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Life skills gained from the MBA : a South African perspective .

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Life skills gained from the MBA: A South African perspective

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration

Johannesburg, 2016

ABSTRACT

Background: The Masters of Business Administration degree is a much sought after management qualification globally. Most students pursue the MBA to enhance their knowledge of business, improve their managerial skills and employability and to earn more money. However despite its popularity, it has been noted in research that the MBA curricula adequately develop analytical skills such as accounting, strategy and statistics but fails to develop students' problem solving, communication, critical, interpersonal and leadership skills. Life skills have become imperative in today's fast paced, rapidly changing global business environment.

Purpose: This research aims to identify life skills gained by the South African MBA students and to match specific life skill development to specific courses, incidents or events that occurred during their studies.

Method: Qualified MBA graduates as well as MBA students in their final year of study were targeted for this study. The survey instrument was emailed to the target population. The research methodology used was quantitative in nature with a few open ended question.

Key Findings: Self-management, communication and emotional intelligence were identified as the three most important life skills. Sustainability orientation, life-long learning, cross-cultural sensitivity and networking skills were not viewed as important career-related skills. A correspondence analysis of the data that links the development of life skills to specific teaching methods shows that there is an association between teaching methods and life skills development. Subsequent to the analysis of the data, life skills were grouped according to skills that relate to one's self or 'intrinsic' and skills that one uses when relating to others or 'extrinsic'. Group activities are associated with the development of many life skills whilst field trips, international trips and social responsibility activities were perceived to be insignificant in the development of life skills.

DECLARATION

I, Devina Chetty, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Devina Chetty

Signed at ……

On the …….. day of …… 20…..

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated with all my love to

My guardian angel and greatest inspiration, my dad, Mr Preabruth Saroop Ganga, thank you for the profound effect you've had on my life.

My dear mum, Ms Champa Ganga, for her love, on-going support and encouragement.

My husband and soul-mate, Mr Ugeshan Chetty, for enduring the past two years with me. You have been my greatest support. Thank you for your love, patience and tenderness.

To my three angels, Priyesh, Jyothi and Keshav, the three of you have made my world three times brighter and more beautiful. Thank you for the many smiles, hugs and kisses when I needed it most.

To my brothers, Deepak and Kapil Ganga, for their witty sense of humour and for being my pillars of strength.

To the extended Chetty and Ganga family for their unconditional support and love.

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1. Our divine inspirations for helping me maintain my balance through this demanding academic pursuit.
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3. Prof Terri Carmichael for her guidance, mentorship and assistance in compilation of my research report.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to identify the soft skills gained by South African MBA students, and to ascertain which pedagogies were linked to the development of which soft skills, in addition, to obtain a sense of the value of these skills perceived by the students.

1.2 Context of the study

The value of the Masters in Business Administration (MBA) qualification has come under much global scrutiny and criticism in recent times (Datar, Garvin, & Cullen, 2011; Mintzberg (2004). This is largely based on a level of dissatisfaction about the lack of practical skills of MBA graduates. The MBA's biggest critics have raised concerns that MBA programmes at business schools fail to develop students' problem solving, communication skills and critical interpersonal and leadership skills.

Business schools globally have been accused of being too academically inclined, leaving students defenceless to manage authentic management situations (Howard, Cornuel, Schlegelmilch, & Thomas, 2011). Since the late 1950's, business schools have taken an analytical and discipline based approach (Datar et al., 2011), suggesting that what could be called "hard skills", such as accounting, statistics, strategy have been the focus. One of the MBA's most formidable (relatively) recent critics, Mintzberg (2004), had reproached MBA programmes for providing training in the functions of business and not in management. More recently, Temtime and Mmereki (2011) indicated their view that MBA programmes have assisted students in developing managerial skills but are still deficient in that they have failed to develop students' problem solving, innovation and communication skills. Other international studies on MBA programmes emphasise that only traditional subjects are taught, that MBA curricula have not kept pace with what business requires and that there is a shortfall in the provision of critical interpersonal and leadership skills (Segon & Booth, 2014; Shimizu & Higuchi, 2009). Studies by Hesselbarth and Schaltegger (2014);

Benn and Dunphy (2008) and Giacalone and Thompson (2006) indicate that MBA programmes also fail to enable graduates to adequately deal with issues of sustainability.

The financial crisis in 2008 could have been a reason why the MBA came under such intense scrutiny (Datar et al., 2011; Howard et al., 2011). As reasons for the crisis needed to be understood, MBAs, amongst others, were placed on the list of villains, and the question, “Would a different MBA curriculum have prevented the crises?” was asked (Datar et al., 2011, p. 275).

In their book, Datar et al. (2011) documented that a number of Deans and Executives have concerns about the lack of development of creativity, integrative thinking, leadership, and other generic abilities. They have indicated that there is a future for business schools, but that substantial change is needed. Business schools do revise their curricula from time to time (Louw, Bosch, & Venter, 2001b), and opportunities do exist to incorporate soft skills that the literature has identified and which contribute holistically to management effectiveness (Howard et al., 2011).

Paradoxically, despite such intense criticism, the MBA remains the most sought after management qualification globally, with more than 230,000 students enrolled in MBA programmes accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) between 2011 and 2012, an 11% increase over the past five years (Howard et al., 2011). The reason students still pursue the MBA is to earn more money, enhance their knowledge of business, improve their skills as a manager and advance in their career. The literature that supports the above statement is plentiful. Saba, Mahmood, Khalid, and Aslam (2011) conducted their study in Pakistan; a UK perspective was contributed by Baruch and Leeming (2001); Segon and Booth (2012) provided an Australian point of view; France, Greece and the USA are represented by views from Paucar-Caceres and Thorpe (2005), Mihail and Antigoni Elefterie (2006) and Gupta andBennett (2014), respectively. Temtime and Mmereki (2011) conducted their study in Botswana presenting a Southern African perspective. Singh and Lange confirm that South African students share similar sentiments (Singh, Lange, & Naidoo, 2004).

MBA graduates are generally satisfied with the lessons learnt during the course of their studies and the perceived value that they gain from the MBA (Baruch & Leeming, 2001; Bruce, 2009; Carmichael & Sutherland, 2005), but dissatisfaction with the lack of soft skills development in their degrees is not evident. In fact, it has been reported (Rubin & Dierdorff, 2009) that many students have a rather disparaging attitude towards soft skills. It is hoped that this study will reveal a somewhat changed attitude towards such skills.

The MBA has been a much-debated topic in recent literature. Authors have unpacked the MBA structure at business schools as well as the change in curriculum and learning experiences over time (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Rubin & Dierdorff, 2009). There have also been studies on student perspectives and what students wish to gain from an MBA within a UK, Botswana and American context. Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) focused their study on MBA graduates in Gauteng, offering a South African contribution.

This research aimed to garner insight into the perceived value of soft skills gained by South African MBA graduates, and to identify the ways in which the MBA offers opportunities to develop such skills. The research was conducted using quantitative methods with simple descriptive statistics.

1.3 Problem statement

1.3.1 *Main problem*

The main problem of this research is to identify if South African business schools' MBA curricula, through the use of various pedagogies, leads to the development of soft skills.

1.3.2 Sub-problems 1: Identify the key career-related soft skills that MBA graduates acquire through their MBA studies

1.3.3 Sub-problem 2: Match the development of soft skills on the MBA to specific pedagogies, incidents or events on the programme

1.4 Significance of the study

Given the globally recognised status of the MBA degree, and the continued demand for the qualification, there is some imperative to increase its value, both to students and to the business world, as they are the consumers of graduates. Business schools embedding soft skills development into their degrees in such a way that students can appreciate their value are likely to have a competitive advantage, as will their graduates. Rapert, Smith, Velliquette, and Garretson (2004) shed light on the reasons students pursue MBAs with similarities to the earlier findings to Simmering and Wilcox (1995). The reasons noted are to improve earning potential, acquire or enhance business skills, career development and growth.

The volatile South African business sector has had a dramatic political transition, since then, the country has re-established itself on the global platform. The global demand for broad-based managers has intensified and the MBA continues to be a sought after qualification to equip managers with the skills to compete on an international scale. Apart from Singh et al. (2004), Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) and Temtime and Mmereki (2011), there has been little academic research aimed at identifying the soft skills Southern African students have gained from the MBA. This research aims to contribute to the already alive discussion on the value of the MBA with particular focus on the value of soft skills and how they are developed. This research could provide guidance and possible reassurance to students who have become demotivated and disillusioned by media negativity (www.ft.com; www.businessbecause.com) about the value of the MBA.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

The research targeted MBA graduates in South Africa only, and explored the development of soft skills during the MBA programme. The secondary part of the study

was to elicit student perceptions about the pedagogical ways in which the MBA offers opportunities for the development of such skills. An exhaustive investigation into pedagogical practices is beyond the scope of this study, and the focus was on the perceived association between pedagogies / activities and soft skills development only.

The financial value of the MBA and the skills developed within the degree, as well as actual costs and returns were not part of the research. The research was focused on perceptions of such value only.

1.6 Definition of terms

AACSB – Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business

GMAC – Graduate Management Admission Council

Hard skills – These are the technical requirements of a job (Schulz, 2008) that can be learned with IQ, they are easily taught by attending courses, and are well documented in books and universities, and the rules around them are generally fairly constant (Han, 2014).

MBA – Masters of Business Administration

Soft skills – Soft skills refer to the cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark people to varying degrees (Schulz, 2008). They are learned mainly through EQ (emotional intelligence), and are changeable with changing context (Han, 2014).

1.7 Assumptions

The following assumptions are made;

- The terms “soft skills” and “life skills” are not necessarily the same, but there is some overlap in the literature (Bridgstock, 2009). It is not within the scope of this study to be deviated by subtle differences between the terms, and it is

anticipated that the value of the study is not diminished by variations within the literature.

- Respondents responded reflectively and openly to the interview questions

1.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the MBA remains a popular choice for graduates who wish to improve their business acumen, managerial skills, earning potential and career capital. Although still popular amongst graduates, the value of the MBA has been questioned by business executives who state that the MBA fails to equip graduates with the softer skills. Globalisation has changed the business frontier and with that the requirements of a manager. Managers of today need to have extensive knowledge and understanding of business as well as sound leadership and communication skills and critical interpersonal skills. It is imperative for business schools to remain cognisant of the fact that the management education has to change in order to equip future managers with both the analytical skills such as accounting, strategy and statistics and to develop problem solving, communication, and critical interpersonal and leadership skills.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one outlines the concerns raised by many critics regarding the value of the MBA. The chapter presented different points of view on the perceived reasons that Business schools failed to produce a well-rounded MBA graduate, the most notable being that business schools have placed too much focus on traditional subjects and too little on courses that develop interpersonal and other soft skills. Business schools continuously revised their curricula (Van Auken & Chrysler, 2005), but there is still much progress to be made in terms of holistic management development.

This literature review briefly describes the benefits and market value of the MBA degree and its global popularity; then goes on to compare hard and soft skills, and to explore soft skills development in the context of the MBA and a few other management development programmes. Propositions regarding the development of soft skills are offered at the end of the literature review.

2.2 The benefits of the MBA

The benefits of the MBA can be categorised into tangible and intangible benefits. Intangible benefits have been classified in literature into two categories namely: hard skills and soft skills. Although the so-called hard skills are not the topic of this study, a brief description of them is included for comparative purposes.

2.2.1 *The tangible benefits of MBA*

Tangible benefits relating to the MBA refer to the increase in salary and career progression. This topic has attracted a lot of attention and many studies have assessed the advantage the MBA has on both financial rewards and career benefits and have concluded that MBA graduates certainly enjoy higher remuneration and more opportunities to advance in their careers (Louw, Bosch, & Venter, 2001a; Mihail & Antigoni Elefterie, 2006; Saba et al., 2011; Shimizu & Higuchi, 2009). The question

is, to what can this success be attributed? It is the contention in this research that soft skills may add more value than previously thought.

When comparing the potential earning of MBA graduates to other degree holders, MBA graduates show a higher earning potential, as illustrated in Figure 1.

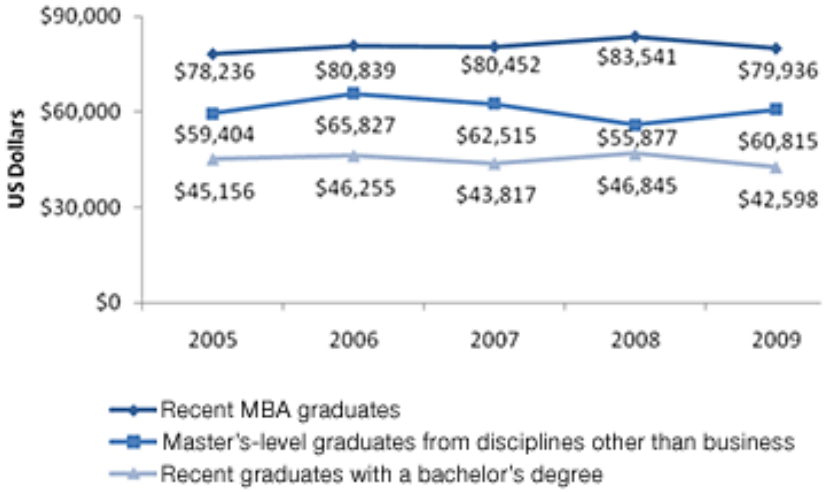


Figure 1: Expected Starting Annual Salaries of Recent Graduates - GMAC Corporate Recruiter Survey 2005 Through 2009

Improved remuneration post MBA is true for South African graduates. Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) published that 68% of their respondents were able to command a higher salary. Goko (2013) makes reference to the QS Global 200 business report for 2012-13, which found that MBA graduates from South Africa are sought after in the Middle East and Africa and earn as much as R736,5074. The GMAC corporate recruiter's survey from 2006 to 2015 (Estrada-Worthington, 2015) indicates that most employers of MBAs intend to increase starting salaries of MBA graduated, some by as much as 21%.

The tangible benefits of the MBA can be related to the so-called "hard" skills, which are the technical requirements of a job (Schulz, 2008). Hard skills can be learned with IQ, are easily taught by attending courses, and are well documented in books and universities, and the rules around them are generally fairly constant (Han, 2014).

Within the context of the MBA, hard skills are the specific, teachable management and business techniques such as goal setting, information gathering, financial concepts, strategic planning, marketing, statistics, accounting concepts, core business concepts, and project management, (Hay & Hodgkinson, 2006). It is not a surprise that graduates have acquired or enhanced these skills as this is inherently the aim of MBA programmes (Kretovics, 1999) and the reason that students pursue an MBA. The improved business acumen is important in improving career capital (Sturges, Simpson, & Altman, 2003) and improved career capital makes career progression easier.

2.2.2 *The intangible benefits of the MBA*

Amidst some of the harsh criticism that has questioned the value of the MBA, many authors delved into studies that aimed to explain the value of the MBA from a graduate's perspective (Baruch & Leeming, 2001; Carmichael & Sutherland, 2005; Gupta & Bennett, 2014; Sturges et al., 2003). In these studies, graduates described a host of skills acquired from the MBA that have had profound value in improving their capabilities and abilities in their professions.

Soft Skills

Soft skills are specific traits that supplement the "hard" competencies contributing to an individual's career success, and are often their strength as a leader (Hay & Hodgkinson, 2006). Soft skills do not depend on acquired knowledge, but include common sense and the ability of an individual to work with people in a positive manner (Robles, 2012). Soft skills includes qualities such as self-regulation, self-awareness, motivation, empathy and social skills (Dixon, Belnap, Albrecht, & Lee, 2010). Some of the skills needed in the work place today are: communication, interpersonal skills, teamwork, work ethic, responsibility, flexibility, integrity, courtesy, positive attitude, adaptability and professionalism (De Villiers, 2010; Gillard, 2009; Hissey, 2000; Moss & Tilly, 1996; Robles, 2012).

With globalisation and the rapid pace at which business and technology is advancing, corporates are exposed to changing markets, increased competition and economic

uncertainty (Wisma, 2008), multi-cultural societies (Roome, 2005) and with this, an era of constant change. Managers face a new host of challenges and the value of soft skills to organisations is growing. This is not limited to any specific industry.

Hissey (2000) discussed the value of soft skills to engineers; although a highly technical field, engineers should understand the career enhancing value of soft skills in order to progress in today's global-open-market economy. Executives of engineering firms have confirmed that many engineers lack soft skills. The 'extra' skills needed were defined as the ability to work easily and co-operatively with others, have excellent written and oral communication skills and higher level traits which were further classified as corporate necessities and personal attributes. Corporate necessities consists of having a global perspective, being a team-player, professionalism and versatility to provide a 'multiplexing" capability (Hissey, 2000). With downsizing prevalent in the industry, engineers are expected to take on a greater workload and accept a wide variety of challenges. Engineers would benefit from being more flexible and developing multiple capabilities; soft skills are listed in retention matrices used in the event of mergers or downsizing in the industry.

Skills needed for effective project management have migrated over the years from a 50/50 technical skills and soft skills to more focus on soft skills, such as communication, negotiation, conflict management and persuasion (Gillard, 2009). Many of the problems project managers face are fundamentally people management issues and therefore excellent interpersonal skills and soft skills are essential for success (Paucar-Caceres & Thorpe, 2005)

De Villiers (2010) and Oliver, Whelan, Hunt, and Hammer (2011) both discuss the importance of soft skills to graduating accountants. De Villiers is in agreement with sentiments expressed by Wisma (2008), that due to technological advancement, globalisation and the changing economic landscape, the nature of management has dramatically changed over the past decade. Operating on this macro environmental level, various ethical, legal and cultural factors require soft skills, professional traits and attributes such as tolerance, cultural acceptance, self-confidence, creative thinking and the ability to clearly communicate feedback, as well as receive feedback, are imperative to success. Oliver et al. (2011) specifically added that the work related knowledge and skills of clear, effective writing, the ability to solve complex problems,

critical and analytical thinking, and a continuous effort to build and maintain awareness of the industry in which they operate, are essential.

Soft skills have become sought after traits by business executives (Hissey, 2000) as well as recruiters (Estrada-Worthington, 2014; Estrada-Worthington, 2015; Ingols & Shapiro, 2014). In the GMAC 2014 recruiter survey (Estrada-Worthington, 2014: 19), respondents were asked to evaluate the overall importance of five skill sets demanded in new graduate business schools, namely, communication, managerial, teamwork, leadership and technical skills. Figure 2 illustrates that communication skills was the most highly valued, followed by teamwork, technical, and, lastly, managerial skills.

Communication skills also ranked highly in the GMAC (2015, p. 26) recruiter survey report, represented in Figure 3, followed by strong technical and quantitative skills. The category “Proven ability to perform” was ranked the highest at 92%. In the 2015 survey, 60% of employers *strongly agreed* that the ability to make decisions based on data was critical for business success. Students in the survey confirmed that “integrated reasoning skills” should be integrated into business school curricula (p. 17).

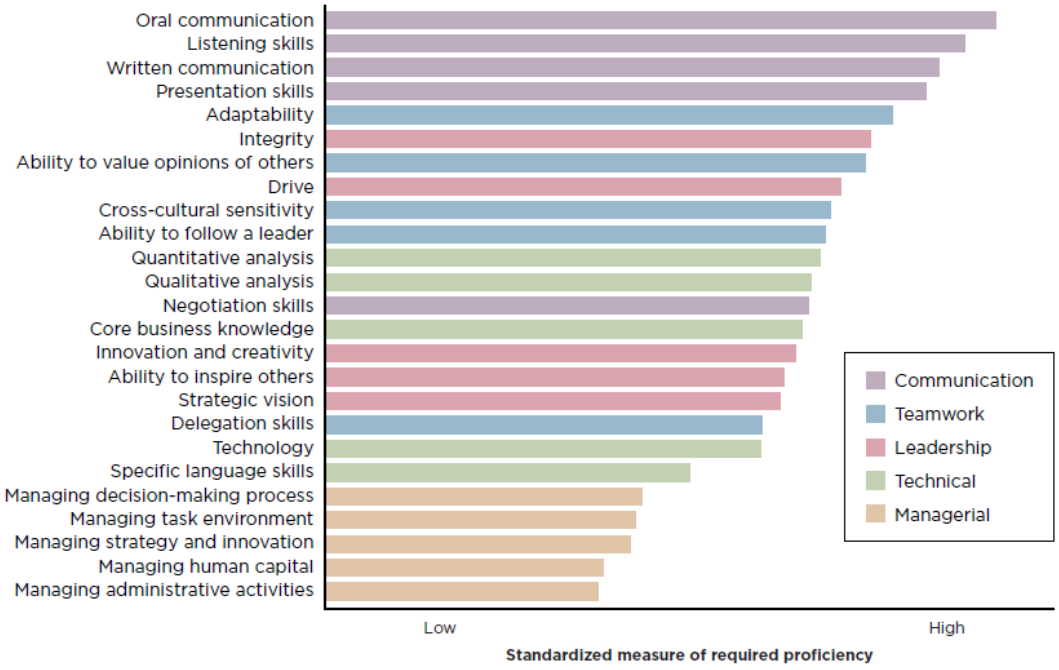


Figure 2: Skills Companies Demand in New Graduate Business School Hires, Based On Standardised Analysis of Skill Proficiency (Estrada-Worthington, 2014)

Team work includes adaptability, ability to value opinions of others, cross-cultural sensitivity, ability to follow a leader and delegation skills. Cross-cultural sensitivity is relevant to managers globally. Internationalisation of business has resulted in a mix of ethnic groups and cultures within organisations and the challenge facing managers is how to effectively deal with diversity in the workplace (Berndt, Svensson, Mayer, & Louw, 2011). The consequence of not managing diversity effectively is cross-cultural conflict (Berndt et al., 2011; Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003) which poses a risk to the business (Roome, 2005). The rest of the world has always dealt with diversity in the work place, for South Africans, there was a racial divide during the apartheid era and with the first democratic election in 1994, South Africa experienced a huge shift in the political, social and economic environment as well as cultural mix in the work place (Mayer, 2012). In describing the impact on organisations, Denton and Vloeberghs (2003) make reference to Roodt (1994) who describes a 'them and us' culture where white managerial staff are still separated from black unskilled labour force; inequality despite affirmative action leading the faction-fighting and adverse labour relations; and ethnic and language diversity. Management will have to adopt new approaches to deal with matters. Mayer and Louw (2011) emphasise the value of communication

and that new transcultural management approaches have become important traits for managers. Managing diversity requires situational adaptability, flexibility, on-the-spot decision making and good communication skills (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Human, 1996; Patrick & Kumar, 2012). When cross-cultural diversity is understood, it can be appropriately used to benefit the organisation. Mixing of cultures can have positive effects as different cultures have cognitive processes (Cox & Blake, 1991) which can be used to introduce new ideas and innovation, new ways of thinking and problem solving enhance communication and bring in new languages. Diversity can enhance organisational effectiveness (Jayakumar, 2008; Patrick & Kumar, 2012).

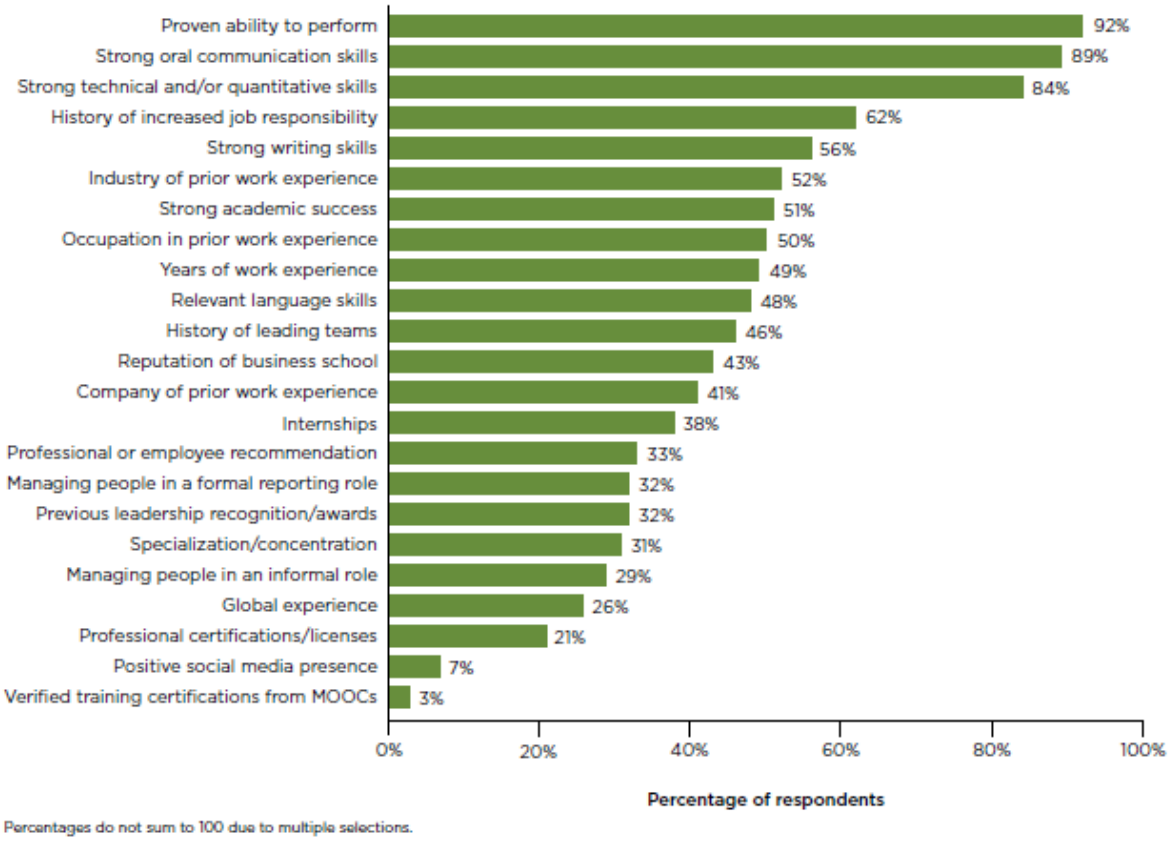


Figure 3: Critical Factors Employers Consider When Selecting Candidates To Interview (Estrada-Worthington, 2015: 26)

Soft skills are also leadership traits that employees prefer from their leaders. In the study by Marques (2013), which evaluated employees' perceptions of soft skills, soft skills scored higher than hard skills as the skills admired most in leaders. Within the listing of soft skills in this study, 'concern for "others"' received the highest rating (Marques, 2013).

From a graduate perspective, the course of study of the MBA has furthered their technical, hard skills as well as soft skills such as improved levels of confidence, significantly greater knowledge, greater skills, and the ability to work more efficiently in a team (Carmichael & Sutherland, 2005; Hay & Hodgkinson, 2006; Sturges et al., 2003). Loman (2011) emphasised the importance of communication skills and leadership above all other skills.

Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) categorised non-financial benefits as improved self-confidence, broader world view, greater knowledge, greater skills, control own destiny, greater job satisfaction, better quality of life, productivity, greater sense of ethics and better relationship with friends. A boosted self-confidence has been rated the most valuable (Carmichael & Sutherland, 2005; Hay & Hodgkinson, 2006; Sturges et al., 2003). Graduates have indicated that this trait helped them deal more effectively with peers, subordinates as well as superiors (Hay & Hodgkinson, 2006). It gave them the ability to cope better in stressful situations and they were able to assert themselves when the need arose. Being more self–confident also improved team-working skills, which fostered trust, improved delegation skills and communication skills. Graduates felt more confident to contribute their thoughts and ideas at meetings.

These skills translate to better people management skills. Robles (2012) links people skills and interpersonal skills; these are the set of abilities that help a person interact positively and effectively with others. Included are: good communication (written and verbal), listening, delegation, negotiation, problem-solving, decision-making, assertiveness, and leadership skills (Hunt & Baruch, 2003).

To add another dimension on the value of soft skills from a graduates perspective, Benjamin and O'Reilly (2011) found that the major challenges facing MBA graduates early on in their management careers were largely, "challenges associated with managing others" and "challenges associated with managing one's self," (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011, pp. 459-460). Dealing with others refers to the relationship with peers, subordinates and managers. Challenges associated with managing one's self refers to dealing with your own emotions, self-regulating and self-motivating while coping with adversity.

The skills needed to overcome these challenges are fundamentally the softer, people-related skills. Denton (2003) defined an effective leader as a person with “healthy people-management skills”. Goleman (2004) stated that effective leaders have a high degree of emotional intelligence. Salovey and Mayer (1990) described emotional intelligence as a type of social intelligence that allows the ability to monitor one’s own and others emotions, to discriminate among them and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions. The value of emotional intelligence is illustrated in the findings of the study by Rapisarda (2002). The study suggests that emotional intelligence competence is strongly related to group cohesiveness. Emotional intelligence can be developed from the MBA but change to the typical MBA curriculum is needed (Boyatzis, Stubbs, & Taylor, 2002).

The implication of these findings is that business schools are compelled to develop specific soft skills in management degrees if they are to serve their corporate clients. Revised programmes should include; interpersonal and presentation skills, change management, ethics, corporate social responsibility and risk management (Segon & Booth, 2012); behavioural competencies, leadership and communication (Rubin & Dierdorff, 2009), cultural sensitivity, self-management, problem-solving, structured thinking and workplace etiquette (Schulz, 2008).

Jain and Stopford (2011) suggest that MBA educators should consider three important drivers when revising the MBA curriculum. The three drivers are; (1) environmental shifts and subsequent economic and political trends ; (2) professional skills for global context which includes communication, relationship management and cross-cultural setting and (3) sustainability concerns such as poverty, inequality, environmental impact of global warming and ethics. These drivers will adequately equip MBA graduates to deal with the geo-political and cultural changes brought about by globalisation. Studies by Hesselbarth and Schaltegger (2014); Jabbour, (2010); Stubbs and Cocklin (2008) support the discussion that ‘sustainability’ must be included in MBA programmes.

The world was introduced to the concept of sustainable development by the Bruntland report in 1987. Sustainability development is defined in the report as; ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,’ (Brundtland et al., 1987), as such sustainability

is increasingly becoming a critical issue for business today, It raised the awareness of the dangerous depletion of natural resources, inequality and economic decline. Developing nations are most vulnerable and must be allowed to meet basic needs of food, energy, water and sanitation. South Africa is a developing nation with a diversified economy and key economic drivers being in the automotive industry, food processing, clothing and textile, tourism, telecommunications, energy, transportation, wholesale and retail trade, real estate, agriculture, fisheries and extractive mining. South Africa mines gold, platinum, diamonds and various other metals and minerals. The process of mining has a negative impact on the environment. It results in large amounts of waste earth and water, contamination of ground and surface water and the subsequent harmful effects on people and the environment (Adler, Claassen, Godfrey, & Turton, 2007). Excessive underground mining leads to unstable land, resulting in sink holes. Underground mining alters the levels and flow of underground water. These commodities are also non-renewable and at some point, the levels will be exhausted (Durand, 2012). Sustainable orientation is not defined in the literature as a soft skill, but has been included because of its socio-political importance in South Africa.

Whilst the academic literature does have fairly broad coverage of soft skills in MBA degrees, the field of soft skills development in management education is broader than might initially appear. Zheng, Zhang, and Li (2015) investigated the development of soft skills in an information technology environment, citing the soft skills identified by an MBA graduate consulting in the coaching field (Han, 2014). Han defined soft skills as needing to fit into the categories of:

1. Self-management skills
2. People skills, which she divided into
    a. Conventional skills
    b. “Tribal” skills, being those that are not listed in job descriptions, but which nonetheless are important for workplace success

The details of the soft skills that she identified are as follows:

1. Self-management skills
    a. Growth mind-set
    b. Self-awareness

c. Emotion regulation
d. Self-confidence
e. Stress management
f. Resilience
g. Ability to “forgive and forget”, i.e. deal with issues and move on without harbouring resentment
h. Persistence and perseverance
i. Patience
j. Perceptiveness

2. People Skills – conventional
    a. Communication skills
    b. Interpersonal relationship skills
    c. Presentation skills
    d. Meeting management skills
    e. Facilitating skills
    f. Selling skills, in the context of having the ability to get buy-in to one’s ideas
    g. Management skills
    h. Mentoring and coaching skills
3. People skills – “tribal”
    a. Managing upwards
    b. Self-promotion skills
    c. Dealing with difficult people
    d. Dealing with unexpected or complex situations
    e. Office politics savvy
    f. Influence and persuasion
    g. Negotiation skills
    h. Networking skills

Phani, Challa, and Ram (2007) cited in both Desman, Moodie, Roebuck, and Siha, (2011) and Yaacoub, Husseini, and Choueiki (2011), gave a list of what they called the “Top 60” soft skills. The full list can be viewed at http://www.rediff.com/getahead/2007/jan/08soft.htm, but is not repeated here, as the list includes items that are not soft skills, but rather attributes (e.g. co-operative),

behaviours (e.g. eye contact), technical (e.g. mathematics), and others that are obscure in the context of this study (e.g. safety and personal chemistry).

A complete list of soft and life-skills from the literature consulted, that could be developed directly, or indirectly in MBA programmes is as follows:

1. Intra-personal skills
    a. Self-confidence
    b. Self-motivation
    c. Self-confidence
    d. Self-management
    e. Self-awareness and self-knowledge
    f. Time management
    g. Persistence
    h. Resilience
    i. Self-promotion skills
    j. Presentability at work
    k. Workplace etiquette
    l. Stress management
    m. Assertiveness
2. Interpersonal and influencing skills
    a. Courtesy
    b. Ability to work co-operatively with others
    c. Conflict management / dealing with difficult people
    d. Motivational skills
    e. Body language
    f. Emotional intelligence
    g. Managing upwards
    h. Delegating
    i. Effective team membership
    j. Followership

k. Leadership
l. Dealing with office politics
m. Meeting management skills
n. Facilitating skills
o. Selling skills / persuasiveness, in the context of having the ability to get buy-in to one's ideas
p. Relationship management
q. Management skills
r. Mentoring and coaching skills

3. Communication skills
    a. Written Communication
    b. Verbal Communication
    c. Listening skills
    d. Negotiation skills
    e. Networking skills
    f. Language skills
4. Values-related skills
    a. Cross-cultural sensitivity
    b. Taking responsibility
    c. Integrity and honesty
    d. Positive work ethic, e.g. perseverance, flexibility, patience, tolerance
    e. Positive attitude
    f. Professionalism
    g. Ethics
5. Thinking skills
    a. Creative Thinking
    b. Critical Thinking
    c. Problem solving
    d. Decision-making
    e. Dealing with complexity, adaptability

f. Learning to learn effectively
g. Perceptiveness
h. Learn from experience, wisdom
i. Growth mind-set
j. Developing a broad worldview
k. Integrated reasoning skills and logic
l. Analytical skills
m. Innovativeness
n. Entrepreneurial thinking
o. Strategic thinking (long-term, big picture focus)

2.3 Teaching methods and soft skills development

There has been reference in literature that suggests business schools' chosen teaching methods have a significant effect on the outcomes of the qualification, (Howard et al., 2011), and there is a constant need for business schools to be mindful of changes in business and the requirements of effective managers (Kretovics, 1999). The study by Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) indicated that there were differing student perceptions regarding the effectiveness of various teaching styles, activities and interventions. The inclusion of this section in this study is intended to add a dimension to the findings of Carmichael and Sutherland.

Thus, the teaching methods investigated in this study are limited to those actually in use by Business Schools rather than those exhaustively identified in the literature, as this is beyond the scope of this study. They are listed below with a brief description of each method;

a. Interactive lectures
    - Lectures are a verbal presentation given by a lecturer or teacher to an audience (Sajjad, 2010). Interactive lecturing is where the lecturer deliberately facilitates class participation through debates, challenges, exercises, Socratic questioning and a variety of other techniques.

Sharma et al. (2010) reported a 28-42% improvement in learning through an experimental study design on the topic. Interactive lectures improve attention and motivation, introduce active learning and improve communication between the lecturer and the student (Snell, 1999)

b. The social responsibility course

- Designed to create awareness on ethical and sustainable business practices and should integrate all three dimensions of sustainability; economic, environmental and social (Christensen, Peirce, Hartman, Hoffman, & Carrier, 2007; Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008; Wu, Huang, Kuo, & Wu, 2010). The course should be designed in a way that students are able to contribute to sustainable organisations and societies (Rusinko, 2010). The current consideration in literature at the moment is whether sustainability should be included as a core course or an elective (Christensen et al., 2007)

c. Case studies

- Case studies are scenarios that present a realistic, complex and contextual situation which often involves a problem or conflict (Barnes, Christensen, & Hansen, 1994). They provide practical hands-on analysis that allows students to learn about a real-life situation by applying concepts and strategies. It is a forum for active learning which develops analytical tools such as critical thinking, strategic thinking, problem-solving ability, making decisions in complex situation and coping with ambiguity (Barnes et al., 1994; Sajjad, 2010). Case studies facilitate learning in the real-world and must be current, brief, well-written and open to various solutions.

d. Assignments

- Assignments are a valuable method used to assess students' knowledge on the subject (Gilbert, 2012). Students are given a topic with specific instructions and a time-frame within which to complete. This is an activity that can be done individually or in groups (Sert, 2005)

i. Individual assignments are designed to build student ability to work independently, particularly with fairly complex projects. This is a key requirement in the South African education structure, as illustrated in the South African Qualifications Authority level descriptors (Samuels, 2012)

ii. Syndicate assignments are assignments that have to be completed by a group. Assignments of this type are intended to build team-working skills in order to enhance workplace performance in work-based teams

e. Student presentations

- Students are given a topic which they have to research and prepare a presentation to deliver to the class and lecturer. The critical objectives of presentations are to improve communications skills and to build students confidence levels to talk in front of a group (Alshare & Hindi, 2004)

f. Business simulations

- Business simulations are scenarios where the student is placed in a real-world situation (Hough, 2012). The purpose is to provide the student with practical experience that is often lacking in management education students. Simulations provide a risk-free environment and the student is allowed to consider new innovative solutions (Salas, Wildman, & Piccolo, 2009), thus stimulating creative and entrepreneurial thinking

g. International exposure (International Business trip or student exchange)

- The purpose of international business trips is to provide a practical and experiential learning element to theory on global business and international markets (Finley, Taylor, & Warren, 2007; Paul & Mukhopadhyay, 2003; Tuleja, 2008). It enhances the learning experience, improves networking skills and heightens cultural awareness (Finley et al., 2007) (Tuleja, 2008)

h. The research panel discussion

- A discussion on student's research proposal between the student, supervisor and other panel members.

i. Informal debates in class
    - The lecturer encourages students to offer different and alternate views on a topic and a constructive discussion ensues on the different points raised

j. Small group activities in class
    - The lecturer introducers an element of active learning by asking students to break up into groups during the lecture and discuss a topic. Group activities, such as syndicate assignments and small group activities, can develop and re-enforce skills that are relevant to group and individual work (Mannix & Neale, 2005). The purpose of group activities is to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Bentley & Warwick, 2013; Gokhale, 1995). Team collaboration develops team-working ability and improves communication skills (Gokhale, 1995; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998)

k. Field trips to organisations
    - A trip to an organisation that allows students to gain knowledge through direct experience. Direct experience and observation of a real situation has the benefit of enriching and complimenting theory (Shakil & Hafeez, 2011)

l. Industry expert (guest) lectures
    - An expert in the field is invited to present a lecture and often gives his/her experience or point of view on the topic (Shakil & Hafeez, 2011). Guest presentations help to break the pace of the lecture and add a level of variation and practical experience and knowledge on the subject. Industry experts, who are often renowned academicians (Dhar, 2011), give their real-life experience. It enhances student learning by providing current and practical application of theory (Rowland & Algie, 2007).

2.4 Conclusion of Literature Review

Soft skills have been sought after by executives and recruiters across all industries. Soft skills have become imperative in dealing with the complexities of the present fast paced, rapidly changing global business environment. Some MBA graduates are of the perception that the course of study of the MBA has improved their soft skills; confidence, interpersonal skills, communication skills, team work and self-motivation, and those skills are instrumental in improving career success. Others are however, resistant to soft skills development, feeling that the hard (technical) skills are all that are required for career success.

From the list of life and soft skills derived from the literature consulted on pg. 18, the following are not included in this study, as they are not soft or life-skills, but can be classified as generic skills required for career success:

a. Writing skills
b. Presentation skills
c. Reading literacy
d. Financial literacy
e. Core business, industry and company knowledge (on-going, always current)
f. Political awareness
g. Task management
h. Administrative skills

Integrity has not been included in the instrument, because it is felt that most people would answer in the affirmative regarding their own integrity, and inclusion of the item is unlikely to add any insight into the research findings.

The items selected for inclusion into the instrument are those that the literature emphasises as being particularly important, leading to:

2.4.1 *Research Proposition one: The key career-related soft skills that MBA graduates acquire through the MBA include the following;*

i. Self-management (includes self-knowledge, stress management, time management, self-confidence, goal setting, taking responsibility, being accountable)
ii. Emotional intelligence
iii. Effective teamwork
iv. Communicating effectively (verbal, written, listening)
v. Dealing with difficult people / conflict management
vi. Cross-cultural sensitivity
vii. Critical / analytical thinking
viii. Problem-solving ability
ix. Ethical, logical decision-making
x. Entrepreneurial thinking, encompassing innovativeness and creativity
xi. Learning to learn effectively / lifelong learning
xii. Dealing with complexity
xiii. Networking skills
xiv. Strategic thinking (long-term and big-picture)
xv. Sustainability orientation - this was not raised in the literature, but has been included because of its socio-political importance in South Africa.

2.4.2 *Research Proposition two: The perceived development of soft skills on the MBA can be linked to specific pedagogies.*

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology applied to this research. It begins with a discussion on the chosen paradigm and method. An explanation on the appropriateness of the method is followed by a brief description on how the research actually took place. It includes the population, sample, sampling method, the instrument, the process for data collection and analysis, limitations of the research, and the validity and reliability of the method.

3.1 Research methodology /paradigm

The research paradigm applied and followed for this research was quantitative in nature with a few open-ended questions. A large number of soft skills were identified from the literature, hence it was appropriate to use a combination of the following tools:

1. a simple ranking survey
2. a matrix to identify which soft skills were developed with which teaching methodologies
3. some open-ended questions to add depth to the data.

3.1.1 *Quantitative research*

Quantitative research involves the collection of numeric data that is analysed using mathematical methods, such as statistics, in order to explain a phenomenon, (Creswell, 2009) or exhibit a view of the relationship between theory and research, (Bryman, 2006). It is a logical and data-led approach that provides a measure of what people think from a statistical and numeric perspective. Quantitative research uses primarily a positivist approach to develop knowledge or testing of theories and utilises strategies such as surveys and data collection (Creswell, 2013). This method is more relevant in this study, as the need for soft skills development in management education has been well articulated in the literature and most studies focusing on soft skills development from the graduate's perspective have been qualitative in nature. Using a quantitative approach over a qualitative method for this study provided a new

perspective and alternate insights into this field of study. The chosen method for data collection took place from a single on-line, self-assessment survey.

3.2 Research Design

This was an exploratory, cross sectional research design that adopted a positivist paradigm (Creswell, 2009). Positivism is the use of scientific methodology to research a phenomenon in an objective real world (Cornford & Smithson, 2006). The quantitative data came from a checklist of identified soft skills and a correspondence matrix regarding the development of specific soft skills on the MBA programme. The open-ended questions were designed to gain further insight and provide more meaning to the statistical data. The detail of the instrument is discussed under research instrument.

An on-line, self-administered survey was the chosen method of data collection. The benefit of this method is that it allowed for a larger sample size to be collected within a relatively short time frame as compared to interviews (Truell, Bartlett, & Alexander, 2002). A well-known on-line survey tool, “Qualtrics” made distribution of the survey to a large population quick and easy. The link to the survey was emailed to respondents who could then access the survey and complete it in the comfort of their own time and space. Accessibility to emails via smart phones proved an impediment for this survey as the matrix question was not compatible with the mobile devices. Respondents who accessed the survey via their mobile devices could not view the matrix questions and subsequently could not complete the survey - this resulted in 51 surveys that were incomplete and excluded from the results.

Another disadvantage of on-line surveys is that the researcher has no way of tracking which respondent answered and which respondent did not answer the questionnaire, and therefore could not follow up if data were missing. In the present electronic age, people are often inundated with emails, which can result in the emails being directed into a junk folder, where the recipient would be unlikely to complete it.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 *Population*

The population consisted of qualified MBA graduates in South Africa as well as MBA students in their final year of study. No restrictions were placed on which industry the graduates were employed in, the business school that they studied at, or their year of qualification.

3.3.2 *Sample and sampling method*

A snowball sampling technique was used for the study, and the approach was similar to that of a census, in that all possible contactable MBA graduates were sent the survey to complete. The sample was not random because the study was exploratory, and the greatest possible coverage and input was required, in order to identify the soft skills that are developed within South African MBA degrees, as well as the ways in which they are developed. A sample of between 50-70 respondents was expected and 51 completed surveys were obtained. The survey was quantitative based and therefore it was important to get the right number of respondents to ensure validity and reliability of results. However, because the sample was not randomly selected, the results are not generalisable, although it is hoped that they will be useful in similar contexts, particularly in curriculum development in business schools.

3.4 The research instrument

The survey instrument was designed specifically for this study and was not based on any previous instrument design. A list of soft skills was obtained from the literature review, and teaching methods included are present methods used at business schools. The research instrument was designed to identify the following;

a. Demographics of the respondents (Questions 1 – 5)
b. Which soft skills were developed during the MBA (from a limited list identified from the literature) in Question 7

c. The ranking of the five most important career skills from the respondents' perspective in Question 6
d. A correspondence matrix to identify which classroom activities or teaching methods could be associated with the development of the different soft skills in Question 7
e. Open-ended questions to determine other soft skills that may be developed, any other teaching methods that respondents felt developed soft skills, examples of ways in which soft skills have been important in their careers, and lastly, anything else they would like to contribute to the research (Q 8-11)

The author acknowledges that although the primary methodology used was quantitative, a paradigm shift to qualitative methods was necessary to analyse the open–ended questions. Thus thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data from the open-ended questions. Thematic content analysis uses recurring themes or patterns across data to describe or explain a phenomenon associated with the research question or proposition (Bryman, 2012a).

3.5 Procedure for data collection

A pilot study was conducted on five MBA graduates and the instrument was then amended, based on feedback. A list of MBA graduates and alumni with their email addresses was obtained from business schools in South Africa. Wits Business school MBA programme co-ordinator emailed the survey link to registered final year MBA students and well as graduates from previous years. The Gordon Institute of Business Science posted the survey link on their alumni portal. With the snowballing sample technique used, the survey reached graduates from the University of Cape Town and Potchefstroom.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

The data was analysed using correspondence analysis (Bendixen & Sandler, 1995) and cluster analysis (Bryman, 2012b) to determine the frequencies and ranking of the soft skills developed, and also which teaching methods / activities are associated with

the development of specific soft skills. The answers to the open-ended questions were content analysed and integrated with the quantitative findings in the discussion chapter.

Correspondence analysis is a multivariate descriptive, exploratory method used to analyse two-way or multi-way tables. It provides a graphical method of representing categorical data (Yelland, 2010). Correspondence analysis shows that a relationship exists between variables but more than that, it is used to determine the nature by which or how the two variables relate to one another (Hoffman & Franke, 1986). It is a statistical method that is used to identify intricate associations between two or more variables that may not be revealed from other statistical methods. The requirement for correspondence analysis is a rectangular data matrix consisting of rows and columns with non-negative data. Row and column variables are assigned numeric values in corresponding units which function as co-ordinates so that these can be plotted on a graph. The display of each co-ordinate reveals similarities or variations within the variables. Plotting row and column co-ordinates within the same space shows correspondence within the row and column data sets (Hoffman & Franke, 1986).

3.7 Limitations of the study

The study did not necessarily seek to generalise the findings, but it is hoped that the results may help to inform future research into the development and possible deliberate integration of specified soft skills development into MBA degrees.

3.8 Validity and reliability

3.8.1 *External validity*

External validity refers to the extrapolation of the results to the greater population of the sample (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). If a study has a high degree of external validity, the greater the chances are that the results can be generalised (Bryman, 2012a). Although generalisability was not sought in this study, efforts to increase the usefulness of the findings and to promote transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Leedy

& Ormrod, 2005; Rudestam & Newton, 2015) were made, including a broad range of MBA graduates from different universities, different cohorts, different years of study, a range of experience, and different demographics was sought. As mentioned above, the survey was emailed to MBA graduates and students from Wits Business School, Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Potchefstroom as well as University of Cape Town. Respondents are employed in different industries, 14 in finance and insurance, ten in health and social services, six in professions, five in manufacturing and the remainder in mining, agriculture, education, transportation and aviation and maritime Refer to Table two in chapter four. Respondents had varying years of experience post MBA with some qualifying in 2014, 2015, a few with more than 10 years post MBA, graduating with their MBA in 2003 and 2004. The majority of the respondents will complete their MBA in 2016.

3.8.2 *Internal validity*

Internal validity is the ability of research to measure what it is intended to measure and draw appropriate conclusions (Saunders, 2011). Internal validity or credibility (Bryman, 2012b) is based on the believability of the results from the perspective of the respondents. The purpose of the research was to identify which soft skills were developed during MBA study, understand the value of the soft skills from the graduate's perspective, and gain an idea as to how development of the skills could take place in MBA programmes. The instrument was straightforward and provided clear and simple instructions to the respondents. A pilot study was done to test the instrument which was modified based on the feedback.

3.8.3 *Reliability*

The straightforward construction of the instrument, and the fact that all respondents completed the same instrument, positively contributed to the reliability (or replicability) of the study (Bryman, 2012b; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Clear instructions were given to the respondents to increase the likelihood of a common understanding of what was required. The instrument consisted of 12 questions and took an average of 10 minutes to complete. This was designed to prevent respondents from getting tired and losing interest, which would influence their ability to answer honestly.

3.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter discusses the chosen method and paradigm. A quantitative research method was used to provide a fresh perspective and alternate insights into a topic that has been extensively analysed in studies that were qualitative in nature. A large number of soft skills were identified in chapter two. Thus, a combination of a simple ranking survey, which identified soft skills in order of importance to graduates; a matrix question that determined the level of association between the developed soft skills and teaching methods; and lastly a few open-ended questions to provide depth to the data, were developed for the questionnaire.

The data were collected using an on-line self-administered survey that was emailed to the chosen sample. A snow balling sample technique was used to reach as many contactable MBA graduates as possible.

The data were analysed using correspondence analysis. This method was appropriate as it is used to analyse the relationship or association between two or more variables. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data from the open-ended questions.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The research results are presented in the following categories. The first category explains the demographics. As the nature of the research was to broadly identify soft skills, it was not necessary to delve into detailed demographics. Demographic questions were therefore kept fairly simple and just asked for classification of gender, respondent's qualifications, and industry sector of employment, as well as year of completion of their MBA. This is followed by the presentation of results for sub-problem one and then sub-problem two.

4.2 Demographic profile of respondents

Demographic data were analysed with simple descriptive statistics using Microsoft Excel. The total number of completed surveys used for the analysis was 51 (n=51). As illustrated in Figure 4, there was a total of 31 (61%) male and 20 (39%) female respondents.

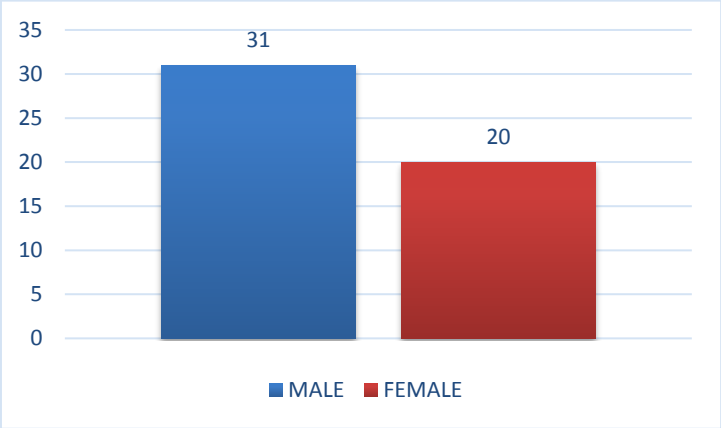


Figure 4: Gender profile of respondents

The majority of the respondents were in the age group (30-39 yrs) and accounted for 35 (68%) of the sample. The 40-49 year age group was the second largest group of respondents in the sample, n = 8 (18%). A similar representation of respondents in number was found in the following age groups 20-29 years of which there was four,

and in the age groups 60-69 years there were three respondents. None of the respondents were older than 69 years old. Figure 5 depicts age profile of respondents.

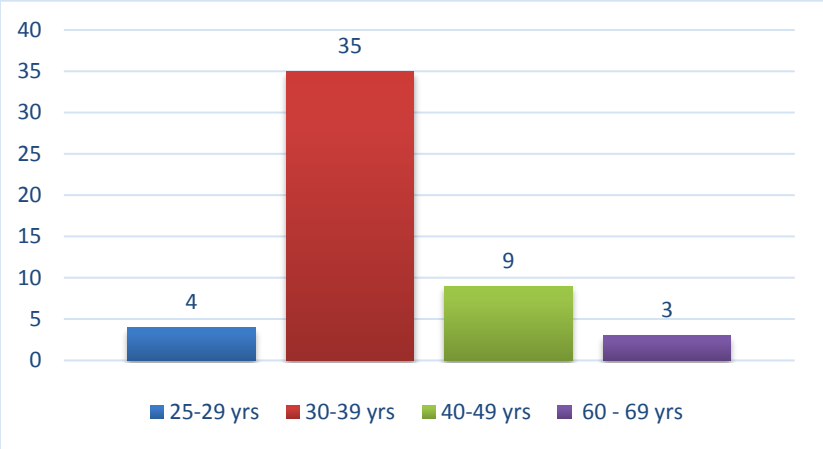


Figure 5: Age profile of respondents

Most respondents had more than one qualification in different fields of study. There were nine with Bachelor of Commerce degrees; eight with Bachelor of Engineering degrees and three with pharmacy qualifications.

Regarding the year of study of the MBA, 30 (59%) of respondents were currently in their 2nd year of study. Nine respondents (17%) qualified in 2014. Three respondents qualified in 2015. There were three respondents with ten years post MBA; two respondents qualified in 2004 and one respondent qualified in 2003. There were six respondents that did not answer this section. Figure six represents the years in which respondents graduated with their MBA.

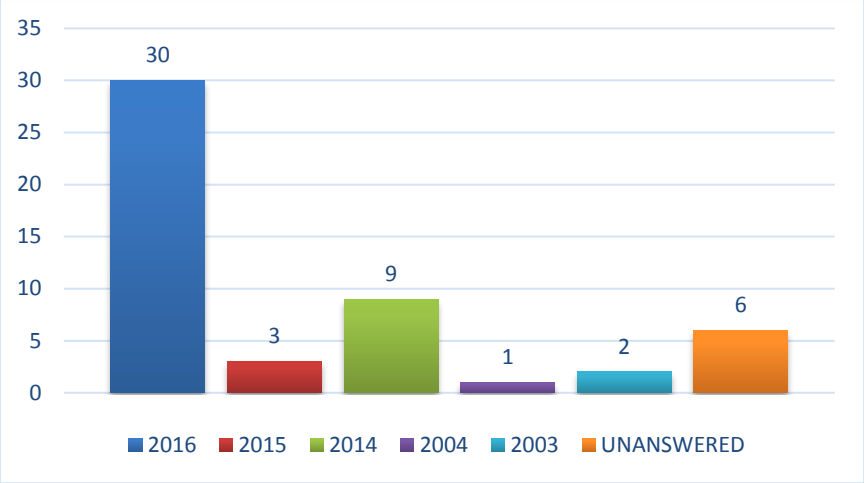


Figure 6: Year respondents graduated with the MBA

Table two shows the various industry sectors in which respondents were employed. The seven 'other' included the following industry sectors, CSR; government and economic development; aviation and maritime; consultancy; tele-communications and the public sector.

Table 1: Industry sector representation

INDUSTRY SECTOR	TOTAL
Financial and insurance services	14
Health and social services	10
Professional and technical services	6
Manufacturing	5
Education	2
Mining and quarrying	2
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1
Construction	1
Transportation and storage	1
Wholesale and retail trade	1
Other	7
TOTAL	**51**

4.3 Sub-problem one: Key career-related soft skills

Sub-problem 1: Identify the key career-related soft skills that MBA graduates acquire through their MBA studies

- *Proposition One: The key soft skills that MBA graduates acquired through the MBA include the list mentioned on pg. 35*

In Chapter 2, a detailed list of life and soft skills derived from the literature was given. The items selected for inclusion in the instrument are those that literature emphasises as being important and are re-stated below for ease of reference;

i. Self-management (includes self-knowledge, stress management, time management, self-confidence, goal setting, taking responsibility, being accountable)
ii. Emotional intelligence
iii. Effective teamwork
iv. Communicating effectively (verbal, written, listening)
v. Dealing with difficult people / conflict management
vi. Cross-cultural sensitivity
vii. Critical / analytical thinking
viii. Problem-solving ability
ix. Ethical, logical decision-making
x. Entrepreneurial thinking, encompassing innovativeness and creativity
xi. Learning to learn effectively / lifelong learning
xii. Dealing with complexity
xiii. Networking skills
xiv. Strategic thinking (long-term and big-picture)
xv. Sustainability orientation - Though not raised in the literature it has been included because of its socio-political importance in South Africa

Respondents were asked to rank the five most important soft skills in order of importance for their careers. Figure 7 reflects the number of times a particular soft skill was chosen as one of the five most important soft skills.

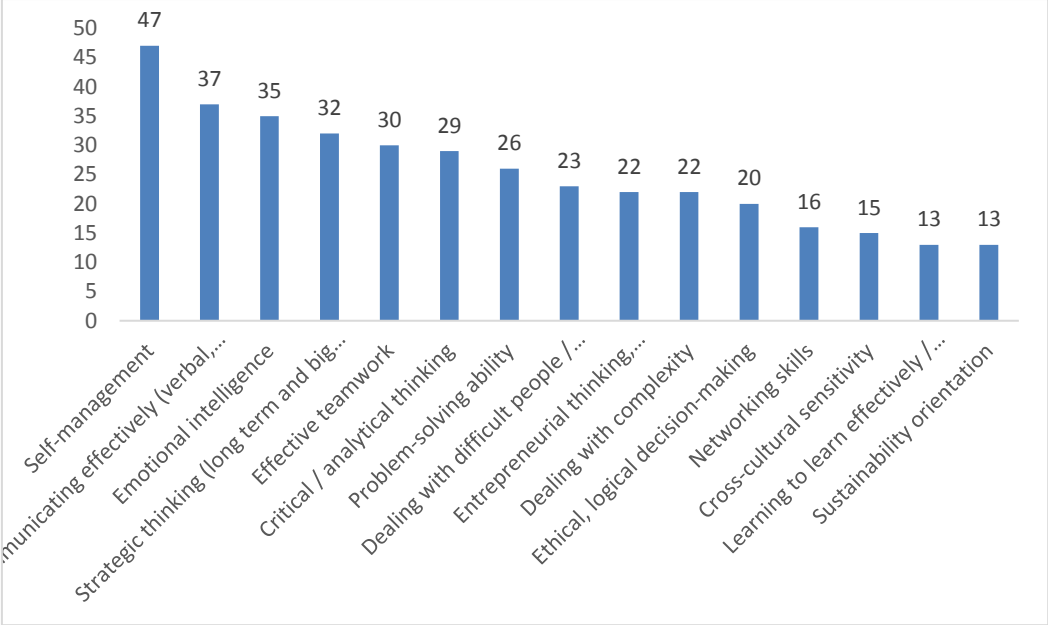


Figure 7: Frequency of Soft Skills being selected as the top five most important career-related soft skill

Out of the sample size of 51, one respondent omitted to answer this specific question; self-management was selected 47 times as a top five soft skill out of 50 respondents. Communication, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking and effective teamwork were selected between 30 and 37 times. Life-long learning and sustainability orientation was only selected 13 times out of a possible 51 as important soft skills.

The above analysis reflects simply the number of times that a particular soft skill was selected and not the actual ranking of that skill or the number of times that skill was selected as ranked one or two most important. The data were further analysed to reflect a ranking order of the most important to the least important soft skills. The statistical programme SAS was used and the data were analysed using a shotgun stochastic search. The results are displayed below in Table 2 and graphically by Figure 8..

Rank ordered data - Results

	Item means														
	Sustainability orientation	Lifelong learning	Cross-cultural sensitivity	Networking skills	Ethical, logical decision-making	Dealing with complexity	Entrepreneurial thinking	Conflict management	Problem-solving ability	Effective teamwork	Critical / analytical thinking	Strategic thinking	Emotional intelligence	Communicating	Self-management
Standardised mean	**-0.57**	**-0.42**	**-0.41**	**-0.32**	**-0.20**	**-0.14**	**-0.12**	**-0.07**	**0.02**	**0.11**	**0.17**	**0.22**	**0.30**	**0.40**	**1.03**
t-value	-3.2411	-3.2292	-2.8339	-2.4197	-1.2351	-1.0925	-0.9678	-0.7671	0.1245	0.8225	1.0202	1.0958	2.5257	2.9389	7.2588
p-value	0.0019	0.0020	0.0062	0.0185	0.2215	0.2789	0.3369	0.4460	0.9014	0.4140	0.3117	0.2775	0.0142	0.0046	0.0000
Upper Conf. Limit	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401	0.2401
Lower Conf .Limit	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401	-0.2401

	2.0595
Significance level	**0.0437**

Table 2: Shotgun stochastic rank order results

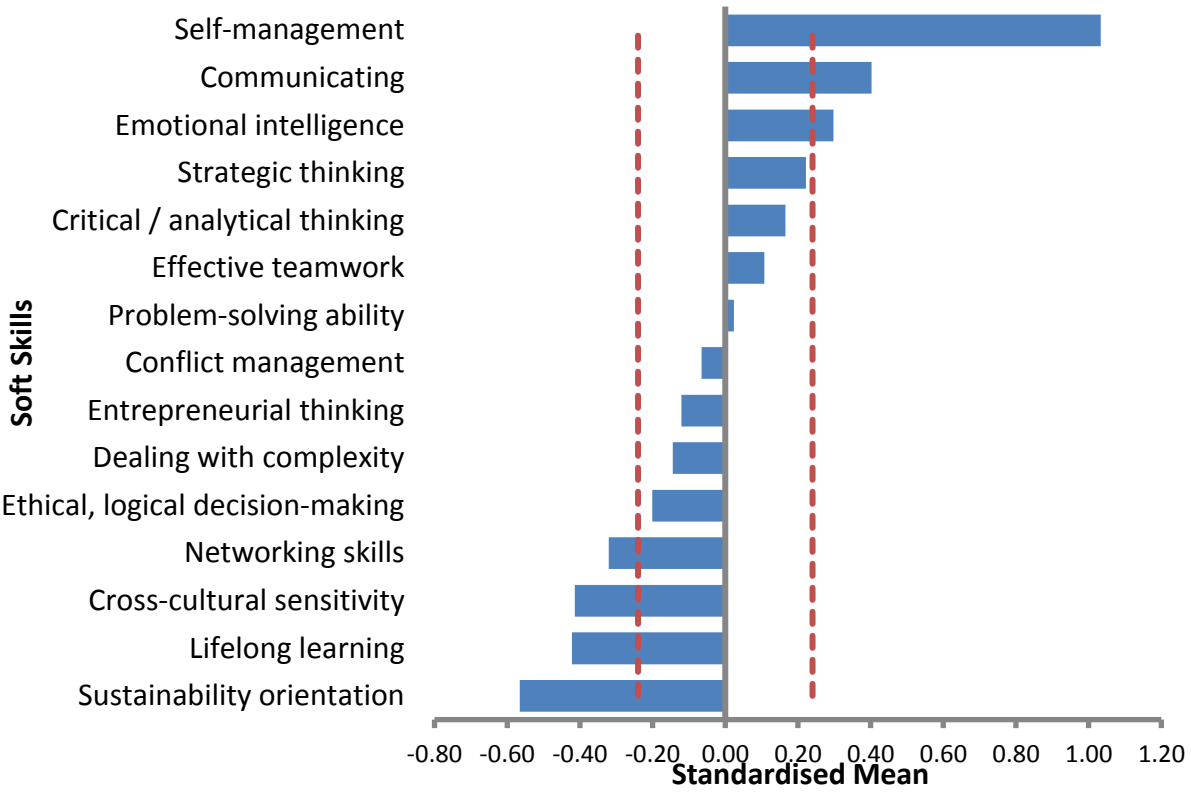


Figure 8: Graphical representation of shotgun stochastic search results of the five most important career-related soft skills

Self-management was ranked as the most important soft skill ($p > 0.001$)). Communication ranked as the second most important soft skill with a standardised mean of 0.4 and a p-value = 0.046. Emotional Intelligence was the third most important soft skills with a p-value = 0.0142.

Strategic thinking (p=0.2775) and critical/analytical thinking (p=0.3117) ranked as the 4th and 5th most important soft skills but with standardised means of 0.22 and 0.17 both within the upper and lower confidence level, so one cannot be viewed as higher ranked than the other. The skills listed in Figure 8 including strategic thinking and ethical logical decision-making, were selected by a few respondents as ranked amongst the top five, however this number was not statistically significant. These skills are effective teamwork (p=0.4140), problem solving ability, (p=0.9014), conflict management (p=0.4460), entrepreneurial thinking, (p=0.3369), dealing with complexity (p=0.2789) and ethical and logical decision making (p=0.2215).

At the opposite end of the ranking scale, soft skills that were viewed as least important were sustainability orientation (p=0.0019), lifelong learning (p=0.0020), cross-cultural sensitivity (p=0.0062) and networking skills (p=0.0185). These soft skills had negative standardised means below the lower confidence level of -0.2401.

Qualitative analysis of the open-ended question related to sub-problem one.

The responses to question ten relate to Proposition one. Respondents were asked to describe any other skills that they developed during their MBA that were not included in the instrument, and their responses were consolidated and presented below in Table 3 in order of frequency of mention. The skills have been loosely grouped into themes.

Table 3: Other skills developed during the MBA

Number of mentions	Skill mentioned
5	Communication and related skills, including writing skills, effective listening, negotiation skills and dealing with difficult people
3	Tolerance and patience (e.g. in the face of bureaucracy)
2	Leadership: e.g. "I have learnt to delve deep within and truly discover who I am in order to leverage off my authenticity to lead effectively"
2	Personal growth, e.g. self-confidence, self-belief, self-awareness
2	Time management including planning and organising; general efficiency
2	None: "Other than being able to communicate with impact and effectively nothing in particular" and "all soft skills listed are the same as those I have learnt thus far"
1	Resilience – "Just getting a thick skin. We are all in one class but it's still a competitive space"
1	Problem solving
18	**TOTAL mentions to the open ended questions**

4.4 Sub-problem two: Matching soft skills to specific pedagogies

Sub-problem 2: Match the development of soft skills on the MBA to specific pedagogies, incidents or events on the programme

- *Proposition Two: The perceived development of soft skills on the MBA can be linked to specific pedagogies*

Teaching methods included in the instrument are those used in business schools today, and are listed in Section 2.3 on page 18. Teaching methods were cross tabulated with soft skills and respondents were required to indicate if a teaching method contributed to the development of a soft skill. The data was first consolidated into a matrix table using excel. The consolidated matrix is presented below in Table 4.

Visual inspection of the teaching methods indicates that syndicate assignments is seen to contribute significantly to the development of many soft skills namely; effective teamwork (40), conflict management (37); emotional intelligence and communication (35). Thirty-nine respondents indicated that Individual assignments contributed to the development of self-management. Individual assignments were also seen to develop problem solving ability, life-long learning, as well as ethical and logical thinking. Interactive lectures led to the development of communication skills, entrepreneurial thinking and strategic thinking. Case studies are seen to have led to the development of problem solving ability and ethical and logical thinking.

International trip/exchange, field trips and social responsibility were not seen to be beneficial in the development of soft skills.

TEACHING METHOD	Self_management	Emotional_intelligence	Effective_teamwork	Communicating	Conflict_management	Cross_cultural_sensitivity	Critical_analytical_thinking	Problem_solving_ability	Ethical_logical_decision_makin	Entrepreneurial_thinking	Lifelong_learning	Dealing_with_complexity	Networking_skills	Strategic_thinking	Sustainability	Total
Syndicate assignments and activities	31	35	40	35	37	32	30	33	29	28	27	32	32	28	23	472
Individual assignments	39	15	2	10	5	6	26	34	27	22	29	22	6	24	19	286
Interactive lectures	15	16	9	25	7	17	21	15	19	25	20	17	15	23	15	259
Case studies	13	5	12	8	7	8	23	32	17	18	14	22	9	29	15	232
Small group activities in class	13	22	32	19	23	16	6	16	9	10	11	14	28	8	5	232
Informal debates in class	12	25	10	20	15	20	6	8	11	2	8	8	20	6	7	178
Business simulation	7	6	6	5	8	5	20	15	12	15	9	11	5	19	8	151
Industry expert (guest) presentations	7	10	7	7	5	6	10	3	6	13	13	8	12	15	10	132
Student presentations	8	6	15	28	8	5	9	3	3	11	7	8	6	8	5	130
Research panel discussion	7	9	0	13	4	3	11	7	7	3	5	7	4	6	4	90
Social responsibility course	5	10	3	5	3	9	0	4	9	7	2	1	5	2	13	78
Field trips to organizations	3	2	6	7	4	7	4	4	2	7	5	4	11	3	6	75
International trip / exchange	2	6	8	4	6	9	2	3	2	6	2	4	12	5	3	74
Total	162	167	150	186	132	143	168	177	153	167	152	158	165	176	133	2389

Table 4: Consolidated cross tabulation of correspondence matrix results

The data were subjected to correspondence analysis using SAS and the results obtained are represented in the Figures below. The presentation of results for the correspondence analysis of the matrix table 4 follows a similar format of presentation and discussion as used by Bendixen and Sandler (1995).

Figure 9 displays the results of the inertia and chi-square decomposition. It is noted that 51.05% of the inertia can be explained by the first dimension. This implies that the relative frequency of values that can be reconstructed from a single dimension can produce 51.05% of the total Chi-Square value. Dimension two contributes to 14.43% of the inertia. The combination of both dimensions accounts for 65.48%. The average row axis accounts for 8.33% (100/13-1) of the inertia and the average column axis accounts for 7.14% (100/15-1). It is recommended that any axis contributing to more than the maximum of these two percentages is regarded as significant and should be included in the solution. Axis three and four both contribute to more than the highest percentage with 12.10% and 9.47% respectively. As the addition of more and more dimensions explains less and less of the overall Chi-Square value and is unlikely to contribute significantly to the interpretation of the dependency between rows and columns, dimension three and four were excluded.

Inertia and Chi-Square Decomposition

Singular Value	Principal Inertia	Chi-Square	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0.32212	0.10376	247.884	51.05	51.05
0.17124	0.02932	70.051	14.43	65.48
0.15681	0.02459	58.742	12.10	77.58
0.13876	0.01925	45.996	9.47	87.05
0.09619	0.00925	22.102	4.55	91.61
0.09016	0.00813	19.419	4.00	95.61
0.06513	0.00424	10.133	2.09	97.69
0.04186	0.00175	4.187	0.86	98.55
0.03887	0.00151	3.609	0.74	99.30
0.02768	0.00077	1.831	0.38	99.68
0.02233	0.00050	1.191	0.25	99.92
0.01270	0.00016	0.386	0.08	100.00
	0.20324	485.530	100.00	

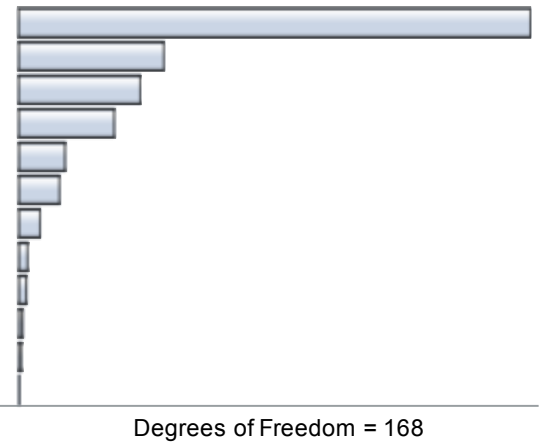


Figure 9: Inertia and Chi-Square Decomposition of Correspondence matrix results

Dimension one and dimension two co-ordinates for rows (pedagogies) and columns (soft skills) are presented below in Table 5 and Table 6 respectively and a graphical plot of the data is shown in Figure 11.

Table 5: Row co-ordinates (Pedagogies)

Row Co-ordinates (pedagogies)		
	Dimension1	**Dimension2**
Interactive lectures	-0.1177	0.0108
Social responsibility course	0.1473	0.6075
Case studies	-0.3821	-0.1317
Student presentations	0.2450	-0.3525
Business simulation	-0.3591	-0.1369
Informal debates in class	0.4328	0.2373
Small group activities in class	0.4560	-0.0971
Individual assignments	-0.4943	0.1386
Syndicate assignments and activities	0.1159	-0.0230
International trip / exchange	0.4766	-0.0133
Research panel discussion	-0.1348	0.0380
Field trips to organisations	0.2504	-0.0427
Industry expert (guest) presentations	-0.0611	-0.0065

Table 6: Column co-ordinates (Soft Skills)

Column Coordinates (soft skills)		
	Dimension1	**Dimension2**
Self-management	-0.2066	0.1461
Emotional intelligence	0.2979	0.2739
Effective teamwork	0.4920	-0.2941
Communicating	0.2957	-0.1483
Conflict management	0.4197	-0.0841
Cross-cultural sensitivity	0.3835	0.2081
Critical-analytical thinking	-0.3773	-0.1669
Problem-solving ability	-0.3328	-0.0132
Ethical & logical decision making	-0.2426	0.2160
Entrepreneurial thinking	-0.1909	-0.0776
Lifelong learning	-0.2230	-0.0007
Dealing with complexity	-0.1590	-0.1327
Networking skills	0.4624	0.0277
Strategic thinking	-0.3408	-0.1497
Sustainability orientation	-0.1602	0.2765

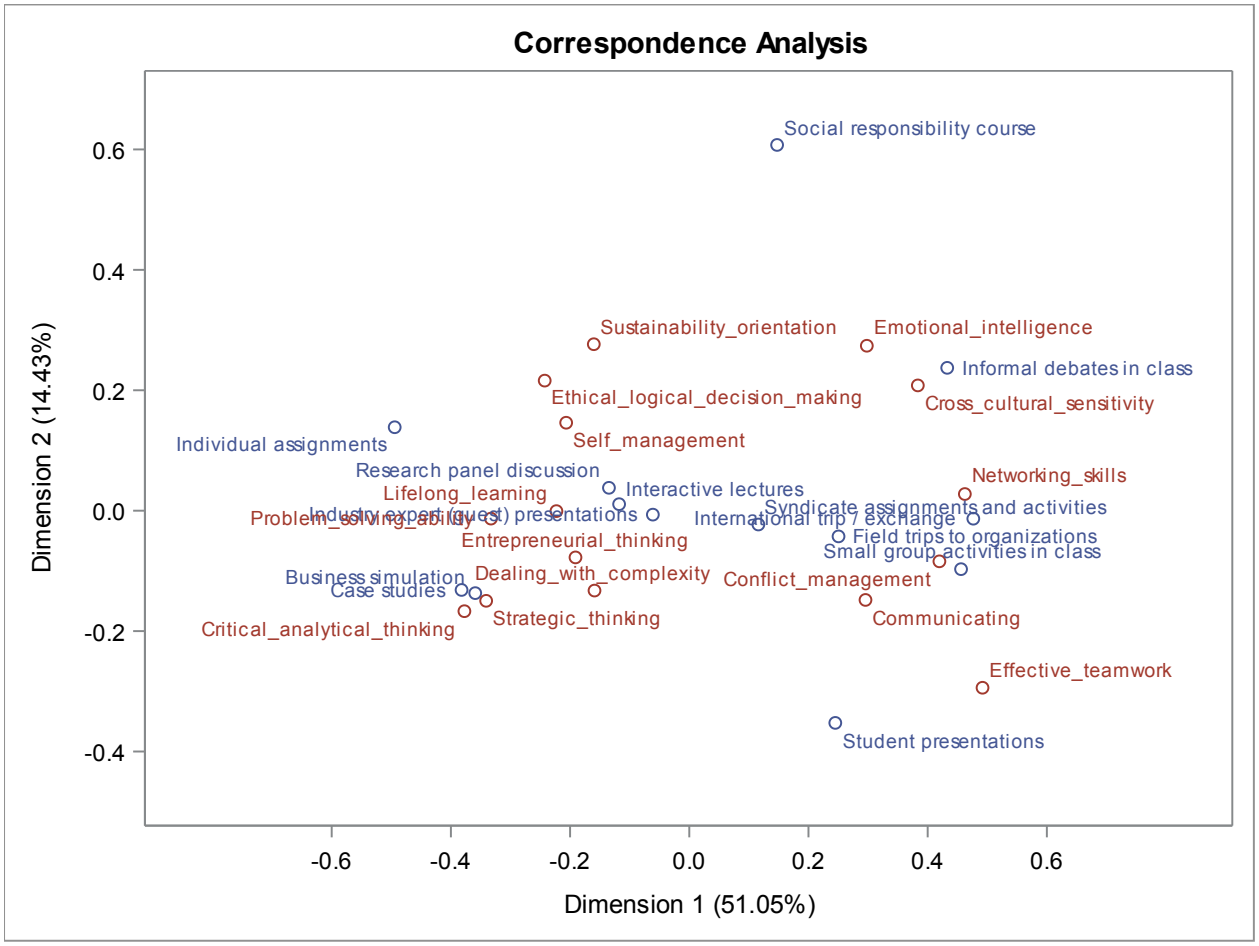


Figure 10: Plot of teaching method and subsequent soft skills

The axes were interpreted in terms of columns in row space i.e.: teaching methods in soft skill space. The next step is to interpret the axis. The logic used to define the opposite ends of dimension one and two is the logic applied by Bendixen and Sandler (1995), which is to consider the similarities of the variables that are clustered along the same side of the axis and name that axis accordingly.

Emotional intelligence, cross-cultural sensitivity, networking skills, conflict management, communication and team work contribute significantly to the inertia along dimension one. These skills all have positive co-ordinates. The soft skills listed above are skills used when dealing with people and were classified for this research as 'people-related' or extrinsic softs skills. Soft skills with negative co-ordinates and

contributing significantly along dimension one are, critical thinking, dealing with complexity, strategic thinking, self-management, logical thinking and sustainability orientation. These are skills that 'relate to one's self' or intrinsic soft skills. Figure 11 shows labelled dimension one axis.

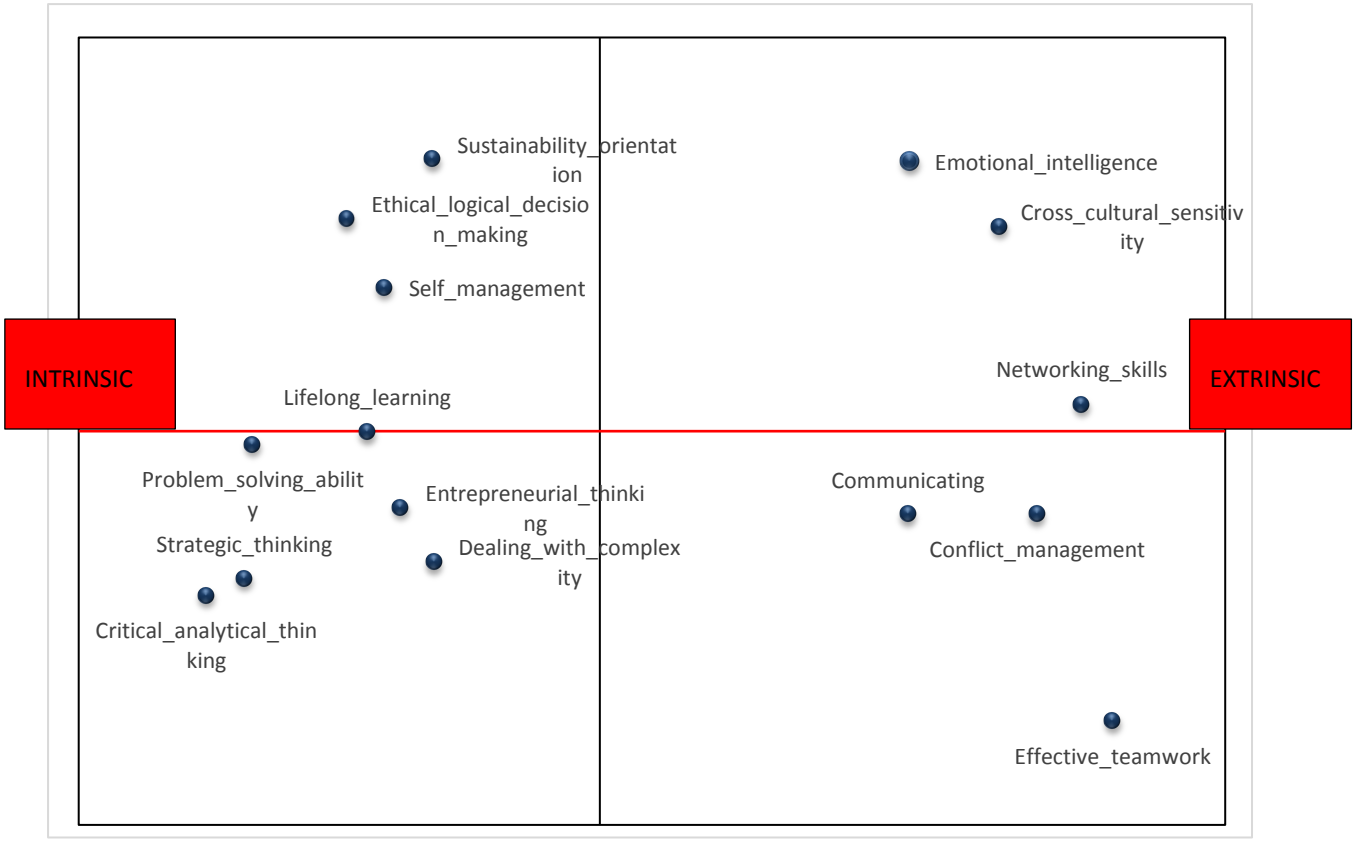


Figure 11: Labelled dimension one axis

Sustainability orientation, emotional intelligence, ethical and logical decision making, cross-cultural sensitivity and self-management have positive co-ordinates and contribute significantly along dimension two. Effective teamwork, critical/analytical thinking, dealing with complexity, strategic thinking and conflict management have negative co-ordinates and offer a similar contribution along dimension two. The former group can be considered to be a more value-based skills and the latter group more skills based. Figure 12 displays labelled dimension two axis.

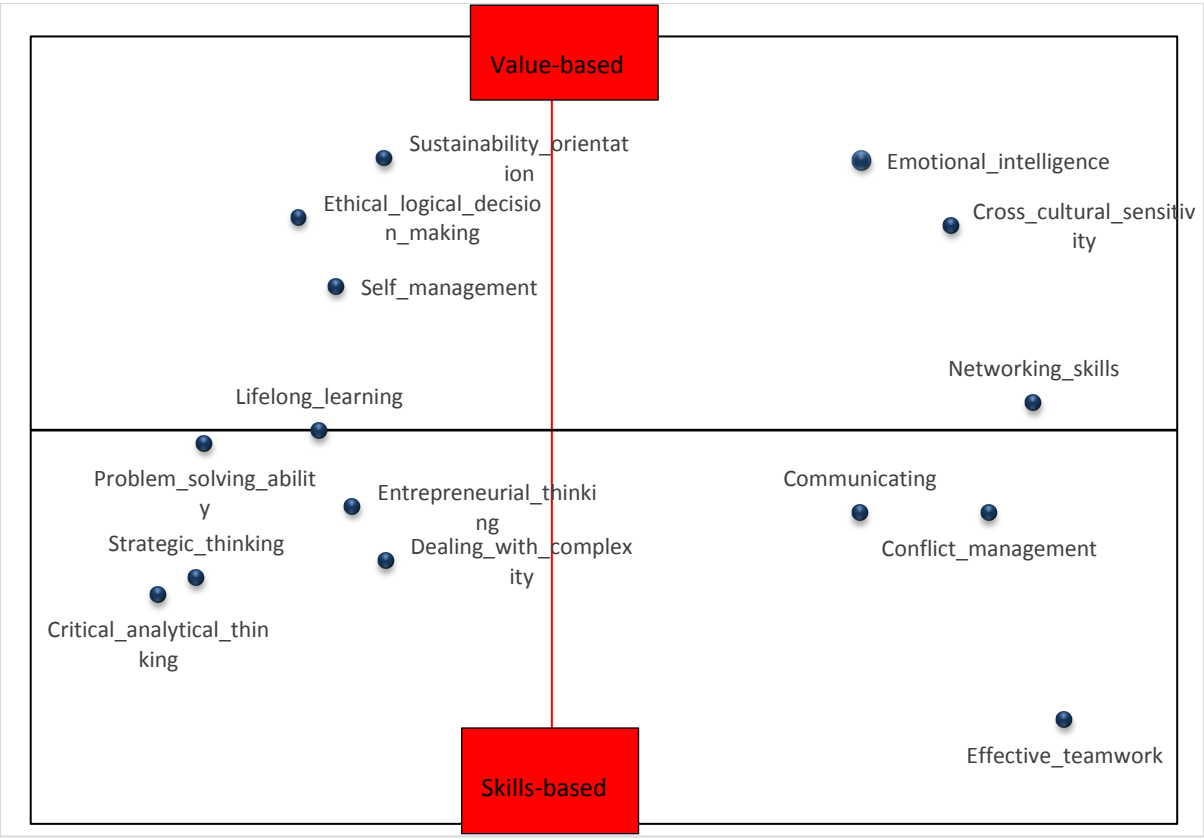


Figure 12: Labelled dimension two axis

The principle co-ordinates are now plotted with the labelled axes above. The plot is represented in Figure 13.

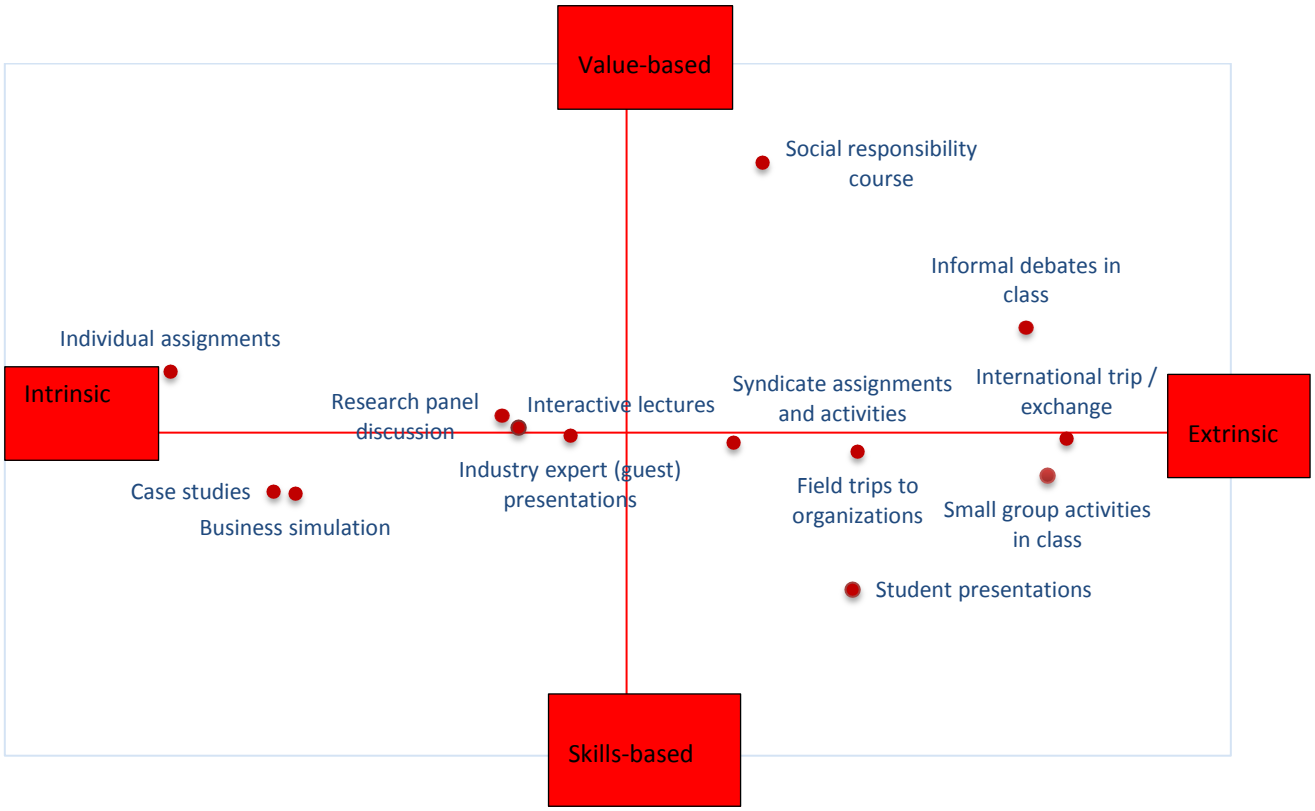


Figure 13: Plot of teaching methods in the defined soft skill space

The plot above shows that teaching methods are more clustered along dimension one and therefore more differentiated along dimension one as opposed to dimension two. In terms of the applied analysis, teaching methods can be associated with the development of intrinsic or extrinsic related soft skills. Teaching methods situated towards the end of the negative axis; Individual assignments, case studies, business simulations are strongly associated with intrinsically related soft skills. Teaching methods situated towards the end of the positive axis; International trips, small group activities and informal debates in class are strongly associated with extrinsically related soft skills. Teaching methods situated more centrally towards the X and Y intercept; syndicate assignments, interactive lectures and industry expert presentation can either be associated with the development of soft skills across the dimension, and is not limited to the skill being intrinsic or extrinsically related or the teaching methods is not associated at all with the development of soft skills. For example, syndicate assignments located centrally along the dimension is seen to be instrumental in the development of many soft skills as shown in Table 3 and Industry expert presentation was not selected by many respondents to be beneficial in the development of soft skills as shown in Table 3.

Unlike the teaching methods that are discussed above, Social responsibility course and student presentations are more differentiated along dimension two. Social responsibility course is distributed along the positive end of dimension two and associated with value based skills such as sustainability orientation. Student presentations is distributed along the negative end of dimension two and therefore associated more with 'skills-based' soft skills, such as of communication skills.

Qualitative analysis of the two open-ended questions relating to sub-problem two

The responses to question 11 and 12 relate to Proposition two. In question 11 respondents were asked to describe any additional learning activities they experienced during their MBA. Question 12 asked respondents if there was anything else they would like to indicate about teaching methods or activities they

experienced on their MBA or the development of soft skills. The responses to these questions were consolidated using thematic analysis and presented in the tables below. Table 7 presents responses that relate to teaching methods and Table 8 presents responses that relate to soft skills.

Table 7: Additional comments on teaching methods

Number of mentions	Teaching method
2	Syndicate activities and group discussions. Teaches the benefits of collaborative work and dealing with difficult people.
1	Career Planning course work
1	Project mapping assignment. Helpful improve problem-solving ability
1	Case studies facilitated understanding in an unfamiliar field
1	Educational overseas trips, helps understand the bigger picture
1	Social responsibility course. Was not well conceptualised and lack of preparation.
1	Field trip to visit CSI initiative. With better planning this should have added value
1	Interactive lecturers. The success of which lies with the skill of the lecturer to able a consolidate points back to the point of the discussion and to coax comments out of the quieter introverts
1	Part-time classes and study weeks helped developed all soft skills. Communication in person better
10	Total number of mentions to open-ended question

Table 8: Additional comments about the MBA experience

Number of mentions	Soft Skill
1	Time-management
1	Stress management. Working under severe pressure
2	More focus on soft skills development
4	Total number of mentions

4.5 Conclusion

The results for the research were presented in this chapter. The demographic results were presented first, followed by results pertaining to Proposition one and lastly, results pertaining to Proposition two.

Demographics where presented using simple statistics and tables.

Data relating to Proposition one were consolidated to reflect the number of times a soft skill was selected amongst the top ranking soft skills. This was graphical represented in Figure 7. The results were further analysed using a shotgun stochastic search using the statistical software SAS. The results of the stochastic analysis were presented in Figure 8. The responses to the open-ended question were analysed using thematic content analysis and are presented in Table 3. In summary the most important career-related soft skills identified were self-management, communication and emotional intelligence.

Data relating to Proposition two was first represented in Table 4 to show the number of times a teaching method was selected towards the development of particular soft skill. The data were analysed using correspondence analysis and the results are represented in Figures 9 and 10. Figures 11-13 graphically represent the labelling of dimension polar ends. The responses to open-ended questions 11 and 12 were analysed using content thematic analysis and presented in Tables 7 and 8.

The full results of the correspondence analysis are in Appendix B.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to identify the most important career-related soft skills acquired by the South African MBA students along with matching soft skills to specific pedagogies, practices, incidents or events that occurred during their course of study. This chapter discusses the research results presented in Chapter 4 with reference to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. Furthermore the research findings provide valuable insights on the associations between pedagogies and soft skill development.

The chapter begins with a brief demographic profile of respondents followed by the interpretation and discussion of results pertaining to each sub-problem.

5.2 Demographic profile of respondents

The study targeted MBA graduates and MBA students in their final year of study and aimed to obtain a sample that was representative of the diversity in MBA classes. The researcher is satisfied that the sample is a good representation of diversity within MBA classes due the gender spilt, age variations, industry sector representation and qualifications of the respondents.

5.3 Discussion pertaining to sub-problem one

Proposition One: The key career-related soft skills that MBA graduates acquire through the MBA include the skills listed on pg.; 27

Self-management, communication and emotional intelligence have been ranked the top three most important career related soft skills. With a p value < 0.001, self-management was unanimously chosen by all respondents as being the most important career-related soft skill. Communication (p value = 0.0046) and emotional intelligence (p-value = 0.0142) with positive standardised means

greater than the upper confidence levels are ranked the second and third most important.

It is clear in the literature consulted in Chapter 2 that all of these skills are seen to be valuable, the question to be asked is why do South African graduates view self-management, communication and emotional intelligence significantly more valuable compared to the other skills?

South African is unique with the set of challenges faced by its managers. Recent democratisation and globalisation catalysed irreversible change in the political, social and economic climate. Some of the many challenges facing the economy today are, the effects of a weakening currency and inflation; developed-world regulatory demands in emerging markets; high crime rates; affirmative action; adverse labour relations; political uncertainty; job insecurities; high unemployment rates; skills shortage; migration; ethnic and language diversity within the work place; technology; poverty; exhaustible natural resources; uncertain electricity supply and the effects of HIV/AIDS (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Mayer & Louw, 2012; Singh et al., 2004). Against the backdrop of such tumultuous economic conditions, managers need to have strong intrapersonal skills, they need to be adaptable and resilient. Self-management is an intrapersonal skill that consists of a combination of behaviours that relate to how people manage themselves, their work and their lives. Self-regulation or self-management is the ability to control your emotions and your reactions to those emotions and to respond to challenges productively.

In response to globalisation, companies have resorted to re-engineering of operational processes and organisational structures by downsizing or right-sizing in order to improve their business model and efficiency (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Prasad, 2014). Organizations have to be adaptable, flexible and responsive in order to survive (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003). The adaptability of a manager to be able to quickly adapt and adjust to changes in organisational needs is crucial in seeing the organisation through such periods of change. The ability to manage one's self when facing set-backs and disappointments is important for a manager as this will help them maintain composure and professionalism in front of peers and subordinates (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011)

and maintain their own stress levels and still be productive (Han, 2014). Apart from company organisational re-structuring and downsizing, other set-backs and disappointments are; poor business results, not meeting targets and poor relationships with colleagues. Managers must to be able to critically and objectively evaluate themselves and have self-awareness and self-realisation to admit when their approach might not have been the most effective (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). A shift in thinking and adaptability is then needed to consider different strategies (Goleman, 2000). Self-awareness is about knowing, understanding and accepting yourself. Self-aware people are realistic, tend to be more self-confident and are able to manage themselves and their relationships with others (Goleman, 2004; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Apart from self-management being an important skill in dealing with peers and subordinates, it is also important for managing relationships with bosses (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011).

From the literature consulted, self-management includes self-knowledge, stress management, time management, self-confidence, and goal-setting, taking responsibility and being accountable. Self-regulated or self-managed people are reasonable and this creates an environment of trust and fairness (Goleman, 2004). Han (2014) includes resilience, patience, persistence, perceptiveness, ability to forgive and forget and growth mind-set as components of self-management. Self-confidence was rated highly in studies by Sturges et al (2003), Carmichael and Sutherland, (2005) and Hay and Hodgkinson, (2006). An 'enhanced sense of self' was discussed by Hay and Hodgkinson (2006) as an important skill. Sixty-seven percent of respondents in the study by Roble, (2012) indicated that interpersonal skills are extremely important. The value of self-management and intrapersonal skills is well documented in literature and the respondents agree that this is a valuable skill as they have rated self-management as the most valuable soft-skill.

Communication helps to build one's relationships with peers and subordinates and helps managers effectively convey the vision and goals of the company. Success is not based on what you know but how your communicate it (Klaus, 2010). The findings in this study placed communication skills as the second most

important soft skill. Communication skills also received five mentions in the open-ended question. Communication skills also include writing skills, effective listening, negotiation skills and dealing with difficult people. Key findings in the study by Robles (2012) were that 52 of the 57 respondents indicated that communication is an important to extremely important skill. Improved self-confidence and communication skills has made discussions with managers easier (Sturges et al., 2003). In the same study by Sturges et al (2003), those who have acquired these two skills have also found it easier to voice their opinions and make a contribution at meetings. Performance appraisals are often a daunting task for both the staff member being appraised as well the manager conducting the appraisal. Effective communication skills by the manager will ease the process and turn the most difficult appraisals into a positive experience, thus motivating staff.

The findings in this study recognising emotional intelligence as the third most valuable soft skill, indicates that students and graduates are aware that it is an important management trait. As management is becoming more and more about people management, the skills needed when relating or dealing with people are of vital importance. These skills collectively are known as emotional intelligence. The components of emotional intelligence are; self-awareness, self-regulation; motivation; empathy and social skills (Goleman, 2004). Some people-related difficulties faced by managers are, understanding different points of view, motivating subordinates, being accepted, being heard and learning to listen without judgement, dealing with poor performers and understanding that success does not just depend on you and your skills but the performance of your team and hence their ability as a manager to inspire and unleash the teams' talent (Benjamin & O'Reilly, 2011). The social skill/social intelligence component of emotional intelligence, according to Goleman (2004) and Salovey and Mayer (1990), is the ability to handle the emotions in relationships. This is recognising the importance of relationships, taking time to understand and appreciate the value of that relationship (be it with a subordinate, peer or boss) and fundamentally, being a leader by inspiring and developing others and taking charge when necessary. Managers with a high emotional intelligence have better communications skills, they respond better to change, they are able to foster

productive relationships effectively and they can cope better with stress. The study by Rapisarda (2002) shows that emotional intelligence competencies are strongly related to group cohesiveness. The importance of high emotional intelligence is expressed in a quotation by Jack Welch, who states;

> *"A leader's intelligence has to have a strong emotional component. He has to have high levels of self-awareness, maturity and self-control. He must be able to withstand heat, handle setbacks and when those lucky moments arise, enjoy success with equal parts, joy and humility. No doubt. Emotional intelligence is rarer than book smarts, but my experience says it is actually more important in the making of a leader. You just can't ignore it" (Welch, 2004)*.

Sustainability orientation, life-long learning, cross-cultural sensitivity and networking skills are ranked in this study as the least important career-related soft skills. The implications of these findings are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Networking was mentioned in studies by Baruch, Bell, and Gray (2005); Baruch and Leeming (2001) as one of the benefits graduates hope to gain from the MBA. Baruch and Leeming (2001) indicated in their study that MBA students were most concerned with acquiring networking skills and new experiences than career competence and improving overall business acumen and management competencies were of secondary importance. Findings in this study are consistent with the studies mentioned above as networking skill did not rate highly as an important skill. However, it is important for students to take note of the benefits of this skill, as organisations today rely on teams and networking structures to function. Therefore, leaders and managers today must have high emotional intelligence and networking skills. Building business relationships with fellow students and colleagues can be a valuable resource during the course of study and after.

Life-long learning refers to the learning that is pursued during the course of your life. With the changes brought about by globalisation and uncertain job security.

the ability to learn new things and acquire new skills and competencies will be useful in improving employability. This study shows that this skill has not been identified by respondents as an important skill.

South Africans have been racially and culturally segregated for many years and the fairly recent democracy which aimed at integrating different cultural groups by the process of affirmative action and black economic empowerment strategies meant that different values and identities need to be understood and acknowledged (Berndt et al., 2011). Cross-cultural interaction and cross-cultural dialogue, without due respect to differences in values and perceptions, can easily lead to misunderstandings and subsequent conflict. South African managers need to adopt a different approach to management and they need to be cognisant that new communication techniques and different ways of thinking is the new transcultural management approach (Mayer & Louw, 2012). A manager with high levels of emotional intelligence and empathy will seek to gain insight into employees and colleagues value structures and perceptions. Emotional intelligence, coupled with good communication, will lead to a sense of empowerment and appreciation within employees (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003; Goleman, 2004).

However, despite changes in legislation, discrimination and privilege is still rife. Racism continues to manifest and evolve post-apartheid, there are still massive economic inequalities (Denton & Vloeberghs, 2003). The current political turmoil and rampant racism and xenophobic attacks indicate that South Africans still have challenges in accepting different cultures (Crush, 2001) In view of this, it is surprising that cross-cultural sensitivity is not viewed as an important skills.

Sustainability is a key concern for organisations today and it is important for organisations to accept and acknowledge that their policies and practices have social and environmental consequences (Jabbour, 2010; Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008). Given the global awareness on issues of sustainability, it is deeply concerning that the findings in this study indicated that students and graduates do not assign the same value to sustainability orientation. The following paragraph highlights the importance of sustainability from a South African perspective.

It has been acknowledged that the world's natural resources are finite and reaching exhausted levels (Brundtland et al., 1987). With the effects of global warming and climate shifts, sustainability development is a key concern from a South African and global perspective. South Africa's natural resources are highly strained. During apartheid, international sanctions imposed on South Africa led to an economy that relied too heavily on the extractive mining industry and cheap electricity from coal and oil. This resulted in unsustainable development, ecological and environmental havoc. The recent energy crisis was directly related to the service provider's inability to meet the high demands of the nation. Load shedding was implementing by the government in order to reduce the demand. The disruption of electricity for 2-3 hours a week had a negative impact on production and the revenue of small businesses, restaurants and the agriculture and mining sector. The disruption of electricity has adverse effects on the water business as electricity is needed for many structural processes in the delivery of water. South Africa's water crisis in reaching dangerous levels, again this is a result of the demand outstripping the supply. Climate shifts and low rainfall exacerbates the water crisis. Due to dry conditions, some areas in South Africa have been declared disaster areas. Rural communities are most affected as they lack access to sanitation and clean water education which results in poor hygiene which leads to sickness and ill health. Farming, agriculture and mining industries are affected which, in turn, impacts on the economy.

Keeping with the trend of sustainability awareness, business education should include sustainability-related courses (Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008). Environmentally aware managers will make decisions being mindful of the impact those decisions will have on the environment (Hesselbarth & Schaltegger, 2014; Jain & Stopford, 2011; Jabbour, 2010). These managers have to not only steer the organisation towards sustainability, but also deal with changing the mind-sets of the organisations' people towards sustainability.

In light of the current sustainability issues in South Africa and the current relevance of sustainability issues globally, the lack of concern in this areas could have devastating consequences for the country.

It is important to note that this is the result within the context of the ranking analysis. One should acknowledge that that these skills were selected by some respondents to be amongst their most highly ranked soft skill. Sustainability orientation and life-long learning were both selected by 13 times. Cross-cultural sensitivity and networking skills were selected 15 and 16 times respectively.

Strategic thinking, critical/analytical thinking, problem solving ability, entrepreneurial thinking and ethical and logical decision making are all thinking skills and traditional business skills that can be taught in courses (Segon & Booth, 2012; Shimizu & Higuchi, 2009). Most MBA curricula have incorporated courses that develop these skills. These skills are still relevant and important but have become baseline requirements or tools that MBA graduates are expected to have.

Soft skills listed by respondents that were not included in the instrument are, resilience, negotiation skills, patience, effective listening, dealing with complexity and leadership as displayed in Table 3.

Resilience and patience are grouped by Han (2014) as a component of self-management. Resilience can be defined as the ability to adapt or fight back from challenging situations. Patience is defined as the ability to apply self-restraint in a crisis-situation (Han, 2014). The above two components of self-management will resonate with MBA students who experience many challenges as they try to maintain a work-life balance and still meet the high demands of the MBA. Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) listed non-financial benefits as reduced work-life balance, high stress levels, deterioration of relationships and reduced social networks. Certainly, a sense of great achievement will be felt as students manage to balance all three aspects. Managers often do not have time to be distracted by their own emotions, especially with the pace of global business today, developing resilience will mean they can simply get along with what needs to be done.

Negotiation skills and dealing with complexity are people-skills that can be acquired through work experience and mentors (Han, 2014). Interaction within

student groups and lectures can also lead to the development of this skill. Leadership was acknowledged by two respondents as a skill that was acquired on the MBA. Negotiation and leadership are offered as individual courses on the MBA programme and these skills will be acquired through study of these courses.

Soft skills that were mentioned in the instruments but stated again in the open question are self-management, problem solving ability and communication. The remaining skills, such as time management, self-confidence, patience are skills that relate to self-management (Han, 2014), further emphasising the importance of self-management to respondents.

Based on the results obtained in the discussion above, with reference to the literature, Proposition one is accepted.

5.4 Discussion pertaining to sub-problem two

Proposition Two: The perceived development of soft skills on the MBA can be linked to specific pedagogies

Syndicate assignments and activities are strongly associated with the development of many soft skills, as shown in Table 3. The variations in skills developed by syndicate assignments are affirmed by its distribution on the chart in Figure 13. Syndicate assignments and activities are situated centrally, leaning more towards the positive axis of dimension one and thus associated with the development of many skills irrespective of that skill soft being intrinsically or extrinsically related, however it should be noted that it is slightly more associated with the extrinsically related soft skill. The soft skills developed by syndicate assignments that received the highest scores are effective team work, conflict management, emotional intelligence, communication skills, and cross-cultural skills, dealing with complexity and networking skills which are all extrinsically related skill. Students and graduates agree with the findings in literature that syndicate assignments and activities are valuable teaching methods that developed many soft skills.

Syndicate groups and small group activities are forms of collaborative learning (Gokhale, 1995). Working in collaboration with others promotes one's ability to communicate more effectively, give and receive feedback, enhance learning through discussion and explanation and to gain confidence to be able to challenge assumptions. It provides the opportunity to develop interpersonal (Bentley & Warwick, 2013) and intrapersonal skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving ability through discussion, clarification of ideas and evaluation of other points of view (Bentley & Warwick, 2013; Gokhale, 1995). By collaborating on tasks, team-working skills and communication is enhanced, the group is able to share the work, promoting delegation skills. Other skills that can be developed are leadership skills, self-development, self-management and academic development. In diverse groups, intercultural communication and cross-cultural sensitivity is also developed. Gokhale (1995) demonstrated that group work reduced anxiety when dealing with difficult problems and the humour played a role in reducing anxiety.

Success in teams' efforts requires equal commitment from all members of the group (Johnson et al., 1998). Disadvantages of group work include poor commitment, participation and time management of some syndicate or group members that can slow the group down (Gokhale, 1995). This in turn, can be used by the students to improve their motivational and leadership skills by encouraging the 'underperformers' to work harder, they can also learn to become more assertive. Two respondents made reference to syndicate assignments and activities which were consolidated as two mentions for syndicate activities and group work in Table 7. One statement makes reference to the advantage as well as disadvantage of group work. The second statement makes note of the advantage of group work compared to individual work. These statements are listed below;

1. *'Syndicates are a pain but a good learning experience. There are people I dislike and will dislike forever based on our syndicate work but I also learnt the most about myself and dealing with discomfort from those people. It helped me with work relationships where we are all hired for the common purpose of delivering to the employer needs rather than based on our friendships. I might not like my*

colleagues they may not like me either but I have an obligation to work with them in a functional way. Syndicate work teaches one this'

2. *"Group discussions are very useful especially at an MBA. The point is to learn and also be taught. Individual assignments fail to achieve that."*

The first statement articulates clearly that the respondent has benefitted from dealing with the discomfort associated with being around people whom he/she dislikes from syndicate interactions and applied it to the work situation. We may not always like or be compatible with colleagues at work, but we still have to work towards common goals, syndicate assignments and activities teach us how to overcome this. The strong dislike is an element to take note of by business schools. Group dynamic co-ordinators can perhaps have a forum or platform whereby students can voice concerns and on-the-spot coaching and guidance given to students who have difficulty in interacting with syndicate members. This coaching and guidance given early on at the start of the students' MBA studies will improve the students' ability to work within the group and overcome challenging situations of dealing with difficult people. This skill will be applied to future syndicate group dynamics and assist the student in gaining the maximum advantage from group activities. It has been noted by Johnson et al. (1998) that not all students know how to work in collaboration with others and hence, such guidance will be valuable in helping them integrate and work within a team.

In the second statement above, 'the point is to learn and also be taught,' this emphasises the value of learning by sharing experiences and knowledge from each other; student to student and not only by lecturer to student. Syndicate assignments and activities are extensively used teaching methods in higher education, the point to be noted by business schools is to continue to incorporate collaborative work into MBA programmes.

Individual assignments are a method that aids the teaching and learning experience (Gilbert, 2012; Sajjad, 2010; Sert, 2005). Individual work requires motivation, determination and self-control. From the results discussed in Chapter 4, individual assignments are associated with development of skills that are value

based and used intrinsically, such as self-management, life-long learning, problem-solving and critical/analytical thinking skills. Literature has stated that individual assignments enhance the students' ability to research any topic as students have to consult numerous references, such as books, journals, articles and websites. This process of collecting information and applying it to the topic provides a deep approach towards learning which stimulates lifelong learning. Marton and Entwisetle (1976) differentiate between surface and deep approaches to learning. Surface approach to learning is when students have little personal engagement and they are content to learn facts and problem-solving methods without understanding or the ability to apply it. A deep approach to learning is where students take an interest and go in-depth into understanding the meaning of the topic and often consult literature apart from the prescribed literature (Marton & Entwistle, 1976). Assignments offer a platform to instil a deep approach to learning (Gilbert, 2012) and instil discipline in the personal lives of student's, improve relevance to the topic, enhance critical thinking and develop creativity (Sert, 2005). The finding of this study is therefore consistent with the literature. It should be noted from the results that individual assignments, in comparison to the other teaching methods, contributed most significantly towards the development of self-management, which was ranked the most valuable career-related soft skill.

The lecture method of teaching is still the most a widely used teaching method at higher education levels (Sajjad, 2010) because it is an effective medium for transmitting information. In this medium of delivery, the lecturer who is usually an expert in the field imparts knowledge in the form of theory, facts and sometimes his/her own experiences. However lectures can be ineffective in teaching values, inspiring interest, teaching behavioural skills and for personal and social adjustments (Bligh, 1998). Active learning can be introduced to facilitate learning (Prince, 2004) and the lecturer can deliberately encourage class participation, hence making the lecture interactive and exciting. The lecturer can ask the class to break up into small groups to discuss their opinions on the subject matter and then facilitate a discussion around different points of view. This can be taken one step further and the lecturer can provoke an informal debate in class where students are encouraged to offer a difference of opinion and begin a discussion

around the new trends of thought. The depth of knowledge shared increases, and this stimulates critical and creative thinking, problem-solving abilities and communication (Anderson, Mitchell, & Osgood, 2005). Students also become more comfortable and confident to express themselves. Dhar (2011) suggests a shift from pedagogy to andragogy by integrating relevant current events into the content of learning. Students are able to practically link the learning to their current situation. A study by Currie and Knights (2003) states that students prefer pedagogy that enables them to transfer and apply this learning directly to the workplace (Currie & Knights, 2003) Respondents in this study tend to agree with findings in previous studies that interactive lectures helped them develop communication skills, critical/analytical skills and strategic thinking skills, as these skills received high scores as indicated in Table 3. These are intrinsically related skills and it is consistent with the positioning of interactive lectures on the chart in Figure 13. It should be recognised that respondents gave a high weighting towards the development of entrepreneurial thinking and the development of entrepreneurial skills during interactive lectures, in contrast to findings in literature. It should be noted that entrepreneurial courses should incorporate more interactive lectures.

The skill of the lecturer is tested in interactive lectures. The lecturer must be able to consolidate and relate comments back to the point of the topic. One respondent mentioned that 'he admired a lecturer who was able to get comments out of the quietest of students,' which would certainly help to build self-confidence.

Case studies can contribute to the development of intrinsic-related soft skills that are skills-based, due to its position on the chart. Students and graduates responses in this study was consistent with literature, that case studies developed problem-solving ability, strategic thinking, critical/analytical thinking and dealing with complexity. Case study method of teaching is used quite extensively in business schools (Sajjad, 2010). A comment made by a respondent was that case studies improved understanding in an unfamiliar field. Business schools should note the importance of having case studies that represent a variety of industry sectors.

Industry expert presentations contributed somewhat to the development of strategic thinking, entrepreneurial thinking and lifelong learning, however these scores are comparatively lower than other teaching methods that contributed to these skills. The positioning of industry expert presentations on the chart in Figure 13 shows that it is located centrally and from the discussion in Chapter 4, this implies that either the teaching method can contribute to the development of all skills across the dimension or not at all. Based on these results, the value of industry expert presentations in developing soft skills is questionable. However, its value to the process of learning should not be ignored as it does provide a substitute for experiential learning in business education (Rowland & Algie, 2007).

Student presentations improve communication, listening and presentation skills (Alshare & Hindi, 2004; Dhar, 2011). The results of this study show that students have identified that presentations improve communication skills. This finding is consistent with the positioning of student presentations on the chart in Figure 13, where student presentations are plotted in the skills-based extrinsic space. Research and preparation is required before a presentation as students must become very knowledgeable about the topic so that they are able to convey important theory and insights to their audience and answer questions from the audience (Alshare & Hindi, 2004). This research phase that takes the students' knowledge beyond the scope of the presentation topic will also indirectly enhance and develop life-long learning skills. Students must prepare to convey their message through verbal and non-verbal communication (Hamm, 2008), verbally by using their voice effectively by considering tone and pitch of voice and non-verbally which refers to body language and the medium of presentation, such as videos and slides. The aesthetics of the presentations all have an important function of capturing the audience's attention. Overcoming the initial hurdle of stage fright helps to build confidence. As discussed in the literature in Chapter 2, good communication (written, oral and listening) skills are sought after by employers (Alshare & Hindi, 2004) and the concern from employers in this study is that graduates tend to lack good communication skills. Presentations should be more widely used in course structures. Lectures should also vary the length and duration of presentation and encourage the use of technology. Students

should be allowed to be creative and use techniques they feel will catch the audiences' attention, such as a pop-quiz at the beginning of the presentation.

Business simulations are practical real-life business situations and stimulate active engagement and learning in students. They require quick thinking, action and decision making. Students are placed in a 'real' situation that allows them to test their knowledge and capabilities. Studies indicate that simulations can enhance interpersonal and communication skills. The findings in this study show that students and graduates agree that business simulations improve problem solving ability and strategic thinking, but not the development of interpersonal and communication skills due to the low scores given to communication skills and interpersonal skills, such as self-management and emotional intelligence. Business simulations are plotted in the intrinsic related skills-based soft skills quadrant in Figure 13 which confirms that analytical skills will be developed. The position also indicates that communication can be developed as communication is a skills-based soft skill according to Figure 12. This is important for business schools to consider the value of business simulations. Literature suggests that many MBA students lack practical experience and simulations are a way of providing students with practice in a 'real-world' situation. After the simulation, students receive critical feedback from the facilitator and have an opportunity to refine or improve their approach.

Field trips to organisations and international business trips were not seen to be instrumental in the development of soft skills. Field trips or Field-based work provides a platform for experimental learning. With certain subjects, such as management accounting and investment principles, the learning in the classroom setting is limited. In a practical setting, these disciplines function with a mix of people, interactions, cultures and different processes (Shakil & Hafeez, 2011; Thaker, 2012. Although in this study, field trips to organisations did not have a significant impact on the development of soft skills, Shakil (2011) provides an opposing view by concluding that field trips to organisations help promote qualities of leadership and self-confidence, promote the importance of culture and written capabilities as students were expected to write short reports. South

African business schools should consider this important point and include more field trips as part of the MBA programme.

International business trips are offered by business schools with the intention of providing students with the opportunity to experience other cultures, gain insight on the challenges and opportunities faced by international organisations and to extend their global awareness. There is evidence in literature that suggests students have derived value from international business trips. The position of international trips on the chart being on the positive end of dimension one means that extrinsically related skills, such as networking skills and cross-cultural sensitivity, can be developed. Although one student mentioned that the value from the international trip was that it helped them understand the bigger picture, the rest of the students clearly do not see that any skills were developed, given the low scores of networking skills and cross-cultural sensitivity that is associated with international business trips in Table 3.

This leads to an important recommendation to South African business schools. International trips should be structured in a way that hones in on the development these skills. For example, an assignment before an international trip that focuses on cultural aspects of the people in that country. Students will know what to expect from a cultural point of view. Incorporating more group activities whilst on the trip for example, students can be asked to discuss possible solutions to a challenge or dilemma currently being faced by an organisation. They can work in small groups and then present their solutions to members of the organisation. Apart from improving networking skills, students are critically applying their minds and they gain experience in communication across different cultures. A visit to a business school in that country will give students an opportunity to experience the school's culture and teaching methods. Perhaps a seminar can be arranged by the host school to discuss issues pertaining to business and culture.

The social responsibility course did not contribute to the development of many soft skills. In hind sight, a social responsibility course is not a teaching method but rather a subject. It would be more appropriate to say that sustainability orientation is a soft skill that can be developed through a carefully constructed

module that uses various teaching methods that are associated with value-based skills. These teaching methods are syndicate and individual assignments, field trips to organisations and industry expert presentations. A comment made by a respondent quoted below suggests that more effort is required by business schools to plan and prepare this module and to have a facilitator that is an expert in the field.

1. *"Some teaching methods were well conceptualised but the teaching gives an impression that there is lack of preparation. The courses which required students to visit CSI initiatives in townships were well conceived and could add value only if students were adequately briefed on what their role ought to be rather than trying to mentor people when you also don't have that expertise nor adequately equipped with some of the requisite soft skills"*

Career planning was mentioned by one respondent in question 11. Although career-planning is not a teaching method and more a subject, it should be taken note of as literature states it is an inherent reason, amongst others, for many students pursuing the MBA is to improve employability. A vital part of achieving this is by professional coaching and guidance imparted during career-planning lessons.

To conclude the discussion for Proposition two, syndicate assignments, individual assignments, interactive lectures, case studies and small group activities were the activities that contributed to the development of many soft skills given the high scores assigned by respondents, as noted in Table 4. The study by Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) indicated that these teaching methods, along with guest speakers and student presentations, were perceived by students to be most effective. The findings from this study not only confirms the value of these teaching methods, but links the teaching methods to the development of specific soft skills.

Teaching methods can be grouped into two categories namely; methods that a student experiences within a group or methods that students experience by themselves. The group activities such as syndicate assignments, small group activities, field trips to organisations and international business trips are strongly

associated with the development of extrinsic related skills, such as emotional intelligence, effective teamwork, cross-cultural sensitivity, conflict management and communication. Teaching methods that an individual experiences by themselves, such as individual assignments, interactive lectures, informal debates in class, business simulations, industry expert presentation, student presentations and research panels are associated with the development of intrinsic-related skills, such as self-management and the analytical problem solving skills.

Given that certain teaching methods develop certain skills and that all soft skills are important, a variation in teaching methods is necessary. This finding is consistent with existing knowledge that adults learns most effectively through experiential, collaborative and facilitated learning processes.

From the results obtained and the discussion above with reference to literature, Proposition two is accepted.

5.5 Conclusion

This findings in this research, along with the review of past literature, has shown evidence that both propositions can be accepted. Self-management, communication and emotional intelligence have been ranked as the three most important soft skills. Sustainability orientation was ranked the least important. Courses on corporate social responsibility have been recently introduced to the MBA curriculum and as a respondent mentioned above, the course was not well structured. There was a lack of preparation and students were not well briefed on the deliverables and outcomes of the course. Perhaps as the teaching of this module becomes more structured, sustainability orientation might become viewed as an important soft skill.

There is also evidence on the link between developed soft skills and pedagogies. Soft skills were categorised according to skills that are used with intrinsic skills, such as self-management, problem solving ability, strategic thinking and critical/analytical thinking and skills used when relating to people, interpersonal

or extrinsic skills, such as emotional intelligence, networking skills, cross-cultural sensitivity, communication, conflict management and effective teamwork. Teaching methods were grouped as methods students experienced by themselves e.g.; interactive lectures, individual assignments and case studies or teaching methods that students experienced. Group related teaching methods were associated with the development of extrinsically-related soft skills and teaching methods that individuals experienced by themselves are associated with the of intrinsically related skills. Syndicate assignments and group activities are seen to be a valuable medium to develop a host of soft skills. Lectures are more suitable for knowledge acquisition only.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this research was to identify the most important career-related soft skills acquired by South African MBA students, along with matching the soft skill development to specific pedagogies.

The first part of this study identified self-management, communication and emotional intelligence as the three most important career-related soft skills. Literature suggests that companies and recruiters are continuing to rate interpersonal skills above analytical skills. Studies by Salovey and Mayer (1990), Denton and Vloeberghs (2003) and Goleman (2004) suggest that softer skills are the key to better leadership. The findings from this study indicate that graduates themselves acknowledge the value of soft skills. Self-management was rated significantly higher than all other soft skills. The ability to manage one's self is the key to success in a world where change is the only constant. A manager in control of his/her own emotions creates an environment of trust and fairness which leads to a sense of security amongst sub-ordinates and fosters productivity. The ability to gauge the emotions of others, control your own emotions and your response will help to resolve conflict.

Individual assignments and syndicate assignments are the activities that contribute to the development of self-management. Individual assignments require motivation, discipline, self-control and time-management. As most MBA students are part-time students, who are employed often in positions of management and with families, the ability to manage one's self will create that balance between work, family and the high demands of the MBA. As Individuals tackle the problem of the assignments by themselves, they develop analytical skills such as problem-solving ability, critical/analytical thinking and ethical and logical decision making. The process of researching a topic stimulates lifelong learning which is relevant today as we need to constantly evaluate our knowledge

and skills in this rapidly changing business world. By working in a group to tackle assignments, students develop team-work and networking skills. Leadership skills and the ability to give and receive instructions are tested. This places the student in real-life work situations as managers have to often resolve problems in collaboration with colleagues.

Communication is a skill that can be taught and improved by practice and by attending courses on communication skills. Communication is an extrinsic 'skill-based' soft skill and teaching methods that develop communication skills are student presentations, small group activities and field-trips to organisations. Communication does not only mean a good command of the language but also clarity in written language and the ability to integrate their writing with their verbal, visual and technologically enhanced communication skills (Jain & Stopford, 2011). However, any medium of teaching that requires a written report (research reports, assignments, exams) or encourages student participation will contribute to the development of communication skills. Numerous studies have indicated that the MBA fails to equip graduates with good communication skills. Entry into the MBA programme is subject to pre-requisites; it is suggested that business schools provide supplementary courses on communications skills at the onset of the MBA programme.

A key finding from the first part of the study was that sustainability orientation, lifelong learning, cross-cultural sensitivity and networking skills were ranked as least important career-related. Assignment activities and group work are commonly used in MBA pedagogy. By participating in these activities, students will develop these skills.

It is extremely concerning that sustainability orientation and cross-cultural sensitivity are not viewed as important skills. South African business schools must take note of this and structure courses into MBA programmes that enable the development of sustainability orientation and cross-cultural sensitivity.

Cross-cultural sensitivity was classified in Chapter 4 as a value-based extrinsic skill. Teaching methods associated with value-based extrinsic skills are informal

debates in class, international exchange trips, social responsibility courses and syndicate assignments. Business schools should use a combination of these teaching methods to instil awareness on cross-cultural sensitivity. Cross-cultural sensitivity does not have to be a course on its own but perhaps included as a co-curricular activity of a leadership or ethics course or possibly courses that discuss the effects of globalisation and international business. Lecturers can initiate informal debates in class and encourage students to discuss a cross-culturally related conflict they have encountered in the work place or in their personal lives. The class can debate different methods that could have been used to resolve the matter. Syndicate groups should contain a diverse mix of ethnic groups and languages. A role-play or simulation of a cross-cultural conflict will provide a real world learning experience.

Incorporating principles of sustainability into business and management education has been researched by many authors (Benn & Dunphy, 2008; Giacalone & Thompson, 2006; Hesselbarth & Schaltegger, 2014; Jain & Stopford, 2011; Jabbour, 2010; Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008). Some of the barriers towards incorporating sustainability principles into business and management education is that the concept of sustainability is rather abstract and considered to be a concern of environmentalists (Filho, 2000). There is lack of sustainability skilled lecturers and limited pedagogical approaches and evaluative methods suitable to assess the education on sustainability development (Springett & Kearins, 2001).

There are numerous approaches that business schools can use to incorporate subjects of sustainability. Roome (2005) suggests a combination of experiential learning involving cases, exercises and role plays designed so students can experience a practical scenario, consulting projects and company visits. Benn and Dunphy (2008) and Hesselbarth and Schaltegger, (2014) agree that action research is the best approach coupled with collaborative learning and real-world experiences. Rusinko (2010) suggests that sustainability be introduced as a core course and adopt a co-curricular approach which helps to develop self-awareness, self-motivation and interpersonal skills. Stopford (2011) suggest that programmes should engage in research and teaching that advances students'

understanding on corporate roles and responsibility in creating sustainable business models.

The researcher proposes the following to South African business schools for incorporating principles of sustainability into MBA programmes. A Social responsibility course should be included as a core module. The course should adopt a pedagogy that includes different teaching methods, such as interactive lectures, case studies, assignments, field trips to organisations that are actively involved in issues of sustainability and organisations that are not actively involved in issues of sustainability, guest lecture presentation and simulations. Sustainability orientation is a value-based intrinsic skill, development of value based skills will not be enhanced in the normal classroom setting with lectures, case studies and assignments.

6.2 Conclusions of the study

The main purpose of this research was to identify the most important career-related soft skills acquired by South African MBA graduates and to match the soft skill development to specific pedagogical practices, incidents or events. The need for this research stemmed from the numerous disturbing accusations that the MBA fails to develop managers with the necessary soft skills required by managers today. Being institutions that train and develop future managers and leaders, business schools' practices and teaching methods came into question. This research adds a valuable contribution in favour of the MBA and business schools in this ongoing debate, as the findings of this research prove that soft skills were developed through various teaching methods used at business schools.

This study has identified that self-management; communication and emotional intelligence are the most important career-related soft skills. Networking skills, lifelong learning, cross-cultural sensitivity and sustainability orientation was ranked as the least important soft skills. The low ranking of cross-cultural

sensitivity and sustainability orientation in view of South Africa's ethnic and cultural diversity and the present awareness in sustainability is very concerning and an important consideration for business schools.

The research confirms that the various teaching methods deployed by business schools in the MBA programme can be linked to the development to various soft skills. Syndicate assignment and activities, individual assignments, interactive lectures, case studies and small group activities were seen to be valuable by many respondents in the development of a host of soft skills. Further to this, the findings link specific teaching methods to the development of specific soft skills. The teaching methods indicated in soft-skilled defined space plot in Figure 13 can be a valuable tool used by business schools when planning courses with consideration to the development of soft skills. Social responsibility courses, field–trips to organisations and international business trips were not viewed as important in the development of soft skills. As literature suggests benefit from these methods, South African business schools must consider their approach in utilising a combination of teachings methods to enhance the development of soft skills.

6.3 Recommendations

This study set out to identify the most important career-related soft skills and to link soft skills to specific teaching methods used by business schools. Based on the literature that highlights the value of soft skills as a key managerial competence, business schools must prepare to enhance the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Based on the findings in this study, the following is recommended;

1. Collaborative work has been proven to enhance the learning process and contribute to the development of many soft skills, as such, syndicate and group work should be incorporated as extensively as possible.
2. Due to the challenge faced by individuals who cannot work co-operatively within a team and those who have difficulty in dealing with others in the team, group dynamic coaching should be made available to students.

The emphasis here is that the group should not be changed but rather to equip the student with the ability to confront and deal with problems.

3. Groups should consist of a diverse mix of ethnic groups and cultures to promote cultural awareness.
4. Entrepreneurship courses should use interactive lectures as the instructional medium along with group work, assignments and business simulations.
5. There are a number of teaching strategies that are found to enhance and develop communication skills, however recruiters and employers have found that graduates lack basic communication skills, both written and verbal. The gap in the development of effective communication is that students do not receive feedback in a way that addresses their performance after a presentation or on grammatical errors in an assignment. Individual feedback should be given to each student in their first year of study. Coaching or supplementary short courses can be provided that will help the students improve.
6. Business simulations, field-trips to organisations and international business should be used more as an instructional medium as these teaching methods have been shown in literature to be beneficial in the development of soft skills with particular reference to enhancing cross-cultural sensitivity.
7. To develop student's awareness on issues of sustainability, courses addressing sustainability should be included in the core curriculum. The course should use various teaching methods such as assignments, group work, field-trips to organisations and guest lecturer presentations.

The recommendation to MBA students is to be aware that soft skills can be developed through various teaching methods. Students should take advantage of these methods by engaging during collaborative work, being participative in group discussions, challenging opinions and the status quo and asking for feedback on their own performance from lecturers and fellow students.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

This study primarily targeted MBA graduates and MBA students in their final year of study and although the demographics of the sample obtained satisfied the requirements for this study, further researchers can apply this study to a larger sample of the population. The teaching methods used in this study are limited to the teaching methods used by business schools. A future study can compare and contrast the development of skills developed across business schools that are known to use different teaching methods.

Self-management, communication and emotional intelligence were identified by graduates to be the most valuable career-related soft skills. The study proves that these skills are developed from the various teaching methods used at South African business schools. An interesting consideration for future studies will be how these skills translate back to the work place and what the actual benefits in practice are.

The startling finding in this study was the lack of value associated with cross-cultural sensitivity and sustainability orientation. Further research is suggested to first identify if this is the view of a broader sample of MBA graduates and students. Future studies can be done on how to integrate these concepts into MBA curricula in such a way that students are made aware of the relevance and importance of these skills.

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APPENDIX A – On line survey

Dear Participant,

My name is Devina Chetty and I am currently a second year MBA student at the University of Witwatersrand (WITS). In my journey I am required to complete a research project, for which I have chosen to identify the soft skills gained by South African MBA students and to obtain a sense of the value of these skills to the students.

I humbly invite you to participate in this study by answering this survey.

In the first section you are required to provide some demographic information. The second section you are required to rank the 5 most important soft skills in your career. The third section links the developed soft skills to various teaching methods. Lastly, the fourth section comprises of three open ended questions that will provide more depth and meaning to the value of these developed soft skills.

Your identity will be kept anonymous and all the information you disclose will be used only for the purpose of this research.

Your participation in this survey will be contributing to the body of academic knowledge in this field and is greatly appreciated. Continuing with this survey conveys your consent.

Please feel free to contact me, should you have any questions regarding this research.

The researchers contact details:
Name: Devina Chetty
Email: devinachetty5@gmail.com
Mobile: 083 967 3256

The research supervisor contact details,
Name: Prof Terri Carmichael
Email: Terri.carmichael@wits.ac.za

Sincerely.

Devina

Please indicate your gender,



Please indicate your age



Q3. Please state all your tertiary qualifications both undergraduate and post graduate degrees,

Q4. In which year did you complete your MBA

Q5. Please select the industry sector you are currently employed in

Q6. If you selected 'other' for industry sector in question 6, please state the industry below

Q7. ASSESSING THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT SOFT SKILLS IN YOUR CAREER

Soft skills are listed below under Items. Please rank the five most important skills in your career (1=most important) by clicking on the soft skill, drag and drop into the corresponding rank block. Please select one soft skill per rank.

Items	Most important (Rank 1)
1. Self-management (includes self knowledge, stress management, time management, self confidence, goal setting, taking responsibility, being accountable)	
2. Emotional intelligence	**2nd most important (Rank 2)**
3. Effective teamwork	
4. Communicating effectively (verbal, written and oral)	
5. Conflict management (dealing with difficult people)	
6.Cross-cultural sensitivity	
7. Critical and analytical thinking	
8. Problem-solving ability	
9. Ethical, logical decision-making	
10. Entrepreneurial thinking and creativity	
11. Learning to learn effectively /	

long life learning		
12. Dealing with complexity		
13. Networking skills		
14. Strategic thinking (long term and big picture)		
15. Sustainability orientation		
16. Innovativeness		
		4th most important (Rank 4)
		5th most important (Rank 5)

Q8. ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOFT SKILLS FROM **CLASSROOM BASED TEACHING METHODS / ACTIVITIES** USED AT BUSINESS SCHOOLS

In the matrix below, the soft skills are listed in the first column and class room based teaching methods / activities are listed in the top row. For each soft skill, please tick in the relevant box for each teaching method that helped you to develop that skill. Mark all that apply.For example, if you learned Problem solving abilities through informal debates and small group activities, then tick in the two spaces that apply.

If a learning activity did not contribute to the development of any soft skill listed, do not tick any space for that soft skill

	Interactive lectures	Social responsibility course	Case studies	Student presentations	Business simulation	Informal debates in class	Small group activities in class
Self-management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emotional intelligence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective teamwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communicating	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dealing with difficult people / conflict management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cross-cultural sensitivity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Critical / analytical thinking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Problem-solving ability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ethical, logical decision-making	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entrepreneurial thinking, encompassing innovativeness and creativity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learning to learn effectively / lifelong learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dealing with complexity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Networking skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strategic thinking (long term and big picture)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sustainability orientation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q9. Continued from Question 8, ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOFT SKILLS FROM **OUT OF CLASSROOM BASED TEACHING METHODS / ACTIVITIES** USED AT BUSINESS SCHOOLS

Please answer as instructed above.

	Individual assignments	Syndicate assignments and activities	International trip / exchange	Research panel discussion	Field trips to organizations	Industry expert (guest) presentations
Self-management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emotional intelligence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective teamwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communicating	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dealing with difficult people / conflict management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cross-cultural sensitivity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Critical / analytical thinking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Problem-solving ability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ethical, logical decision-making	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entrepreneurial thinking, encompassing innovativeness and creativity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learning to learn effectively / lifelong learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dealing with complexity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Networking skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strategic thinking (long term and big picture)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sustainability orientation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q10. Please describe any other soft skills that you developed in your MBA that are not listed in the table above:

Q11. Please describe any additional learning activities that you experienced on your MBA that were of value, and how they were valuable

Q12. Is there anything else you would like to say about teaching methods or activities on your MBA, or the development and the value of soft skills?

APPENDIX B: Complete correspondence analysis results

Summary Statistics for the Row Points			
	Quality	**Mass**	**Inertia**
Interactive lectures	0.2372	0.1084	0.0314
Social responsibility course	0.6977	0.0326	0.0900
Case studies	0.7568	0.0971	0.1031
Student presentations	0.4784	0.0544	0.1031
Business simulation	0.7301	0.0632	0.0629
Informal debates in class	0.8280	0.0745	0.1079
Small group activities in class	0.8021	0.0971	0.1295
Individual assignments	0.8575	0.1197	0.1810
Syndicate assignments and activities	0.5395	0.1976	0.0252
International trip / exchange	0.6305	0.0310	0.0549
Research panel discussion	0.0878	0.0377	0.0414
Field trips to organizations	0.2932	0.0314	0.0340
Industry expert (guest) presentations	0.0290	0.0553	0.0355

Indices of the Coordinates That Contribute Most to Inertia for the Row Points			
	Dim1	**Dim2**	**Best**
Interactive lectures	0	0	1
Social responsibility course	0	2	2
Case studies	1	0	1
Student presentations	0	2	2
Business simulation	1	0	1
Informal debates in class	2	2	2
Small group activities in class	1	0	1
Individual assignments	1	1	1
Syndicate assignments and activities	0	0	1
International trip / exchange	0	0	1
Research panel discussion	0	0	1
Field trips to organizations	0	0	1
Industry expert (guest) presentations	0	0	1

Squared Cosines for the Row Points		
	Dim1	**Dim2**
Interactive lectures	0.2352	0.0020
Social responsibility course	0.0388	0.6589
Case studies	0.6765	0.0803
Student presentations	0.1558	0.3225
Business simulation	0.6374	0.0927
Informal debates in class	0.6367	0.1913
Small group activities in class	0.7673	0.0348
Individual assignments	0.7951	0.0625
Syndicate assignments and activities	0.5192	0.0204
International trip / exchange	0.6301	0.0005
Research panel discussion	0.0813	0.0065
Field trips to organizations	0.2849	0.0083
Industry expert (guest) presentations	0.0286	0.0003

Summary Statistics for the Column Points			
	Quality	**Mass**	**Inertia**
Self_management	0.4063	0.0678	0.0526
Emotional_intelligence	0.7978	0.0699	0.0706
Effective_teamwork	0.8374	0.0628	0.1212
Communicating	0.3451	0.0779	0.1215
Conflict_management	0.7690	0.0553	0.0648
Cross_cultural_sensitivity	0.8167	0.0599	0.0686
Critical_analytical_thinking	0.8249	0.0703	0.0714
Problem_solving_ability	0.5402	0.0741	0.0749
Ethical_logical_decision_making	0.8716	0.0640	0.0382
Entrepreneurial_thinking	0.3281	0.0699	0.0445
Lifelong_learning	0.4834	0.0636	0.0322
Dealing_with_complexity	0.7676	0.0661	0.0182
Networking_skills	0.7332	0.0691	0.0994
Strategic_thinking	0.7641	0.0737	0.0657
Sustainability_orientation	0.4974	0.0557	0.0562

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	Quality	**Mass**	**Inertia**
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Strategic_thinking	0.7641	0.0737	0.0657
Sustainability_orientation	0.4974	0.0557	0.0562

Partial Contributions to Inertia for the Column Points		
	Dim1	**Dim2**
Self_management	0.0279	0.0493
Emotional_intelligence	0.0598	0.1789
Effective_teamwork	0.1465	0.1852
Communicating	0.0656	0.0584
Conflict_management	0.0938	0.0133
Cross_cultural_sensitivity	0.0848	0.0884
Critical_analytical_thinking	0.0965	0.0668
Problem_solving_ability	0.0791	0.0004
Ethical_logical_decision_making	0.0363	0.1019
Entrepreneurial_thinking	0.0246	0.0144
Lifelong_learning	0.0305	0.0000
Dealing_with_complexity	0.0161	0.0397
Networking_skills	0.1423	0.0018
Strategic_thinking	0.0825	0.0563
Sustainability_orientation	0.0138	0.1451

Indices of the Coordinates That Contribute Most to Inertia for the Column Points			
	Dim1	**Dim2**	**Best**
Self_management	0	0	2
Emotional_intelligence	2	2	2
Effective_teamwork	2	2	2
Communicating	1	1	1
Conflict_management	1	0	1
Cross_cultural_sensitivity	2	2	2
Critical_analytical_thinking	1	1	1
Problem_solving_ability	1	0	1
Ethical_logical_decision_making	0	2	2
Entrepreneurial_thinking	0	0	1
Lifelong_learning	0	0	1
Dealing_with_complexity	0	0	2
Networking_skills	1	0	1
Strategic_thinking	1	0	1
Sustainability_orientation	0	2	2

Squared Cosines for the Column Points		
	Dim1	**Dim2**
Self_management	0.2709	0.1354
Emotional_intelligence	0.4323	0.3655
Effective_teamwork	0.6170	0.2204
Communicating	0.2757	0.0693
Conflict_management	0.7393	0.0297
Cross_cultural_sensitivity	0.6309	0.1857
Critical_analytical_thinking	0.6899	0.1350
Problem_solving_ability	0.5393	0.0008
Ethical_logical_decision_making	0.4861	0.3854
Entrepreneurial_thinking	0.2815	0.0465
Lifelong_learning	0.4834	0.0000
Dealing_with_complexity	0.4526	0.3150
Networking_skills	0.7306	0.0026
Strategic_thinking	0.6406	0.1236
Sustainability_orientation	0.1250	0.3724