

ABSTRACT

Executive education in the form of MBA is supposed to provide training in the theory and practice of management. Many organizations hire MBA graduates do so on the assumption that this special class of human resource will bring some specialized knowledge and skills to the organizations. In the eyes of the graduates, the degree can help improve their career prospects, competencies as well as their earning powers. This study is an attempt to analyze, from the perspectives of both recruiters and MBA graduates, the key suppositions just-mentioned. The thrust of this study will be on the perceived importance of six selection criteria by recruiters in Macau, namely technical work skills, conceptual skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, work experience, and personality in the hiring process of MBA degree holders. The reasons why some employers do not hire them and how far the MBA studies have helped to prepare their graduates for managerial roles will be the focus as well. The study also identifies the reasons MBA graduates undertake the programme and their views towards the value of gaining the degree.

Two sets of questionnaires for recruiters in Macau and MBA graduates respectively were used to examine the above questions. Survey on the MBA graduates shows that their decision to enter the programme is based far more on personal needs

than social trends, while the perceived value of an MBA is found mainly in advancing the graduates' career prospects and increasing their competitive advantages rather than huge salary increases. The response from the recruiters indicates that all the six factors are essential and important in the recruitment and selection of MBAs. A comparative analysis between the skills acquired from MBA programmes and those regarded as important by recruiters also suggests that the current MBA curricula are not meeting the recruiters' requirements. In this regard, conceptual skills are the most important result attained by MBA respondents from the programme. However, the recruiters do not perceive it as a very important selection criterion. The recruiters, on the other hand, are more concerned about getting from the MBA graduates technical work skills, interpersonal skills, and communication skills but they are unfortunately short in supply. This no doubt will serve as a "wake-up call" for MBA programme providers.

From this study, the recruiters are recommended to re-examine the myth of MBAs being potential great managers and that they are equipped with all the required knowledge and skills after the degree. As for the prospective MBA students, it is suggested that, if gaining technical, interpersonal, or communication skills is their aim of pursuing an MBA, they are advised to seek other relevant skill development programmes instead.