunities that a university provides to its students (Print 1993; 1987). It is the planned combination of learning goals, lesson plan, teaching and the assessment methods. (Woitezak,2002). Competency based education (CBE) has been the latest trend in graduate education. Universities across the world have jointly agreed to shift their education pattern to CBE model. U.S., Nigeria, U.K, Europe have successfully adopted this model in many undergraduate and postgraduate streams. The main intention behind this major shift is to move focus from just knowledge acquisition to also attaining proficiency in skills and attitudes (Vargas et al. 2024). Another pressing reason found in most studies is the sustainability element in higher education process that is expected to be achieved through competency-based education (Telesford et al. 2024).

Competency based Curriculum (CBC) which is based on CBE theory is being advocated as an ideal curriculum for MBA education as it can develop competencies. Contrary to the common theory-based practice competency-based curriculum requires an in-depth planning for overall development of skills and capabilities (Da Wan et al. 2022) with suitable learning activities (Dewey 1983; Fraut 2009; Slenhose 1975).

As per Brownell and Chung (2001), CBC is sure to find place in business studies education due to its emphasis on learners outcome by demonstrating cognitive, affective, or skills-based learning which are the key success parameters for an MBA graduate.

Evidences from many studies have shown that competency-based models improved capability and skill development in students (Azevedo A. et al. 2012). England has been the pioneer in implementing this model. Results supports the idea of creating specific competences for business graduates and planning the learning path with defined assessments

The main features of a competence-based curriculum are its pre-determined competences as outcomes, self-paced learning and practical assessments by multiple assessor and customized content and pedagogy. (Kumar V. et al. 2023). Another important feature is the student centric learning approach.. The abilities and interest of the students drive the learning process thereby including them as active contributors (Goldie, Andrews, Utkarsh 2016). Results of many studies have also shown that student centric approach is capable of achieving evident results in form of competency development (Hernández-Sabat et al. 2024). However, to attain this, self-motivation of students is essential.

For this the content and pedagogies have to developed considering the cause of low motivation (Nuphanudin et al.2022). Engaging and practical curriculum need to be developed by faculties to enable self-motivation in students. The concept of differentiated or student centric pedagogy is an important transition towards competency-oriented teaching

Differentiated pedagogy is the relevant method that considers the uniqueness of every student in their experiences, background and learning styles (Riza et al. 2024). Lecturers should adopt inclusive learning principles to cater to student's needs. Development of competencies is possible by streamlining the pedagogy with student centered learning tools like inquiry-based teaching, work-based learning etc. (Sultanova et al. 2017). These pedagogies have shown proven results in improving graduate's employability. (Silva et al. 2015). Flipped classrooms or cooperative learning are some tools that provide flexibility as well as comfort of personalized learning. (Tomlinson, 2017; Tabrani ZA et al. 2023) (Rose and Mayer 2002). Blended learning is a pedagogy that is based on experiential learning and is suitable for management courses (González 2024). It is useful as it enhances learning environment and outcomes (Zhnag et al. 2024, Zaheer et al. 2022). BLA incorporates virtual material to enhance learning.

The assessments in the competency-based curriculum differs from regular theory-based format and outlines a shift from average grade point GPA to employability readiness indicator (ERI) as it can assess transferable or generic competences required in MBA studies (Valesco, 2014). The assessments in this framework are based on three stage system that focus on-

1. Self-assessment
2. Third party evaluation
3. Peer evaluation.

Another dimension to assessments of competence development is the self-assessment by students of their strength, abilities and actual performance as it provides a connectedness of students between their learning process and goals. (Boekaerts 1991; Brundiers et al. 2021).

### **Faculty Readiness**

The faculty role therefore, requires a complete transformation. Accepting students centric learning is the basic requirement followed by abilities to work in a tech-enabled learning environment, (Manowaluloua et al. 2022) developing competency-based student centric content and pedagogy, designing practical assessments and connecting with students as mentor and trainer (Riza et al. 2024). Competency development involves a professional perspective of faculties in their teaching methods Hence a faculty has to face technological, educational, institutional as well as individual level challenges. This will require a shift in the competencies of faculty who should have expertise in their domain areas to ensure unbiased assessments of student's performance.

Research on implementation of CBC has been done in other streams like Nursing, Engineering etc., and outlined the below points as main factors affecting the process (Curry et al. 2017)-. These are-

1. Faculty preparedness
2. Student engagement with pedagogy and content
3. Outcomes

The paper also emphasized faculty involvement in complete implementation process for better results and successfully removed classroom lectures getting expected outcomes in performance.

A major issue is to balance teaching, research and administrative level tasks that calls for an exhaustive training of faculties to update them with knowledge and skills of CBE (Gruppen et al. 2016)

The skills & competency in faculty to teach CBC include-

- Practical understanding of subject
- Technical & online skills
- Content Development
- Assessment & feedback

- Collaboration and communication.

In order to successfully adopt CBC in management education, top management role and support is extremely essential by providing trainings and pedagogical resources (A. et al. 2012). Equally important is to design relevant transition strategies and create specific committees to manage the operational and administrative challenges (Orlovic Lovren et al. 2019).

MBA accrediting agencies play a significant role as they need to set up specific learning goals to be adopted by all MBA colleges (Mileva Boshkoska et al. 2024). The Educational objectives are based on mutually identified with industry and alumni based on which the faculty develops pedagogical content.

Overall, the key factors (CBC24) in implementation of CBC in management courses derived from the self-directed learning theory (Kolbet al., 1968; Kolb and Boyatzis, 1970; Boyatzis, 1999) and the constructivist alignment theory aligns outcomes with planned curriculum, pedagogy and assessment include-

1. Competence component decision- traits, motive, skills and knowledge.
2. Defining objectives and needs
3. Competency based didactics and teaching methods
4. Self-awareness through self-assessment (CBC25)
5. Individual and class level monitoring
6. Throughout skills assessment with pre-defined criteria
7. Faculty Mentorship
8. Exit Interview

### **Career Training**

Studies have shown that apart from curriculum gaps, students' unplanned career decisions is also a major cause of low job retention. The lack of clarity in students with respect to their expectation from the MBA course and their career goals leads to frequent job switch and wrong choices of MBA stream. Students are unable to tell their expectations from the course as well as their careers.

The study (Benjamin et al. 2011) identified the problems of management graduate at the starting of the career. The findings indicate important gaps in curriculum leading to early job change and dissatisfaction from jobs the students did not find themselves ready to take real work situation. Also, the self-concept and behavior change too were completely different from what they were taught in colleges

CTM provides planned career training as per individual interest, strength and weaknesses. CTM is an important tool to support students in life long career progression. The importance of career management in achieving personal and professional success is now gaining attention of researchers as well as industry around the world. Students' personality and traits play an important role in taking correct career decisions. (Adejare Babarinde et al. 2022)

. The CD theory of career education and guidance, has been found to have positive effects on student's career decision-making, self-efficacy, adaptability, and vocational identity (Whiston et al. 2017) when provided by qualified practitioners. Such a career training lays a positive impact on job search self-efficacy, networking behavior, and employment outcomes (Liu, Huang, and Wang 2014). However big class size and lack of teachers training facilities put a negative effect on its results. .

The DOTS model of career development is aligned with curriculum resources. The main elements of DOTS model are decision, opportunities, transition and self (McKenzie et al. 2021).

Based on the DOTS model by (Watts, 2006,) the four key career management competences include-

- Decision making skills
- Opportunity awareness

- Transition learning
- Self-Awareness of interest values and abilities.

Career success is another dimension of graduate employability that denotes fulfillment of career goals mainly influenced by proactive career behavior. career decisions. The study (Agarwal,2008) finding indicate that aligning proactive career behavior and career goal as a formal part of curriculum is essential for visible competence development.

The reason for less mentoring programs in MBA is due to more emphasis on classroom based theoretical teaching. The over occupancy of student in academic activity is a prime reason for low participation in mentoring programs (Winningham,1995). Two main suggestions were introducing mentoring in the beginning of the program and providing e-mentoring facility to solve students' issues.

Saidu and Ajuji (2017) recommend restructuring the Nigerian HE curriculum to contain career training and development activities or programs that can ease students' career development and graduate employability.

### **Objective of the study and Theoretical premise**

The implementation of Competency based curriculum in business management courses in India is yet not studied. This poses a need to understand the factors affecting the implementation of CBC. How it can be adopted and what will be the challenges. The available literature misses to include the perspective of the faculty who will be play an integral part in the implementation of CBC. Also there are no studies that check the likelihood of integrating career mentoring & vocational training with CBC for improving employability of management graduates

This study, therefore, aims at understanding the opinion of the faculty and management on adopting CBC with career training in MBA courses. The study aims to identify the factors that will impact the implementation.

RO1- To identify the factors involved in implementation of CBC with career training for management students in Indian universities.

Ro2-. To understand the readiness of the faculties for using CBC model.

The underpinning theory for this research based on the extensive literature review are –

- a) The competency-based Learning Model and
- b) The Social cognitive career theory (SCCT). The two theories relate well with the two dimensions of this study.

**Competence-Based Education (CBE)** emerged in the 1960s. Today, there are various definitions of CBE. The Foundation of Excellence in Education describes it as "a system of instruction in which students progress to higher levels of understanding when they prove their mastery of concepts and skills—regardless of time, location, or speed." Competency-based learning starts by pinpointing specific competencies or skills, allowing learners to achieve mastery of each one at their own pace, often with guidance from a mentor

**Social cognitive career theory (SCCT)**, formulated by Robert W. Lent, Steven D. Brown, and Gail Hackett in 1994, is grounded in Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, which is a significant framework for understanding cognitive and motivational processes. This theory has been applied to explore various aspects of psychosocial functioning, including academic success, health-related behaviours, and development within organizations. SCCT is a comparatively recent theory designed to clarify three interconnected facets of career development: (a) the evolution of fundamental academic and career interests, (b) the process of making educational and career decisions, and (c) the achievement of academic and career success. The theory integrates several concepts (such as interests, abilities, values, environmental influences) that are present in previous career theories and have been identified as impacting career development

## Methodology

### Design

The study is based on qualitative approach aimed at identifying the themes on the topic. The population for the study comprises of faculty and HODs of MBA colleges of Indian Universities. Being a qualitative research, convenience and snowball sampling were used to reach prospective participants. Invitation emails were sent to prospects in around 25 states but due to time and trust issues we were able to interview respondents from 12 states which represents almost 60% of the total population. Emails were derived from professional networking platforms, websites of universities and personal references.

### Participants

Using the convenience and snowball sampling candidates were reached through email and text messages. The total number of persons reached were 143. Contact were gathered from websites of the universities as well as from references and an email with details of topic and purpose of study were sent. The prospects were also reached through text messages and calls. The participants consist of two segments of the MBA department. First, the faculty with more than 5 years of experience of teaching MBA students and second the HODs or Directors of MBA colleges. Maximum faculty who responded were Associate professors and Assistant professors. HODs and directors were contacted first through email and text messages considering their position and busy schedules.

Public and private both types of universities were contacted but only 8 public universities could participate due to time and privacy constraints.

The demographic details of the participants presented a suitable profile for gathering data on such a significant topic. Nearly half of the respondents were having an experience of more than 15 years and another maximum respondent were found with 11-20 years of experience. With a good number of experience these respondents were found to be right fit to discuss on this topic. Another demographic information that signifies relevance to their inputs is their industry experience. Maximum respondents had 1 to 5 years of industry experience with just 20 % above 10 years. Almost 65 percent of respondents work with NAAC accredited universities.

Demographic Profile of Respondents						
S. No.	Code	Gender	Position	Experience (in years)	University category	Indian State
1	F1	Female	Professor	15	Private	Uttar Pradesh
2	M1	Female	HOD	14	Private	Uttar Pradesh
3	M2	Male	Associate Professor	12	Private	West Bengal
4	F2	Male	Professor & Chairperson	22	Private	Karnataka
5	M3	Male	Associate Dean and Professor	23	Private	West Bengal
6	F3	Male	Professor	11	Private	Assam
7	F4	Female	Professor	32	Private	Maharashtra
8	M4	Male	Professor	34	Public state	Uttar Pradesh
9	F5	Male	Professor	19	Public state	Uttar Pradesh
10	F6	Male	Professor	21	Public state	Uttar Pradesh
11	F7	Male	Professor	30	Private	Uttarakhand
12	M5	Male	HOD	32	Private	Uttarakhand

13	M6	Male	HOD	25	Private	Uttarakhand
14	F8	Male	Professor	24	Private	Uttarakhand
15	F9	Male	Professor	18	Public state	Uttar Pradesh
16	F10	Male	Professor	16	Private	Uttar Pradesh
17	M7	Female	Professor	9	Private	Haryana
18	F11	Female	Professor	21	Private	Delhi
19	M8	Male	HOD	33	Private	Uttarakhand
20	F12	Female	Associate professor	22	Private	Haryana
21	F13	Female	Professor	14	Private	Uttarakhand
22	F14	Male	Professor	23	Private	Uttar Pradesh
23	M9	Male	HOD	25	Private	Karnataka
24	F15	Female	Professor	22	Private	Karnataka
25	M10	Male	Director	27	Private	Uttarakhand
26	M11	Male	Director	31	Private	Rajasthan
27	F16	Male	Associate professor	42	Private	Uttar Pradesh
28	F17	Female	Associate professor	19	Central university	Assam
29	M12	Female	Assistant professor	22	Public state	Tamil Nadu
30	M13	Male	Professor	36	Private	Maharashtra
31	F18	Male	Assistant professor	14	Private	Uttar Pradesh
32	F19	Female	Assistant Professor	10	Public state	Uttar Pradesh
33	M14	Male	Dean	25	Private	Rajasthan
34	F20	Female	Associate Professor	18	Public state	Rajasthan
35	F21	Female	Assistant Professor	13	Private	Rajasthan
36	F22	Male	Associate professor	20	Private	Tamil Nadu
37	F23	Male	Associate professor	17	Private	Tamil Nadu
38	F24	Male	Assistant Professor	11	Private	Uttar Pradesh
39	F25	Male	Associate professor	21	Private	Rajasthan
40	F26	Female	Associate professor	16	Central university	Assam
41	M15	Male	Professor	35	Private	Haryana
42	M16	Male	Director	37	Private	Maharashtra
43	M17	Male	Director	26	Private	Uttarakhand
44	F27	Male	Professor	31	Private	Uttar Pradesh
45	F28	Female	Associate	15	Central university	Uttar Pradesh



			Professor Director]			
46	F28	Female	Assistant Professor	10	Public state	Delhi
47	F29	Male	Associate Professor. Director	19	Public state	Tamil Nadu

**Table-1 Demographic profile of Respondents**

### Interview/Data Collection

Qualitative study with semi structured interviews were conducted to keep check on the identified themes from literature review and keep pace with research objective. This interview guide was created with themes identified from review on main components of competency-based curriculum, global trends on career planning and training, faculty concerns on CBC in MBA programs.

Improvisation of the interview guide was done with suggestions from co-researcher and experts in this area. Priority was given to develop an entirely open-ended questionnaire to obtain maximum inputs and wider perspective on said themes. The main Questions asked were around the following themes

- a) Opinion on Employability of MBA students
- b) Challenges in adopting Competency based Curriculum with career training. (separately by HODs & Faculty)
- c) Opinion of Faculty on taking the roles of a CBC
- d) View on the relevance of CBC & Career training in India's MBA program.

The subthemes included specific opinion on Multiple assessor system, Flexible timelines, skills to train students on competencies, assessment challenges etc. (Themes taken from Literature review).

The first interview was a pilot test to check whether the inputs could generate relevant information on the questions.

The interviews were mainly conducted online and face to face. Few were also conducted over a phone call due to time issue.

The interviews were documented in the form of video recordings along with audio recordings and notes written alongside.

A total of 47 participants were interviewed from private and public universities from \_\_\_\_states of India. Two HODs were from foreign universities (U.K., &Middle East) with extensive experience in Indian colleges. This was a value addition as an international perspective was made on this study.

One-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted, lasting 30–45 min. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researchers.

### Participants' Requirements and Ethical Considerations

The participants were informed of the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the time commitment required

The purpose of the study was duly informed to each participant at the time of fixing the interview schedule. Assurance was provided about their privacy and confidentiality of the data. They were given the choice to opt out in case of any inconvenience which was not availed by any of them. Prior permission was taken to record the interviews in audio and video forms. Every respondent was given a pseudonym to secure their identity. None of the respondent raised any concern and showed complete support in the conduct of the interviews. The data files on the computer were protected by password and can be accessed only by the researchers.

## Analytical Process

Data were analysed using inductive approach to thematic analysis based on the work by Braun and Clarke (2013, 2014) guided the investigation of the interview transcripts. The analysis was conducted to identify the patterns and themes against the research questions. The Six Step data analysis process by Braun & Clarke, 2006 included-

1. Familiarization of data.
2. Generation of codes.
3. Combining codes into themes.
4. Reviewing themes.
5. Determine significance of themes.
6. Reporting of findings.

The data was first cleared and edited preparing the transcripts of each respondent. The data was then sorted to identify the keyword. . The identified keywords were grouped together under the most appropriate codewords using the semantic coding approach. Open coding was done by creating and modifying the codes while working through this process. Later these codes were studied to understand the emerging themes. The entire process was conducted using the thematic analysis software NVivo 12 pro and Excel (Bree & Gallagher (2016). The word cloud was generated to understand the most recurring terms, that helped in understanding the overall themes appearing against the research questions.

A key contemplation in qualitative research for all researchers is establish when the data saturation has occurred. After the analysis of 47 transcripts, we could not find emergence of any new data or themes. Hence at this point it was assumed that saturation of data has occurred (Dibley, 2011; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The in-depth analysis, coding and sub coding helped to draw the most recurring points. There were approximately 75 codes identified at the beginning of the analysis process that were funnelled down into Six themes.

Employability of management graduates is the core reason for this study hence, one basic question was asked with all respondents about their *“viewpoint on status of employability of MBA freshers”*.

## Results

A total of Six themes emerged by conducting the thematic analysis of the data. These were, [1]Faculty Role Expansion, [2] Remuneration and Infrastructure Cost, [3] Leadership support, [4] Scheduling Barriers, [5]Faculty Personal Restraints and, [6]Curriculum Structure & Design.

A separate theme on solutions emerged as a result of asking management & Faculty about suggestion to overcome the stated challenges. These included,

- A. Curriculum alignment & Certification.
- B. Goal oriented assessment indicators
- C. Value addition vocational courses
- D. Paid experiences & Internships
- E. IT enabled process



**Figure 1- Themes on key issues of Implementing CBC with Career Training**

### ***Theme***

#### **[1] Faculty Role Expansion.**

Added responsibilities like developing pedagogy and content with individual learning style, collaborating with Career training departments for student career plan integration , developing practical assessments and learning to develop skills rather than teaching theory were the main concerns of faculties. Along with domain expertise, faculty will need to develop training aptitude to teach a competence-based subject.

Industry networking will be required to align their pedagogies with industry skills expectation. This will add a new role to the existing faculty profile. Regular Feedback and monitoring is an essential element of CBC that demands a facilitator role in faculty. Faculty have to be a facilitator with ability to understand student psychology and intents to ensure continuous feedback and monitoring of the performance of each student.

*“role of the teacher will evolve from a stand and-deliver model to one of coaching, mentoring, facilitating and collaborating with students.”. [F4]*

*“Academician or faculty need to reach out to industry and connect to understand what is happening in industry and bringing it to the classroom“. [F13]*

*“PHD is important in India. but industry exposure should also be a mandatory requirement”. [M1]*

### ***Theme***

#### **[2] Remuneration and Infrastructure Cost**

Adopting a CBC in current MBA programs demands faculty themselves to be highly competency I their domain areas with ability to convert their subject into specific competencies and skills. This will be a challenge as faculties at present are hired for their academic orientation only with little or no corporate exposure. Hence new faculties will be required. Most of the faculties as well as management respondents expected a revision of salaries with provisions for additional incentives.

*“Senior faculty members -what are they getting for their efforts. No Cheques and balances for professors, are there, they are governed by central government rules”.[F11]*

Similarly, there will be additional remuneration expenses to hire career training & industry experts for adopting multiple assessments and providing vocational training by experts

*“Number of professors need to be more. Infrastructure, more rooms and facilities to be increased. Overall cost will increase. per student cost will be higher”.*[F1]

*“Software and IT support will be needed to manage a student centric curriculum ‘that require to maintain different records performance monitoring of students’.”* [F7]

*“Teacher may resist due to work overload as well as less incentives.”*[F12]

Simultaneously, due to larger group sizes of students, more space will be required to break them down into smaller batches leading to need for more faculty as well as labs and rooms.

### **Theme**

#### **[3] Leadership support**

CBC requires a complete change of pedagogy and learning experiences in current systems. From faculty upgradation to infrastructure, hiring new staff and industry associations, all this is not possible without the active of leadership. Since CBC will be a complete change in curriculum, it has to be led by the top including the accrediting agencies like UGC, AICTE, NAAC etc.

Faculties and management viewed management vision as the most important aspect in this transition. The presence of BOS, quality control departments in higher education is an affirmation to this requirement and will definitely catalyse the process .

*“leadership commitment can definitely accelerate the entire change process”.* [M1]

*Leaders cannot operate in an exclusive environment. Always driven by external environment.*[M4]

### **Theme**

#### **4] ] Scheduling Constraints**

Schedule here refers to factors affecting assignment of tasks and duties to faculties. In the current operational systems of MBA program, faculties are assigned multiple subjects , sometime non-domain ones. Also, the batch sizes are big up to 120 to 375 students in one batch. An important factor is the additional workload in form of documentation due to the mandatory guidelines under NEP 2020, to follow Outcome based Education system of teaching.

CBC features like the flexible time line, multiple assessors for evaluating competency development and personalised pedagogy and monitoring requires high level of faculty involvement. To develop competencies faculty, have to be domain experts possessing both practical skills as well as knowledge. Most of the faculty respondents were found to be resistant of CBC due to its additional workload, better known as work overload, signifying their overoccupancy leaving less or no time for self-development specially research that is an important criterion for their career progress and college rating.

*“ Interest of teachers is going ahead with completion of time schedules and completion of number of classes”.* [M4]

### **Theme**

#### **[5] Faculty Personal Restraints**

Faculty were found to be reluctant to accept mainly two parts of the CBC model. First is developing competencies as per market demand. Due to the recruitment specifications, most professors possess academic degrees and

certificates and few have corporate experience. Most of the faculties have theoretical knowledge in their domain areas and don't find themselves ready to train students on competencies. Due to this they fear about student's acceptance. They opined that student centric approach may be misused by some students. A feeling of self-doubt could be figured from their responses on their preparedness. HODs suggested that competency development in faculties can be easily achieved by providing dedicated corporate time and reducing their administrative and documentation workload.

The second point of doubt was the multiple assessor system. Bringing outsiders as assessors may lead to biases as well as lowering their importance among students. Faculties were apprehensive of their relevance by bringing multiple assessors. However, with predefined competency indicators and criteria this problem can be resolved.

### ***Theme***

#### **[6] Curriculum Structure & Design.**

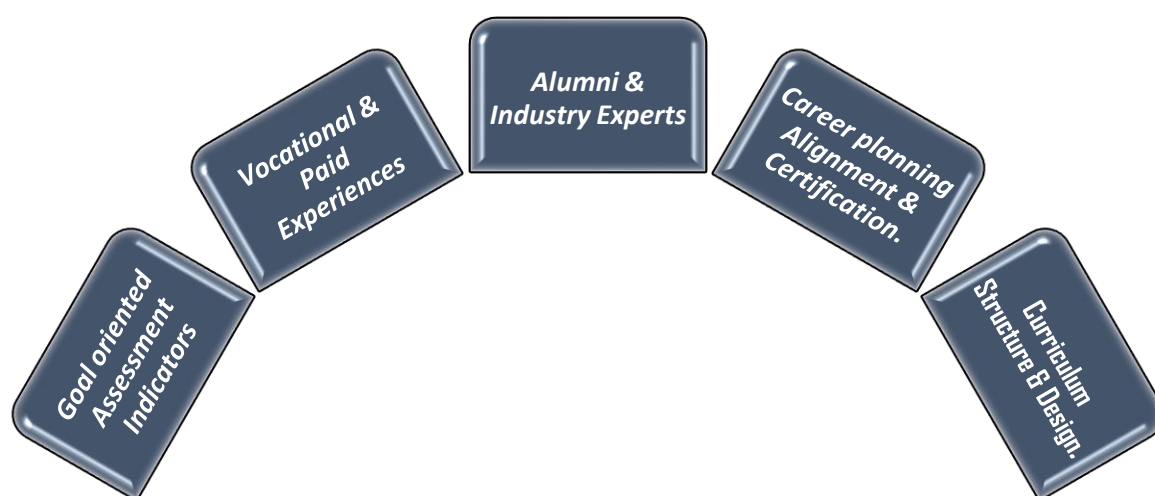
Curriculum structure refers the layout of various components of the curriculum and design refers to the alignment of different process to get the desired outcomes.

The key considerations of faculty in terms of structure were a compulsory 15-20% ratio of theory in Curriculum to accommodate Indian students' requirements. Also a compulsory part of vocational and paid experiences as trainings to complete the competencies. HODs were mainly concerned about the problems in getting the curriculum and competencies authenticated. Who is the right authority to approve selection of competencies and who shall authenticate the competency completion indicators (CCI)? HODs were concerned about acceptance of career training activities and want it to be added as a separate department working immediately after the admissions and orientation process of new batch.

"Theory and practical are dependent on nature of subject. In case of competency-oriented curriculum, practical can be adopted but 10 to 20% theory will be needed based on quality of students.".[M6]

### ***Solutions***

*As a wrap up question of the interview, respondents were asked for suggestions on the issues they have raised in implementing CBC with Career Training.*



**Figure 2- Suggested actions for Implementation**

- ***Goal oriented Assessment indicators***

Where college management has employability and program quality as considerations, faculty looks for seeing visible outcomes in students' performance from their exhaustive teaching efforts. Replacing the current theoretical outcomes of OBE practice with competency indicators as assessment criteria will help in overcoming this limitation. Employers too will be satisfied of recruiting the competency certified students who can perform in real work situations.

- ***Vocational & Paid Experiences***

Both faculty and management suggested to include more of practical inputs with an experiential learning. However, a 100% competency-based curriculum may not be accepted by the students and the teachers both. Hence a 15-20% theory was suggested should be included WITH pedagogic tools like flipped classrooms. Despite this the main focus was to provide as much experiences as possible in an active blended learning mode. Paid internships and short-term work assignment were suggested for better career decisions and competency selection.

- ***Alumni & Industry experts***

Mutually beneficial Collaborations between college and alumni and other industry experts is necessary for providing relevant career mentoring and training in specific competencies. Alumni as mentors can considerably improve students career decisions leading to low turnover in their initial jobs mutually fulfilling tie-ups between college and industry can reduce costs and provide intrinsic motivation to experts for long term associations as expert mentors, trainers and career guides.

- ***Career planning alignment & certification.***

Already accrediting agencies like UGC, AICTE etc have made it mandatory for colleges to have career training department. However, the issue raised by management side respondents is the casual approach in its operations. Giving weightage to career planning process and work experiences in the performance assessments should be a mandatory requirement to attain competency certificate. A formal structure is a must that aligns career training with CBC as it will make the competencies more relevant leading to satisfaction of both the employers as well as the students

- ***IT enabled process***

CBC & career planning both are task-rich activities. Career planning comprises of elements like, [1] personality assessments, [2] career interests, [3] scanning job prospects and roles of suitability, [4] self-awareness, [5] career planning. Being student-centric, curriculum has to be customised right from competency selection to pedagogy and content development and monitoring every student's progress. The final outcomes should be tangible in terms of performance in real work situations. They should fulfil the competency indicator criteria for eligibility of competency certificate and MBA degree. To align this with competence development curriculum requires extensive dialogues, monitoring and efforts of students as well as faculty and career experts which if done manually will kill a lot of productive time and learning activities. Hence, both the categories of respondents suggested, firstly to have a separate career training department assigning faculty with just the facilitation and feedback roles. This will balance their current work load and give ample time to devote in content and pedagogy innovations in their domain areas.

IT-enabled processes therefore are inevitable considering the big batch size in Indian MBA, to keep record of each student's performances, track of alignment between career planning and competency development, goal-based assessments with regular feedback and monitoring.

## **Discussion**

The findings of the study brought out a mix of challenges as well as solutions. Faculty as well as management, both, raised the fact that the MBA curriculum is obsolete and needs a revamping in all its components specially learning experiences and assessments. This supports the common demand of most stakeholders to replace the outdated theoretical orientation of MBA curriculum with a more practical and skill-oriented one. CBC along with planned career decisions will increase student's engagement leading to sustainable employment and low turnover from jobs. The prevailing teaching redundancies in terms of low-quality teaching tools and knowledge-centric

assessments need to be replaced with education that prepares students for global opportunities. Experiential and work-based curriculum is necessary to overcome the employability and career issue of graduates. An important point to be registered is the affirmative tone of all the respondents towards bringing CBC with career training in Indian MBA Programs. This information holds significance as it denotes more than 50% of the defined population size, i.e., 26 Indian states.

Faculty were found to be mainly concerned about low engagement of students and theoretical inputs whereas, HODs concerns were [a] Diversity in profile of students and [2] ignorant career decisions, as main cause of low employability and early turnover of MBA freshers. [3] Elasticity of Job offers is also a significant reason for low employability which is due to lack of skills in students. Companies recruit management graduates for jobs suitable basically for B.A., B.Com or other nonprofessional courses. Offers are also usually same for all types of qualification and profile is generally lower than the qualification. This is checked with offers given to tier 1 and tier 2 college students.

The first question that this study aimed to answer is to identify the factors affecting CBC implementation with career training. Competency based curriculum have five distinct features including a flexible timeline, competency-based pedagogy and content, multiple assessments and student centric learning. (\_\_\_\_).

The idea of implementing competency-based curriculum in Indian MBA courses has got positive affirmations from faculty as well as management of colleges. The key reasons behind this positive response include a much-needed shift to an industry-oriented course that develop skills rather than give knowledge through theoretical inputs. Other reason in support of CBC are, [1] Providing sustainable employment [2] Enhancement in quality of MBA programs, and [3] Achievement of visible and functional outcomes.

The need to shift from grade point to Competency Indicators specially for MBA course has been highly appreciated, although concerns were raised on the authenticity of the methods to develop indicators. It was suggested that the government institutes in specific domains like, HR, Finance, entrepreneurship etc should be involved in competency development and assessments.

Although Faculty showed their concerns and doubts on adopting multiple assessor system, yet they were hope full that such system will conduct a 360-degree assessment and will overcome and induce faculties to upgrade their teaching efforts.

*"it's a good idea. Ignorance by one can be balanced by other assessor".[M12]*

An important reason behind affirmative responses by faculty for this transformational change was the considerable increase in workload due to fulfilment of documentation requirements of the OBE process. Lack of visible changes in students' performance and time taking unproductive documentation tasks were triggered the faculty attitude against it.

Responses from state university professors gave a mix response. Although both the HODs and the professors approved the need for competency-oriented curriculum, they were apprehensive about its acceptance by management and the highly diverse and uninterested student group. The state university respondents were indecisive on CBC due to traditional work culture and formal hierarchical structures.

Although there were unanimous acceptance for CBC, HODs were equally concerned about the academic loss in form of research work due to over occupancy of faculty. Planned scheduling of responsibilities and recruitment of faculties can overcome this problem.

An important point raised by all respondents regarding reasons for low employability is the lack of informed career decisions. Both HODs and faculties agreed that students make choice of their electives and career domains based on influences from peers and family. Career training refers to planned career decision by indulging students in activities like self-assessments exploring their personality types, career interests and job market. Selecting Competencies in CBC can also be aligned with career training results. For this it is essential to bring career training in a formal structure with equal weightage in overall graduation criteria. Faculties as well as HODs agreed that career training is a must for sustainable careers, but should be managed through a separate department to reduce

faculty additional workload. Faculties agreed that their involvement in career planning and decisions is required but suggested to remain in a facilitator role. Workload and time constraints were main reason for this.

Competency based curriculum provides autonomy to students right from what to learn, how to learn and till when to complete. Options for selecting competencies of their interest makes CBC suitable for every student need. Findings suggests that aligning career training with CBC can enhance the relevance of the learning outcomes. Students ownership of the curriculum choices will improve quality of learning experiences and discard any redundant teaching trends. A well-planned learning is essential to reduce the unemployable workforce and high attritions.

Carer training was considered necessary by both the groups of respondents but it will add extra roles of faculties. A separate department with just the facilitation roles assigned to faculties was debated as the most viable solution.

IT & Software support was a common requirement by all respondents to streamline all activities, and reduce the monitoring and feedback documentation. The cost factor was an important concern by management but considering the future of technology and AI it will be a mandatory cost to be incurred certainly leading to improved students learning experiences.

The second Research question aimed at understanding the preparedness of faculty to adopt CBC in their pedagogy, content development and assessments. Whether the faculty is ready to adopt a student centric curriculum and adopt a training perspective to develop competencies rather than impart theoretical inputs?

The study aimed at understanding the outlook of faculty and management on replacing their current curriculum with a complete competency orientation and readiness to follow a student centric approach with ability to customise the lesson plans, pedagogy and content. Whether faculty supports the multiple assessor system and how do they look at the flexible timelines option to complete the competency development.

The faculty appeared excited about this shift from traditional teaching to CBC pattern but were nervous about their skills and competencies to administer this curriculum. Faculties were mainly worried for two reasons, First, their limited knowledge on the CBC process and competencies for faculties and secondly, their lack of industry connectedness and exposure to competency development abilities in their subjects. HODs were mainly concerned about the faculties who were permanent job holders but didn't possess an industry perspective. A 15 to 20 days training of faculty in industry in their domain is necessary to look at their subjects from skills perspective.

Acceptance for adopting a student's centric personalised competencies development pedagogy is a step ahead in implementation. The positive outlook of faculty to unfollow the traditional centric teaching, sacrificing their autonomy and importance for students welfare further strengthened the idea of implementing the CBC. A unique feature of CBC, it is found to have potential to overcome teaching evils like teacher centric inputs, student biases and unproductive outcomes

The main concerns on this alignment among HODs is about the low competency of faculty to prepare content and develop competences in students. This is because the prevailing trends were of academic excellence in faculty with little or no consideration to industry exposure. Just a few faculties have corporate experience and domain expertise.

The skills to develop content and assessment system will need extensive training of faculty. Not only this, faculty need to be trained in their domain areas and hence 15-20 days mandatory industry visit is necessary. The reluctance to adopt CBC came mostly from senior or non-corporate faculties who were not confident of the new role. However, the promising aspect was their readiness to learn.

This question also identified a list of diverse skills & competencies for faculty trainings programs. With a well-planned change process CBC competencies and knowledge can be built in faculties. Ofcourse, top management support is essential for results to happen

Suggestion from HODs and directors indicate faculty training in following areas-

[1] Self Improvement skills (adaptability, cohesiveness, flexibility)



- [2] Networking expertise ( Extrovert, dynamic, corporate relations etc. )
- [3] Entrepreneurial skills (Creativity, Innovation, Teamwork)
- [4] Feedback & Mentoring (Mentoring, counselling, student psychology)
- [5] CBC process training(Competency & content development, pedagogy design)
- [6] IT & Software knowledge (AI Literacy, using software for teaching process)
- [7] Domain expertise ( knowledge and skill expertise in domain area)

Not only this, visible outcomes in form of specific domain competencies will reinforce trust among employers and other stakeholders leading to improvement in quality of MBA course.

College reputation, quality of MBA program and sustainable employment are main reasons for top management to prefers CBC with career training.

This study provides perspective of both faculty and the management on CBC implementation issues

### **Conclusion.**

MBA education in India is all set for some massive transformations. The idea of Competency based curriculum holds a lot of scope in MBA programs because of their common perspective on significance of competencies and innovation. Both these are the key to a sustainable career and CBC with its student centric skill-based learning approach fulfils just that. Combining Career training with inputs like student's personality assessments, opportunity analysis and domain specific short trainings adds to the relevance of the CBC model in the future. The decisions taken through career training process and paid internships provide a planned approach for the students to select the competencies in the curriculum. This will further strengthen their involvement in the learning process.

Faculty on the other side will also gain expertise in their domain areas with inbuild industry trainings and upgraded skills in content and pedagogy development. The multiple assessor and flexible timeline arrangements of CBC are believed to provide a positive motivation for continuous improvement in quality teaching. Students will find meaning in what they are learning and therefore can be active contributors breaking the classroom monotony.

The accrediting agencies like UGC & AICTE are already paving way for a skill based practical curriculum. Formalising the role of industry experts and alumni in the learning process in form of assessors, career & domain experts will create a long lasting mutually beneficial relationship among all stakeholders.

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### **Abbreviations-**

1. CBC-Competency based Curriculum
2. CT-Career Training
3. CBE-Competency based Education

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