

Why MBAs are choosing purpose-driven careers

Map The System

Goa Institute of Management became the first Indian school to take part in MTS in Oxford, where 40 teams representing 17 countries participated in the global finale, writes academic **Pravat Surya Kar**

It was a bright, sunny morning in Oxford, and a group of visiting students was enjoying a curated city tour. However, beneath their beaming facial contours, they seemed to be quietly brimming with anticipation. They were part of 150 students from some of the world's most respected institutions whom the University of Oxford in England hosted between the July 3-7, 2023.

The list of the institutions included MIT, University of Queensland, Johns Hopkins University, McGill, King's College London, and others. These students were the chosen few who reached the final round of Map the System (MTS) 2023. This year, 1,700 students across the globe enrolled in the six-month-long, uniquely curated learning journey of MTS. It concluded in Oxford, where 40 teams representing 17 countries participated in the global finale for prizes worth \$15,000, \$1,000, and \$2,500. The Skoll Centre at the Saïd Business School in Oxford launched this unique programme in 2015. Its objective was: "To nurture a global community of educators, students, and practitioners committed to applying the principles of systems thinking to complex social and environmental challenges." In MTS, the participant students and their educator mentors attempt to address problems, such as air pollution, malnutrition, climate change, and other issues that either impact select societies or challenge humanity at large. Often, such challenges are referred to as 'wicked problems'. These problems are not solved outright but are instead continually addressed or dealt with.

Since the inception of MTS, participants from 140 institutions and a total of 15,000 students have been trained to become change agents equipped to address wicked problems. These problems are difficult to resolve because stakeholders often lack a mutually agreed-upon solution, and non-consensual efforts often lead to the evolution—or even escalation—of the problems themselves.

Participant teams in MTS begin with asynchronous online coursework consisting of six modules designed to build competencies for addressing wicked problems. These modules cover topics such as understanding complex social problems, systems approaches, learning about systems, systems analysis, systems mapping, and proposing action plans. Students' progress through the modules is monitored by the Skoll Centre.

(The author is associate professor, Marketing, Goa Institute of Management)

The radical shift among B-school grads aligns with social entrepreneurship's global evolution that fosters sustainable business models, writes **Prof Mahadeo Jaiswal**

As India is projected to remain the fastest-growing major economy, with an expected growth of 6.7% for FY26-27, significantly surpassing global growth of 2.7% (World Bank's GDP, Morgan Stanley's GIC report), the very essence of leadership is undergoing a transformation. This shift moves beyond merely chasing economic growth to strategically balancing it with social impact, sustainability, and responsible capitalism. This evolving discourse is a key driver behind why more MBA graduates are choosing purpose-driven careers. Business, corporate enterprises, and public policy institutions are rapidly aligning with these new priorities, underscored by the emergence of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks. With SEBI making Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) mandatory for India's largest 1000 listed companies since FY2023-24, Indian businesses are integrating sustainability into mainstream decisions, creating a surging demand for MBA graduates equipped with critical ESG skills, capable of navigating carbon markets, circular economies, inclusive business models, and stakeholder-driven governance.

This transformation is reinforced by a shift in student ambitions. The Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC) Prospective Students Survey 2024 reveals 67% of Indian MBA aspirants prioritise 'positive societal impact' (up from 42% in 2017). The LinkedIn India Workforce Report 2024 highlighted a 12% rise in demand for purpose-driven roles like 'Impact Manager', 'CSR Consultant', 'Sustainability Officer', 'ESG Manager', and 'Sustainability Strategist', signaling rapid professionalisation.

Global Impact

This radical shift among MBA graduates aligns with social entrepreneurship's global evolution, where companies address societal and environmental problems while maintaining financial viability, fostering sustainable business models. The 2024 'Global Entrepreneurship Monitor' (GEM) India report highlights over 57% of young Indian entrepreneurs prioritise social impact alongside profitability. Global research, in-

cluding the World Economic Forum's 2023 'Future of Jobs' report, confirms social entrepreneurship leads to higher personal satisfaction and improved job experience, with 72% of social entrepreneurs globally reporting enhanced career satisfaction. This rise in socially responsible career goals aligns with India's evolving policy landscape. NEP 2020 emphasises integrating social responsibility, ethics, and sustainable development into higher education, inspiring B-schools, particularly IIMs, to develop socially, environmentally, and community-driven leaders. A significant policy game-changer is the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) provision of the Companies Act, 2013, making India the first nation to legally mandate companies to spend at least 2% of their net profit on social development programmes. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs' CSR Annual Report 2023 shows Indian firms allocated Rs 26,210 crore to CSR interventions in FY2022-23. This creates substantial demand for management leaders to strategically design, implement, and monitor impactful social development programmes.

As India transitions towards sustainability and social impact, sectors like transport, energy, and infrastructure are undergoing rapid green transformations. This national drive necessitates future-ready talent proficient in green technologies, sustainable business models, and climate-conscious policymaking. Aligning with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 guidelines, B-schools are adapting. IIM Ahmedabad's CIEE.CO has invested Rs 100 crore into Social Impact Startups focusing on financial inclusion, health technology, and livelihood development. IIM Bangalore's NSRCEL-Incubation Centre has significantly contributed to social entrepreneurship, incubating over 500 social startups. IIM Sambalpur fosters societal leadership, exemplified by projects like Bunkar Valleys, integrating grassroots weavers into mainstream markets sustaining traditional arts. Public missions like NIPUN Bharat, Skill India, Mission Karmayogi, and Swachh Bharat offer MBAs leadership roles in public administration, rural development, and public-private partnerships, contributing to national development. This new career trajectory encompasses public policy advice, rural development interventions often facilitated through collaborations with multilateral agencies such as UNDP, World Bank, and NITI Aayog. Indian management education is undergoing a genuine transformation.

(The author is director, IIM Sambalpur)

Strategic leadership and learning culture enable organisations to grow

ADMA-KPMG conducted a survey to examine how organisations progress across the 10 dimensions of the Management Capability Development Index (MCDI). Indian organisations have made noteworthy progress on the 'Integrity and Corporate Governance' dimension, consistently being rated the highest, reflecting the efforts of Indian leaders to implement strong integrity and corporate governance mechanisms. However, the 'Innovation and Adaptability' dimension has been rated the lowest in 2024.

Strongest Dimensions

Integrity, trust and corporate governance, financial leadership

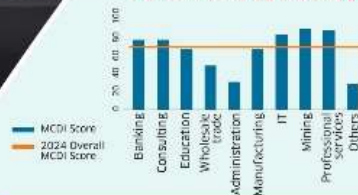
Weakest Dimensions

Innovation, adaptability, people leadership, and self-development

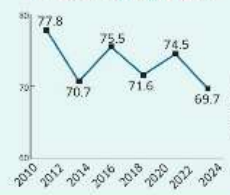
Comparative Analysis

The MCDI score for 2024 stands at 69.7, lower than the score achieved in 2023.

Performance by Industry



Overall MCDI Score



Source: ADMA-KPMG

Recruiters want analytical thinkers to translate theory into business decisions

Graduates must arrive at the workplace with more than textbook knowledge of finance, operations, or strategy, writes **Balakrishna Grandhi**

Industries that reinvent themselves rapidly are seeking graduates who can hit the ground running—professionals who can think on their feet, adapt to change, and inspire teams from day one. As a result, 80% of graduate's secure top roles in consulting, finance, and technology within weeks of graduation, while others may wait months. This difference often comes down to more than just the school's name on your résumé. Whether the MBA is earned in the United States, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, or Australia, where you study still matters, along with what you learn about solving real-world problems, leading under pressure, and staying agile in uncertain environments. It is this blend of academic pedigree and practical readiness that convinces employers you can deliver impact from day one.

Turning Knowledge into Action

MBA graduates are expected to arrive at the workplace with more than textbook knowledge of finance, marketing, operations, or strategy. Recruiters want problem-solvers who can translate theory into actionable business decisions. It is about applying frameworks to real-life situations like analysing markets, optimising processes, or leading initiatives with tangible outcomes. Live projects, case competitions, and internships are no longer just résumé fillers; they are recruiters' proof points. During interviews, employers often ask for concrete examples of how you handled a crisis, resolved conflict, or drove measurable change. The question has shifted from 'What did you learn in class?' to 'How have you applied what you learned to create impact?' One of the strongest expectations for the recruiters is the leadership potential. But leadership today is not about job titles; it is about influence. Employers seek graduates who can inspire teams, collaborate across functions, and lead effectively in uncertain environments. Emotional intelligence (EI), including empathy, self-awareness, and conflict management, is as important as strategic thinking. Recruiters can easily tell the difference between someone who has held multiple leadership roles in name and someone who has genuinely led teams to achieve results.

The stories shared on how you motivated people, balanced competing interests, or navigated setbacks often make or break interview performance. The industries that hire MBAs have changed their expectations from candidates. Consulting recruiters still value analytical and structured problem-solving abilities, but they now prioritise cultural fit and client-facing skills just as highly. Finance recruiters demand technical



fluency but are increasingly impressed by candidates who understand market trends and can communicate complex financial concepts simply and persuasively.

Meanwhile, technology roles are rapidly evolving. Product management, digital transformation, and growth strategy positions require a blend of data literacy, customer-centric thinking, and comfort with agile methodologies. Even without a technical background, recruiters expect MBA graduates to bring a digital-first mindset and an ability to work with engineers and designers seamlessly. Either it is role or industry, communication remains a non-negotiable skill. Recruiters are not impressed by jargon-heavy answers; they value clarity and precision. Whether pitching an idea, summarising a business case, or explaining data insights, ability to structure thoughts and tailor messaging to the audience sets professionals apart.

Global Mindset

Every country has unique hiring trends, industry strengths, and visa requirements. In the United States, consulting and tech remain strong employers, but visa sponsorship challenges require strategic networking. Canada's immigrant-friendly policies and growing fintech and healthcare industries present attractive opportunities. Germany values operational excellence and often prefers bilingual professionals, while UK recruiters in finance and consulting prize candidates who can navigate complex regulatory environments. Australia offers unique roles in energy, infrastructure, and sustainability, but expects graduates to combine a global vision with local adaptability. Recruiters increasingly seek candidates who can work across cultures while understanding regional business realities.

(The author is dean, Global MBA, MGB & GCGM, SP Jain School of Global Management)