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Every year thousands of MBA students pass out from different colleges, but very few get desired jobs. While the situation for them is dismal as they are not selected anywhere. **NISHANT SAXENA** tells what all things should be kept in

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

The harsh reality is that most of the 2,000 MBA schools in India are running on 20-40 per cent placements. Also, during and after campus placements, most MBA students appear in at least 3-6 interviews but often fail to get a decent job.

Why is this happening? There are issues of student input quality (today anyone who can spend Rs 5 lakh can get an PGDM/MBA degree without any entry-level selection criteria); and larger issues of MBA education quality (most run-of-the-mill colleges spend less than 5 per cent of their revenues on actual academic delivery). But that doesn't help students who have already enrolled. What can these students do now?

To find out why our MBAs are not employable, Elements Akademia — India's first chain of finishing schools — conducted an intensive nationwide research amongst the CXOs/HR Heads of more than 40 companies from various verticals, 60 MBA/PGDM colleges across 12 cities and more than 3,000 students and MBA aspirants.

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

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



where, but not a drop to drink...

Elements has been trying to organise seminars on this subject in many Tier-II cities where this gap is widest and it recently organised a similar one in Chandigarh at the PHD Chambers of Commerce. The research suggests that the gap between industry requirement and academic curriculum was mostly in

the nine areas as follows:

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

**Big Picture Thinking:** Most students from Tier-II business schools are unable to grasp big picture business issues.

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

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

**Corporate Exposure:** Knowledge of what's happening in the industry and

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erent colleges, but very few get desired jobs. While they apply in multiple companies, the response given to **NT SAXENA** tells what all things should be kept in mind in their job hunting process



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**Corporate Exposure:** Knowledge of what's happening in the industry and

understanding of real world corporate requirement is missing.

**Domain Knowledge:** Practical skills in marketing, finance, IT, operations and a deep knowledge of core concepts is completely missing.

**Sales and Customer Service:** While most entry-level jobs involve either sales or customer service, most students lack

practical, street-smart skills on it.

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

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

The good news is that these skills can be taught. But it requires a concerted attempt and a very structured scientific process. On something as basic as English, there is no evidence to suggest that simply hiring an English trainer can actually improve the level of English of MBAs. Some polishing can help, but students can still not converse in an intelligent manner. A scientific and rigorous process like the 160-hour English curriculum followed in many top BPOs has proven to improve spoken English levels by at least 50 per cent on a Nasscom scale. The MBA colleges need to adopt these.

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

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

— The writer is CEO of Elements Akademia and Guest Faculty at IIM Lucknow