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**Measuring the Impact and Effectiveness of Mid-career Education
Program: An Exploratory Study in the Indian Context**

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Abstract

Purpose – This study focuses on understanding the impact of mid-career education. Research on the program effectiveness of mid-career education in general and specifically in the Indian context, has received limited attention. While mid-career education has been a significant offering from the b-schools in India, measuring its impact on such professionals' careers has been few. This research set out to measure the extent to which one such mid-career education program of a premier b-school in India met its participants' expectations. It aims to ascertain why mid-career professionals enroll for part-time management education and its impact on their career after the program. Within the context of changing work and the workplace, the study also aims to provide insights for program improvements to meet emerging workplace expectations.

Design/methodology/approach – An exploratory research approach using the survey method was adopted given dearth of established studies. The absence of a standardized tool to measure such programs' effectiveness led to the design of a structured self-report questionnaire drawing from program objectives and extant literature. The researchers sought survey responses from the alumni of the program from the past eighteen years. Two hundred seventy-three completed responses were statistically analyzed using SPSS. Relationships and effectiveness indicators of such programs and features for program enhancement were identified. The findings were further strengthened with inputs from two focus group discussions with select alumnus from across different batches.

Findings – The results indicate a strong relationship between program expectations and perceived objective career outcomes. Mid-career education has empowered the careers of mid-career professionals in numerous ways. It has enhanced participants' knowledge, increased their perceived brand value, and rewarded them with increased job opportunities, yielding significant financial gains. While it provides value for money, the study also reveals that it takes more than just a mid-career education program to rise to leadership positions and experience subjective career satisfaction. The study offers a model for enhancing mid-career education effectiveness.

Research limitations/implications – The research methodology necessitated time commitments from the participants limiting the number of respondents who completed the questionnaire. The methodology could be strengthened further through confirmatory quantitative research to strengthen tool development. It could benefit from exploring methods for capturing actual career outcomes rather than just self-report. The study provides avenues for a more comprehensive study across similar programs among b-schools to ascertain the overall impact of mid-career education on mid-career professionals' careers in general; more so , in the emerging work context.

Practical implications – Mid-career education has been a much-preferred strategy for mid-career professionals to future-proof their careers. The study holds significant implications for the future of mid-career education in the Indian context. It identifies significant advantages and critical gap-areas and provides additional insights into mid-career program redesign. A hybrid model is proposed to meet the emerging needs of a rapidly transforming work world.

Originality/value – Mid-career education intention and impact on mid-career professionals' lives have limited research in the Indian context. This study captures intention for professionals to invest in such programs, obtain insights into its perceived benefits and impact on their career post-program, and provides inputs for program enhancement given a transforming workplace. The study provides an instrument to measure participant expectations and report career-impacting benefits derived from the program. Most importantly, it provides insights for redesigning mid-career education and similar certification programs for working professionals. It does so by collating information from those at the workplace and the front line of a transforming work-workplace context.

Keywords: Mid-career education, mid-career professional, future of mid-career education, the impact of mid-career education, exploratory research, India

1 Introduction

Mid-career research over the past few years has invoked significant interest. It is expected that the rapidly evolving *future of work* will transform both jobs and careers. Premier b-schools in India have since the '80s increased their offerings on providing globally benchmarked mid-career executive education programs. These programs are designed as degree-earning programs of late and also as certification courses of varying course duration and curricula. They are delivered both as generic and as customized programs to meet specific stakeholder expectations. The study of one such executive education program's effectiveness in one of the country's premier b-school is undertaken to evaluate its perceived career benefits reported by its beneficiaries. The aim is to examine and explore the relationship between the expectations the participants had from the program, its perceived career impacting benefits, and implications for curriculum enhancement to better align the program to meet the expectations of a rapidly changing workplace. An exploratory approach has been adopted by engaging with the program alumni to ascertain its impact, effectiveness, and future implications. As b-schools strive further on their excellence journey, they would benefit from ascertaining the impact the midcareer education program has for its key stakeholders and anticipate future expectations.

2 Mid-career Education: Context and Scope

Mid-career management education has been a critical cog-in-the-wheel for enabling the managerial readiness of technical and functional professionals. Over the years, mid-career programs have established themselves as a critical resource that spurs career progression. It is known to equip young / mid-career professionals with the much-needed management knowledge and perspective to break through and qualify for managerial roles and responsibilities.

2.1 Factors impacting careers

The increased use of automation has transformed the job and workplace and creates a threat to future employment prospects (Davenport and Kirby 2015). Work and workplaces have been undergoing a massive transformation due to technological advancement, demographic changes, a shift in societal trends, and widespread globalization (Gratton 2011). Eichhorst (2017) highlights the expected changes in work and employment across different regions due to technological progress and globalization, pointing out far-reaching implications for skill and capability building. These shifts have far-reaching seismic impacts on individuals and their careers (Akkermans et al., 2020). Individuals' careers and lives are getting transformed because of increased competition in uncertain settings (Gratton 2011). Since many organizations are working globally, the boundaryless career is an evolving new dimension to meet dynamic requirements (Baruch & Reis 2015). In recent times, protean career, self-management behaviors, and career insights have gained popularity and become significant career success outcomes (De Vos & Soens 2008). The career management model by Greenhaus et al. (2017) promotes a self-managed career holding the individual accountable for career planning and career management.

Professionals in their middle age who fall under the category of baby boomers or Gen X anticipate their engagement in work for the next 20-30 years (Gratton 2011). The transforming workplace demands new role requirements and managers' skills, requiring practicing managers to acquire and learn those new role skillsets to remain successful in their careers (Laud 2019). Executives are grappling with a lack of leadership skills and are also stressed to perform well (Lee & Suh 2018). Mid-career professionals must invest in self, become own manager for career growth, explore opportunities to showcase their talent (Webb 2016). According to Daines (2016), professional career growth evolves with time only when an individual commits to learning, taking actions, gaining diverse experiences, and obtaining feedback. Mid-career individuals are expected to reshape their career objectives and direction by reframing and reflecting on their career journey, rethink their career direction and focus on learning and adaptability (Brown 2015). Additionally, within the current context of the pandemic, mid-career professionals are currently grappling with the challenges of skills obsolescence, lack of motivation, and job loss (Akkermans et al., 2020; Mendenhall et al. 2008).

Since the late-90s, the benefits from executive education programs have supported mid-career professionals in personal development and career success (Hilgert 1995). Mid-career education has made significant contributions to individuals and organizations, focused on developing senior managers and executives in large organizations (Crotty & Soule 1997). Over the years, mid-career management education contributes to an individual's career growth and an organization's development (Baruch 2009). Executive development programs focus on developing the leader's behaviors, enhance their ability to become a change agent and better relationship managers through leveraging the principles of emotional intelligence, resonant leadership, and executive coaching (Boyatzis, Smith, Van Oosten, & Woolford 2013). Executive education, therefore, help and support participants in the successful transformation, which goes beyond understanding management theories and adapting management tools (Korotov 2016). Entrepreneurship courses in the curriculum encourage participants to set up their business ventures (Allahar & Brathwaite 2017). Such programs nurture global leaders by providing the latest education on leadership, strategy, critical thinking, and technology by adopting diversified approaches, leveraging quality faculty, and encourages global participants (Akiko et al., 2019).

The literature reviewed suggests that mid-career education runs parallel to the workplace context, and a change in the work/workplace holds direct implications for the design and delivery of mid-career education programs. Mathews (1989) postulates that technology-induced changes in production altered the nature of work in the manufacturing and service sectors, requiring workers to learn continually for their working lifetime. Additionally, increased globalization during the 1970s increased competition and challenged traditional management styles and structures, leading to new management practices which needed to be learned (Jurgens, Malsch, & Dohse 1993). These two forces placed significant pressure on management education and mid-career education, in particular, to ensure relevance to the constantly evolving workplace context. Mid-career professionals, therefore, enroll in executive education programs to cope with not just mid-life challenges of personal aspirations (Long 2004), but also to thrive and meet the emerging business needs (Long 2004; Farris et al. 2003). The general motivations for seeking an

executive MBA contribute to understanding more about management and how company conditions can be evaluated (Thompson and Gui 2000). According to Young et al. (2002), mid-career professionals' expectations were relatively high with mid-career programs. They attend such programs in pursuit of their career development. They expect career development in the form of two primary career outcomes, i.e., objective career success and subjective career success. Objective career success involves career growth, promotion, higher compensations, opening a new business, and subjective career success involves skill development, career satisfaction, and work-life balance. (Hwang et al., 2011). Thus, the program needs to be designed carefully, first to meet the expectations of participants, as they promise, and second to integrate the business theories and applications to its content. Changes in the external environment impact the significance of mid-career education and its design and delivery. Therefore, the program demands a regular rethinking and adaptation of curriculum and didactic strategies (van der Meer and Marks 2018).

Mid-career research in India

Research within the Indian context is limited. Very little research has happened within the Indian context in this area. Hardly any research has focused on understanding the post-program impact of mid-career education on its beneficiaries' careers. Research in mid-career education has primarily focused on the context, the need, and the mid-career education programs' objective. There is limited research that is available on mid-career education and its effectiveness within the professional workplace context. According to Haskins, M. E., & Shaffer, G. R. (2010), in the period of economic instability, the price-cutting age, and companies are investing enormous amounts on executive education, where managers and leaders learn new tactics, practices and try to apply on current business settings. To increase their return on investment, companies should start adopting rosters that help identify succession candidates.

Research Gap

3 Research Objective and Method

Given the limited research in mid-career education in the Indian context, one of the part-time mid-career education programs of a premier b-school was identified to measure its perceived impact and effectiveness. The researchers aspired to explore the impact of mid-career education on the career of mid-career professionals who had undertaken the program. Keeping in mind the emerging context of a rapidly transforming workplace, solicit program enhancement insights from those who witness workplace transformation and are directly impacted by it. The objective of the study, therefore, were identified as follows:

- Ascertain the aspirations of mid-career professionals who undertake mid-career education.
- Understanding the perceived career impacting benefits derived post-program.
- Given the transforming workplace context, how does mid-career education need to be redesigned to meet mid-career professionals' needs?

Therefore, this study focuses on examining the critical issues around measuring mid-career education's effectiveness, establishing the program objectives to the perceived benefits derived from the participants post-program, and obtaining insights for program enhancement.

The hypothesis that emerged for the study:

H1: Mid-career professionals undertake mid-career education programs aspiring to enhance both subjective and objective career outcomes.

H2: Post-program, the mid-career education program enhances participant's perception of their brand value, helps in building a robust professional network, and provides better job opportunities.

H3: Mid-career education program can be improved by better aligning it to meet the emerging needs of the workplaces of the future.

H4: Mid-career professionals perceive that the workplace is changing, and it has implications for their careers.

3.1 About the program

India's top management institutions offer several management programs empowering executive education, yielding benefits for mid-career individuals and their organizations. These programs are to meet the needs of their targeted audience. They differ in program duration, pedagogy, and schedules. A two-year weekend management program was specially designed and offered by a premier b-school in South India with rapidly growing sector leaders' active involvement. Given the very high rate of growth of the sector and the absence of well-qualified leaders in the sector, the program targeted high-performing mid-level or senior-level professionals with diverse industry experiences to develop their management competencies while continuing to work. The program's goal was to supplement participants' functional skills with new management knowledge, insights and equip them for a future leadership role in a competitive global environment.

The program participants get an opportunity to learn and acquire skills to prepare for a changing workplace. Participants get an opportunity to collaborate with a diverse group and build a robust professional network. Renowned faculty facilitate curriculum design and delivery, adopting best-in-class learning pedagogy, including collaborative discussions, on-line sessions, case studies, individual and group projects, role plays, live projects, and business games. The program offers core courses in the first year, and electives are pursued during the second year and exercise the option for international exposure through signing-up for exchange programs. The program also provides exposure to a start-up environment. The program sessions are organized during the weekends, specially designed for those executives who wish to pursue their MBA degree while continuing their work – *learn as you earn*.

3.2 Methods Used For the Study

An exploratory empirical approach is appropriate for relatively less researched topics, thereby setting the context for future theory-building (Eisenhardt 1989) and exploring a research question with an open-minded approach (Brink & Wood 1998; Bhattacharjee 2012). The mixed-method exploratory approach adopted for this study draws survey information from the mid-career education program's alumnus to understand expectations from the program and the post-program impact on their career. The self-report survey was designed to determine the extent to which the program met its participants' expectations. Five-point Likert scale-based survey questions were used to collect information on program expectations and post-program impact. It also solicited qualitative inputs through open-ended questions to ascertain program redesign inputs. The researchers conducted two focus group discussions (FGD) with select program alumnus to strengthen the research.

3.3 Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was designed based on the study's objectives, comprising both closed and open-ended questions. For measuring the post-program review, the questions were drawn from a study titled "*Outcomes of a Program in Business Education for Physicians and Other Health Care Professionals*" by Young et al. (2002). The questions that measure the participants' competencies are derived from the research study titled *An agenda for rethinking mid-career master programs in public administration* by van der Meer and Marks (2018). Questions were modified to fit the context of this study. The pilot study of the questionnaire was tested with a statically relevant number. Its validity and reliability were confirmed before it was hosted on Qualtrics. The survey was shared with over 980 alumni of the program in the past 18 years. Three hundred seventy-one respondents took the survey, and 276 responses were complete in all aspects and used for analysis.

Alongside the survey, two FGDs were undertaken with program alumni to obtain a rich and holistic view of program purpose, the program's perceived and actual benefits, and future mid-career education implications. The intention was to understand the contextual factors and ascertain the participants' concerns in a dialogical manner. Two focused group discussions with six alumni members in each duration of 90 minutes were facilitated using a semi-structured FGD guide. The transcriptions of the FGD's and its thematic qualitative analysis supplemented the survey findings.

3.4 Profiling the respondents

The profile of the study participants in Table 1 reveals the diverse experiences of the respondents across batches.

Table: 1 Respondent's profile

		<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Gender	Male	158 (91%)
	Female	15 (9%)
Age	Less than 30 years	2 (1%)
	30-35 years	27 (16%)
	36-40 years	74 (43%)
	Above 40 years	70 (40%)
Work Experience	Less than five years	0 (0%)
	5-10 years	9 (5%)
	10-15 years	48 (28%)
	15-20 years	78 (45%)
	Above 20 years	38 (22%)

3.5 Data Analysis

The statistical analysis of quantitative data was carried out using SPSS software (version 20) to perform tests like factor analysis, correlation, and regression. The multivariate statistical method of factor analysis commonly used in psychology and education defines and evaluates tests and scales (Williams, Onsman & Brown 2010) to reduce the large set of variables yielding smaller groups of latent constructs. The correlation was used to measure the strength of the relationship between two quantitative variables, while regression helped understand the relationship between one dependent variable and one or more independent variables to forecast its effect and predict its future trends (Cohen et al., 2013). For this study, the researcher intended to identify the major factors that drove the decision to pursue mid-career education and the factors that benefited their career post-program. The researchers also attempted to determine the strength between the variables to forecast its impact. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed using a thematic approach (Braun and Clarke 2006) to understand future implications for mid-career education program design and delivery.

4 Findings

The factor analysis, regression, and correlation tests were carried out aligned with the study's hypothesis.

4.1 H1: *Mid-career professionals undertake mid-career education programs to enhance both subjective and objective career outcomes.*

This study's first intention was to ascertain participants' intention for enrolling in the mid-career education program while continuing to work. Using mean and percentage analysis, the most commonly mentioned

reasons were – to enhance personal branding (94%), to look for better and quicker career promotion/career progression (84%), and to increase the opportunity to earn higher compensation and benefits (79%) (Table 2). Factor analysis was carried out to identify groups of related variables. Data were subject to Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy Test indicates the proportion of variance in variables that might be caused due to underlying factors and suggested the value should be greater than 0.5 to ensure the suitability of factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity assesses the strong relationship among variables and advises that the value should be less than 0.05 of the significance level (Williams, Onsman & Brown 2010; Tastan & Yilmaz 2008). The tests yielded four major factor components with a KMO value of 0.737 (which is more significant than 0.5) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant with p-value of .000

The first factor included the items - to enhance personal branding, stand a better chance/quicker promotion/progression to higher levels, and increase the opportunity to earn higher compensation and benefits. Based on the common theme among the items, this factor grouping was labeled *growth aspiration*. The second-factor grouping contained the items - aspired for better work-life balance, to support the family business, career re-direction, and to advance my career and work overseas. It was labeled *lifestyle change*. The third factor included the items - to improve my performance on the job and pick up skills more aligned with industry requirements, labeled *workplace relevance*. The fourth factor included the items - it was always a long-cherished aspiration/ personal goal to pursue entrepreneurship and develop a strong professional network. The fourth-factor group was labeled *personal aspiration* (see Table 2 & Table 3).

Table: 2 Factor analysis on the reason for undertaking the program having factor loadings and communalities based on a principal components analysis with varimax rotation for 12 items (N =268)

	<i>GA</i>	<i>LC</i>	<i>WR</i>	<i>PA</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Communalities</i>
To stand a better chance / quicker promotion/progression to higher levels	.857				4.14	.758
To increase the opportunity to earn higher compensation and benefits	.844				4.01	.757
To enhance my personal branding	.667				4.32	.703
Aspired for better work-life balance - between work and preferred lifestyle		.745			2.73	.638
To support the family business		.671			2.00	.542
To advance my career and work overseas		.482			3.58	.491
Career re-direction		.465			3.62	.604
To improve my performance on the job			.801		3.65	.743
Pick up skills more aligned with industry requirements.			.773		3.95	.706
It was always a long-cherished aspiration/ personal goal.				.812	3.96	.609

Pursue entrepreneurship - start my own business/organization				.566	3.29	.442
To develop a strong professional network				.419	3.83	.548

Note: Factor loadings <.40 are suppressed. GA= Growth Aspiration, LC= Lifestyle change, WR= Workplace Relevance, PA= Personal Aspiration.

Table: 3 Mean and Standard deviation of four latent constructs of the reason for undertaking the program

<i>Reason for undertaking mid-career education constructs</i>	<i>No. of items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
Growth Aspiration	3	4.2	0.7
Lifestyle change	4	3.0	0.7
Workplace Relevance	2	3.8	0.8
Personal Aspiration	3	3.7	0.7

Strong evidence was found for H1. It is evident that professionals enroll in mid-career programs to seek both objective and subjective career outcomes. The first and third-factor grouping of career growth and workplace relevance is linked to objective career success. The second and fourth-factor grouping of lifestyle change and personal aspiration is linked more to the subject career outcomes. The finding corroborates with Thompson and Gui's (2000) study, which found that better performance at work and career development (in terms of improvement in reputation and brand equity for better roles) is the major reason for seeking executive education.

4.2 H2: Post-program, the mid-career education program enhances participant's perception of their brand value, helps in building a strong professional network, and provides better job opportunities.

For H2, the analysis of participants' responses for post-program career impact as perceived by them was used. Mean and percentage analysis of responses revealed that *the program helped them in enhancing their personal brand/image (82%), prepared them to explore more job opportunities both within and outside the organization (75%), skills developed during the program are very relevant with today's industry requirements (73%) and, helped them nurture a strong professional network (68%)*. All items enabled the participants to future-proof their careers and confront potential career challenges. Interestingly, the participants also felt that *the money and time invested in the program were worthwhile (78%)* (see Table 4).

Before applying factor analysis, few items were negatively stated. The inversely stated variables were reverse coded to avoid negative loadings. Factor analysis was carried out on the post-program outcomes, and the results yielded two major factor components with the KMO value of 0.876 (which is more significant than 0.5), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant with a p-value less than .05 (i.e., p=.000).

The first-factor grouping included the items – has a significant impact on compensation and emoluments, the career advancement opportunities, satisfied with position reached in my career, helped me in getting senior leadership role, money and time invested were well spent, pick up skills relevant to industry requirement, better prepared to explore more job opportunities both within and outside the organization, and able to nurture and build a new career path subsequently. The items pointed to *objective career success* and were labeled so. The second-factor grouping included building a strong professional network, enhancing my personal brand/image in the industry, and made me better qualified for overseas assignments/job opportunities. The items pointed more to *subjective career success* and were labeled so. (Table 4 & Table 5).

Table: 4 Factor analysis on post-program outcome variables, having factor loadings and communalities based on oblimin rotation for 11 items (N =268)

	<i>CAF</i>	<i>PAF</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Communalities</i>
I am satisfied with the impact it has had on my compensation and emoluments	.852		3.02	.639
In my opinion, the career advancement opportunities available to me post the program was too significant	.815		2.78	.608
I am happy with where I have reached w.r.t my career	.675		3.65	.623
I think it plays a significant role in getting me into senior leadership roles	.657		2.96	.477
I believe that the money and time which I invested for the program was well-spent	.603		3.93	.577
I feel that the skills I developed during PGSEM/PGPEM are very <i>much relevant</i> to today's industry requirements	.560		3.74	.284
I was better prepared to explore more job opportunities both within and outside the organization	.544		3.82	.535
I was able to nurture and build a new career path subsequently	.535		3.65	.596
I think it helped me build a strong professional network.		.867	3.74	.672
I felt that it helped enhance my personal brand/image in the industry.		.702	3.99	.646
I believe it made me better qualified for overseas assignments/job opportunities.		.428	3.19	.451

Note: Factor loadings <.40 are suppressed. CAF= Career Aspiration Fulfilled, PAF= Personal Aspiration Fulfilled.

Table: 5 Mean and Standard deviation of two latent constructs of post-program outcome

<i>Post-Program Outcome constructs</i>	<i>No. of items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
Objective career success	8	3.4	0.7
Subjective career success	3	3.6	0.7

To confirm or reject the hypothesis, correlation and regression were applied to determine the association between the two post-program factors and the participants' intentions in enrolling in the program. Correlation and regression between objective career success and intentions (H1) found a significant positive association with only one variable – acquire skills aligned with industry requirements, while other variables were not significant. This meant that participants who identified objective career success factor as a post-program outcome joined the course to pick up skills required for the job (Table 6). There was a positive and significant association with four items for subjective career success - acquire skills aligned with industry requirements, pursue entrepreneurship, support the family business, and fulfill a cherished personal aspiration/goal. This meant for participants who identified subjective career success as a post-program benefit had joined the program intending to acquire skills aligned with industry requirements, pursue entrepreneurship, support family business and fulfill a personal aspiration/goal (Table 7).

Table: 6 Correlation between variables

		1	2
1	Pick up skills more aligned with industry requirements.	-	
2	Career Aspiration fulfilled	.172**	-

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

	Regression between variables	R^2	$Adj R^2$	F	df	$Beta$	P
1	Pick up skills more aligned with industry requirements	.029	.026	8.072	267	.172	.005

Note: Dependent variable: Career Aspiration fulfilled

Table: 7 Correlation between variables

		1	2	3	4	5
1	Pick up skills more aligned with industry requirements.	-				
2	Pursue entrepreneurship - start my own business/organization	.032	-			
3	To support the family business	.076	.307**	-		
4	It was always a long-cherished aspiration/ personal goal	.189**	.162*	.133*	-	
5	Subjective career success	.150*	.167**	.174**	.226**	-

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

	Regression between variables	R^2	$Adj R^2$	F	df	$Beta$	P
1	Pick up skills more aligned with industry requirements	.023	.019	6.132	267	.150	.014
2	Pursue entrepreneurship - start my own business/organization	.028	.024	7.658	267	.167	.006
3	To support the family business	.030	.027	8.277	267	.174	.004
4	It was always a long-cherished aspiration/ personal goal	.051	.047	14.297	267	.226	.000

Note: Dependent variable: Personal Aspiration fulfilled

Hence, this hypothesis was only partially met. Reported career impacting outcomes post-program by the participants based on factor loading were strongly supported for the intention to acquire relevant skills for the industry, entrepreneurship pursuits, and fulfill a personal

4.3 H3: Mid-career educations programs met the expectations of the participants.

To test this hypothesis, the analysis linked the participant's expectations from the program and the impact that they perceived it had on their careers post-program. Correlation and Regression were performed among the two post-program outcome constructs, and the four factors were identified, which explains the reason to undertake the mid-career program. The results revealed that, i.e., there is a significant association between Workplace relevance and objective career success. It implies that professionals who enrolled in the mid-career program to attain workplace relevance reported objective career success post-program. Also, subjective career success was significantly associated with lifestyle change and personal aspiration. It implies that mid-career professionals who enrolled for mid-career programs to make a lifestyle change and achieve personal aspiration reported higher subjective career success post-program (Table 8, Table 9 & Table 10).

Table: 8 Correlation between variables

		1	2	3	4	5
1	Lifestyle change	-				
2	Workplace Relevance	.194**	-			
3	Personal aspiration	.315**	.228**	-		
4	Objective career success	.024	.135*	.082	-	
5	Subjective career success	.182**	.076	.301**	.593**	-

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

Table: 9 Regression between variables

		R^2	$Adj R^2$	F	df	$Beta$	p
1	Workplace Relevance	.018	.015	4.94	267	.135	.027

Note: Dependent variable: Career Aspiration fulfilled

Table: 10 Regression between variables

		R^2	$Adj R^2$	F	df	$Beta$	p
1	Lifestyle change	.033	.029	9.101	267	.182	.003
2	Subjective career success	.091	.087	26.528	267	.301	.000

Note: Dependent variable: Personal Aspiration fulfilled

Therefore, it is evident that mid-career professionals undertake mid-career education to enhance both subjective and objective career outcomes and stand to gain both objective and subjective career success from it.

4.4 H4: *Mid-career professionals perceive that the workplace is changing and has implications for their careers.*

The analysis for this hypothesis included questions that probed participants' perception of the workplace changes and their implications for their careers. Using mean and percentage analysis, two significant changes appear to be taking place at the workplace, i.e., *there is a need to acquire necessary skills to meet the demands of a changing workplace (95%), and technological transformation has significantly impacted jobs (89%)*. The top two concerns were an *increased global competition that impacts the workplace (79%), and people felt insecure in their jobs (76%)*.

Before applying factor analysis, one item, which was negatively stated, was reverse coded before the analysis. Factor analysis was applied. It yielded three major factor components with a KMO value of 0.611 (which is greater than 0.5), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant with a p-value less than .05 (i.e., $p = .000$). Considering the factor grouping, the first-factor grouping was labeled *talent strategy changes*. It included the items - organizations are no longer hiring as many people needed to operate effectively. There are increased job-related insecurities at the workplace. We believe that the increasing ratio of newer generations, e.g., Gen Y and Gen Z, in the workplace is negatively affecting organizations. The second-factor grouping was labeled *shift in skills*. It included the items - technological transformation has significantly impacted jobs, organizations are expecting the individual to acquire needed skills for the changing workplace, and in my opinion, increase in global competition has resulted in changes in the workplace. The third-factor grouping was labeled *policy changes* and included the items - organizations are moving work to low-cost tier II and III cities, and HR policies and practices have changed, resulting in changes at the workplace. (Table 11 & Table 12). During factor analysis, one variable was dropped to increase reliability since it had low communalities value and low correlations with other items.

Table: 11 Factor analysis on workplace changes, having factor loadings and communalities based on principal component analysis with varimax rotation for nine items (N =268)

	<i>TSC</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>OC</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Communalities</i>
In my opinion, organizations are no longer hiring as many people needed to operate effectively	.751			3.22	.577
I think there is increased job-related insecurities at the workplace	.705			3.90	.650
I believe that the increasing ratio of newer generations, e.g., Gen Y and Gen Z in the workplace, is negatively affecting organizations	.692			2.41	.563
I feel technological transformation has significantly impacted jobs		.768		4.18	.601

I feel organizations are expecting the individual to acquire needed skills for the changing workplace.		.656		4.34	.475
In my opinion increase in global competition has resulted in changes in the workplace.		.600		3.97	.402
I think organizations are moving work to low-cost tier II and III cities.			.779	2.86	.657
I feel the HR policies and practices have changed, resulting in changes at the workplace.			.571	3.47	.445

Note: Factor loadings <.40 are suppressed. TSC= Talent Strategy changes, SS= Shift in skills, OC= Organizational changes.

Table: 12 Mean and standard deviation of three latent constructs of workplace changes

<i>Workplace Changes constructs</i>	<i>No. of items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
Talent Strategy changes	3	3.2	0.7
Shift in skills	3	4.2	0.5
Policy changes	2	3.2	0.7

4.5 H5: Mid-career education program can be improved by better aligning it to meet the emerging needs of the workplaces of the future.

Testing this hypothesis involved analyzing open-ended responses of participants' suggestions to improve mid-career education program to align program curriculum with emerging future needs better. Given the qualitative nature of the data, thematic analysis was carried out to identify four major themes that participants were majorly looking for - *pruning emerging skills (46%), changes in the course content (29%), career guidance (17%), and enhanced networking opportunities (5%)* (Table 13). Mid-career professionals seek to acquire relevant skills in line with emerging trends, and hence the recommendations for program redesign suggest changes to course curriculum to align it with the current industry requirements better.

Table: 13 Top three goals that executive education should focus on (thematic analysis)

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Percentage of occurrence (%)</i>	<i>Sample Statements</i>
Emerging skills	46%	P35: "Groom leaders to drive Digital Transformation (AI, RPA, Machine learning, Augmented reality, SaaS, IoT, and Blockchain)" P49: "Coping with ever-changing technological landscape and staying relevant." P130: "Learn some of the skills need to address the new age of competition."
Course Curriculum	29%	P46: "Use more recent case studies and examples."

		<p>P54: <i>"Offer courses in product management, data science-based businesses, analytical marketing, and personal leadership....Encourage students to do entrepreneurship..."</i></p> <p>P57: <i>"Reduce theoretical material, focus more on practical application."</i></p> <p>P196: <i>"Aligning curriculum with industry demands."</i></p>
Career guidance	17%	<p>P50: <i>"Coaching towards aspiration..."</i></p> <p>P28: <i>"Help in career transformation..."</i></p> <p>P262: <i>"Help mid-career executives to cope with the changes related to career switch..."</i></p>
Networking	5%	<p>P23: <i>"Provide a platform/environment to build stronger bonds that could result in new ventures.."</i></p> <p>P25: <i>"Help in networking according to the passion..."</i></p> <p>P160: <i>"Provide networking opportunities to enable job changes.."</i></p>
No response	3%	No response recorded

A surprising finding from the study was the strongly expressed need for career guidance to help mid-career professionals undertake the right career transition. They also expressed a need to establish an institution-enabled alumni network to help them explore prospects and maintain cross-industry connect (Table 13).

Responses of 46% participants who recommended the inclusion of emerging skills to the curriculum were further thematically analyzed. It was possible to categorize them into 11 themes (see Figure 1) - *Leadership & Management (21%), Digital technology & Innovation (19%), Business development (15%), Industry specific (14%), Data science & Analytics (8%), AI, ML & Blockchain (5%), Change management (5%), Organization culture (5%), Strategy (5%), Conflict management & Negotiation (3%) and Agility & Resilience (1%).*

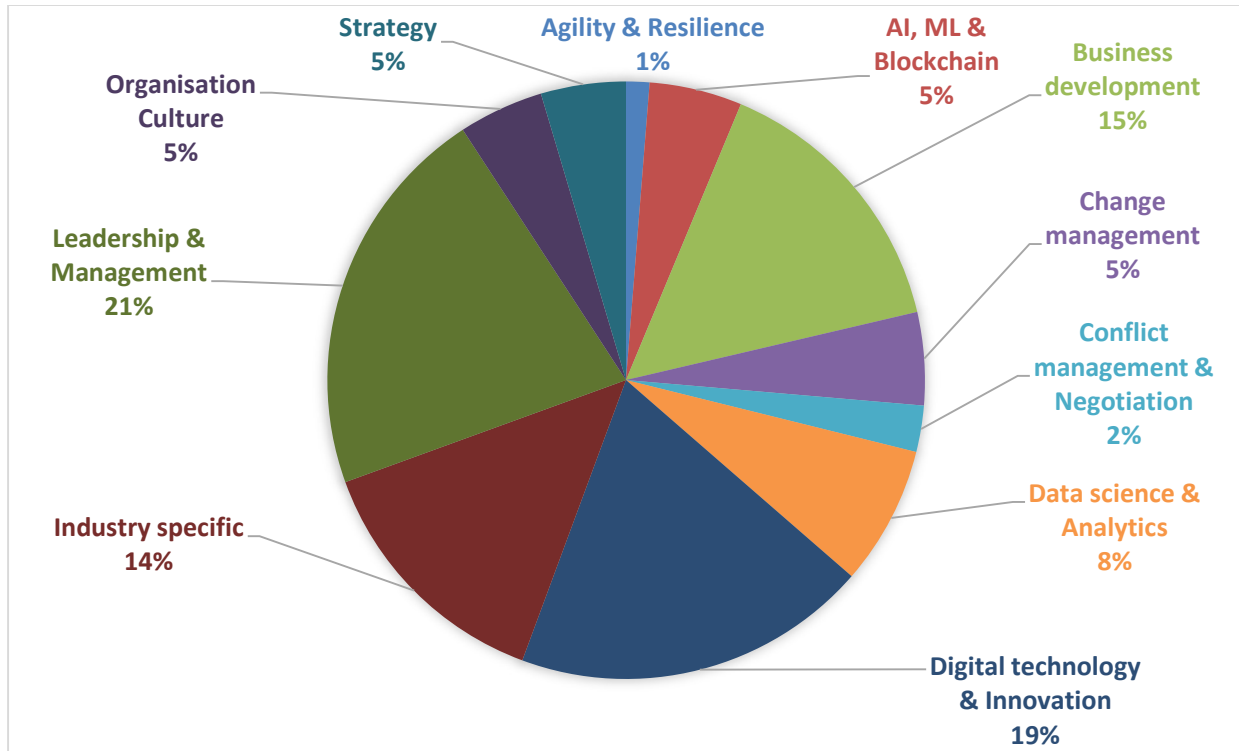


Fig: 1 Emerging Skills

To further strengthen the findings from the thematic data analysis researcher also tried to identify a correlation and regression between three significant factors of workplace changes (talent strategy changes, shift in skills, and policy changes) and the four emerging skills themes that were identified (Emerging skills, Course curriculum, Career guidance, and Networking). Results revealed that emerging skills positively associate with all the three factors – talent strategy changes, shift in skills, and policy changes (Table 14 & Table 15).

Table: 14 Correlation between variables

		1	2	3	4
1	Talent Strategy changes	-			
2	Shift in skills	.066	-		
3	Policy changes	.114	.184**	-	
4	Emerging skills	.122*	.122*	.140*	-

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table: 15 Regression between variables

		R^2	$Adj R^2$	F	df	$Beta$	p
1	Talent Strategy changes	.015	.011	4.00	267	.122	.046
2	Shift in skills	.015	.011	4.05	267	.122	.045
3	Policy changes	.020	.016	5.31	267	.140	.022

Note: Dependent variable: Emerging skills

The findings strongly support the hypothesis and provide the business case for program pedagogy to be restructured to meet the changing workplace's needs. With the advancement of technology and digital transformation at the workplace, pedagogy would need to incorporate new skills so that mid-career professionals would benefit from undertaking such programs.

4.6 Program advocacy

Apart from this, participants were asked about their willingness to recommend the mid-career program to their colleagues and acquaintances; 86% of the participants shared a positive response. Further, mean and percentage analysis revealed that participants who choose to recommend this program to their colleagues and acquaintances also were the ones who reported the following benefits from the program – it enhanced their brand; money, and time invested in the program was spent well. This program prepares them to explore more job opportunities both within and outside the organization (Table 17).

Table: 17 Mean and Standard deviation of post-program outcome calculated about who will recommend this program (N=229)

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
I felt that it helped enhance my personal brand/image in the industry	4.1	0.8
I believe that the money and time which I invested in the program was well-spent	4.1	0.8
I was better prepared to explore more job opportunities both within and outside the organization	4.0	0.7
I feel that the skills I developed during PGSEM/PGPEM are very not relevant to today's industry requirements	3.9	0.9
I am happy with where I have reached w.r.t my career	3.8	0.9
I think it helped me build a strong professional network	3.8	0.8
I was able to nurture and build a new career path subsequently	3.8	1.0
I believe it made me better qualified for overseas assignments/job opportunities	3.3	1.0
I don't think I am satisfied with the impact it has had on my compensation and emoluments	3.1	1.1
I think it did not play a significant role in getting me into senior leadership roles	3.1	1.1
In my opinion, the career advancement opportunities available to me post the program were not too significant	2.9	1.1

4.7 Findings from the focus group discussion analysis (FGD)

The transcribed data from the two FGDs and common points that emerged corroborate the survey analysis findings. It provided interesting insights, especially concerning mid-career programs redesign to meet the emerging workplace's needs. The alumni suggested program enrichment features with regards to content, context, and delivery:

- To be more specialized than generalized. Learning pedagogy to be more aligned with current industry trends and the needs of the learners.
- Focus on acquiring digital skills
- The students need to gain knowledge through more work-related practical projects, live case problems, and internships outside their own company.
- Besides, crowd-source problems that start-ups face need to be used by them as learning opportunities with contextual assignments, examples, and case studies.
- BSchool needs to invite Industry, domain experts, and alumni for interactions and sharing both success and failure stories.
- A hybrid model for program delivery – includes e-learning modules, MOOC courses into the curriculum.
- Option to extend the program beyond two years, on-going as continuous learning options post-program
- Incorporate more cross-cultural context in other emerging markets will help branding expand beyond India to other Asian countries. Tap into massive demand from Dubai, Malaysia, Singapore.
- The program needs to be re-designed to encourage entrepreneurs who want to open a start-up business and struggling with their business plan, the guide from start to finish - full-stack support.
- Participants enroll intending to undertake a career shift and seek professional career guidance focused on redesigning careers, redress concerns such as job-loss fears, redundancy, and relevance.
- Increase Alumni connect. Encourage more networking across batches.

The survey analysis findings and the focus group discussions reveal that mid-career programs have inherent strengths and significantly benefit their participants. It could benefit from making few changes to its design and delivery given the changing workplace context.

5 Conclusion

The general objective of this study was to understand expectations of mid-career professionals undertaking mid-career education and the post-program career impact perceived. The goal was to identify enhancements that can be made to the program from professionals who are currently on-the-ground and experiencing the changes taking place at work.

5.1 Ensuring program relevance

Mid-career education programs that aspire to teach business skills to mid-career professionals must ensure that participants' expectations are managed and deliver what it promises (Young et al., 2002). The pedagogy of mid-career education needs to be continuously aligned with current business requirements. Herein, action-learning pedagogy significantly enhances individual and organizational outcomes compared to traditional executive education formats (Tushman et al., 2007). The insights from the study can be used to re-craft the agenda for mid-career education. It holds special significance for India. Given the current work scenario, the agenda for mid-career education is being re-set. Working professionals join part-time mid-career education programs to enhance their skills and knowledge and move towards career switching (Shetti, 2018). The above needs to be kept in mind while designing and delivering mid-career programs. It appears mid-career education will benefit from an overhaul of its curriculum with significant implications for a new and innovative learning pedagogy to sustain impact and effectiveness. Back to school, and continuous, life-long learning is here to stay. The aforesaid ideas would be a moot point for the institution to sustain a competitive edge over others. Providing on-going career management education is the emergent future; mid-career is neither relevant nor practical.

The changing world of work points to changes in program curriculum and pedagogy. Automation and Digital transformation have disrupted the business environment. Industries are reshaping themselves by adopting new technologies and trends. The technological revolution has impacted jobs and increase job-related insecurities. With the changing business needs, organizations require people with relevant skills and knowledge.

5.2 Practical implications of the study

The authors have made a few suggestions and recommendations to improve the effectiveness of mid-career programs. New content emerged as a critical need, with pedagogy and curriculum as the most significant gap areas.

- *Learning pedagogy* to be more aligned with current industry trends and recent business case studies and examples should explain the concept and theories.
- *Hybrid learning*: Leveraging an online learning platform provides an interface to interact with learning content easily and collaborate with trainers and learners. The n-sSchool needs to leverage online platforms like MOOCs to improve the program's effectiveness.
- *Specialization*: One size no longer fits all participants. Professionals nurture preferences, and at one point, such programs need to diversify and provide some scope to pursue a specific area of interest. The “T”shaped and “Pie”management seems to be emerging in a way There appears to be a need to explore providing the option of a bouquet of supporting courses. The above can accentuate the online component in the hybrid model.

- *Career Guidance:* Mid-career professionals commonly experience a lack of clarity about their visions and career goals and ways to realign a career with their unique strengths. Therefore, they have doubts about the relevant skills they need to acquire. Participants expect the B-school must provide career guidance for their future role transition. According to Bimrose & Brown (2014), for smoother career transition, mid-career professionals commonly look for career guidance and counseling to clarify career goals and make decisions related to which skills one needs to develop, whether to look for a job switch or stay in the same career.
- *Provide Industry Exposure:* One can easily understand the current business trends and best practices from the experts in the field. Special lectures, seminars, webinars or workshops of notable alumni or domain experts would get the participants closer to understanding industry trends and practices from that on-the-ground.
- *Networking:* Building a professional network enhances professional relationships and connections with people of diverse industry backgrounds. Such networks serve multiple purposes, especially in today's technology-driven workplace. Opportunities to expand the professional network help participants update their knowledge about their own and other industries and easily switch the job.
- *Build Entrepreneurial Skills:* on-going career education to focus on incorporating entrepreneurship skills. When the country is promoting Indian entrepreneurship, a full-stack tool kit built into the core of such programs will inspire entrepreneurship. The diversity that is a natural part of such programs further provides the ideal ecosystem to promote more entrepreneurship. Advisory roles could be undertaken by fellow participants too. It can incubate more talks, conferences, and workshops focused on building entrepreneurial skills.

Given the current business context and the transforming workplace, there is an imminent need to review the curriculum and program benefits and impact for its recipients and end-stakeholder, namely organizations.

6 Limitations and Future Research Direction

The study confines itself to one mid-career program of an institution. There is scope to extend the study to other programs and institutions to confirm or counter the findings. The self-report survey method has implications for respondents providing socially desirable responses, despite measures taken to reduce responder bias. A central rating bias was observed in respondents who, for some statements, responded: "neither agree nor disagree." This made it challenging to analyze and reach a definitive perception for certain questions. Alternative methods like longitudinal studies and qualitative methods might be explored for future research. The result would be varying according to the individual and the time available at the respondent's disposal. The qualitative FGD could have preceded the survey, and the survey instrument could have been designed based on the inputs received from the FGD.

As an exploratory study, the research holds potential for more confirmative studies. It sets the context for a more in-depth fact-based survey collecting factual information from the employers on the benefits the

individuals gained career-wise. However, this might pose challenges for the researchers to collect, as the respondents would have shifted multiple employers' post-program. A longitudinal study might prove more reliable through tracing the career path tread by a sample set of participants post-program by keeping in constant touch with them. As also the diary method. Such studies might provide deeper insights. Hence, ample opportunities exist for future studies.

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ANNEXURE I

Survey Questionnaire

Evaluating the outcomes of the program for Mid-career Professionals

Dear Participant,

We are undertaking an independent research study to evaluate the impact of the mid-career program. This program is one of the flagship programs and has been successfully running for over 20 years. The objective of this study is to understand what influenced your decision to undertake this program and the perceived benefits.

Please share your feedback by responding to this short questionnaire. *The responses will be used for research purpose only, and we assure you that it will be kept confidential.*

Thank you for your response.

Regards

Guidelines: Please read the questions and tick (Ö) the appropriate column for each statement

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

1. Workplace changes. Rate how you perceive the changes taking place at the workplace

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	I think nothing much has changed at the workplace in the past few years (2010 onwards)					
2	I feel technological transformation has significantly impacted jobs					
3	In my opinion increase in global competition has resulted in changes in the workplace					
4	I think organizations are moving work to low-cost tier II and III cities					
5	I feel the HR policies and practices have changed resulting in changes at the workplace					
6	I think there is increased job-related insecurities at the workplace					
7	In my opinion organizations are no longer hiring as many people needed to operate effectively					
8	I feel organizations are expecting the individual to acquire needed skills for the changing workplace					
9	I believe that the increasing ratio of newer generations, e.g., Gen Y and Gen Z in the workplace is negatively affecting organizations					

2. To what extent did the following factors influence your decision to do a mid-career course?

		1	2	3	4	5
1	To improve my performance on the job					
2	Pick up skills more aligned with industry requirements					
3	To advance my career and work overseas					
4	To enhance my personal branding					
5	To stand a better chance / quicker promotion/progression to higher levels					
6	To increase the opportunity to earn higher compensation and benefits					
7	Pursue entrepreneurship - start my own business/organization					
8	To support the family business					
9	It was always a long-cherished aspiration/ personal goal					
10	To develop a strong professional network					
11	Career re-direction – changing career path as a result of boredom, restlessness, lost interest, etc. in what I was then doing					
12	Aspired for better work life balance - <i>between work and preferred lifestyle</i>					

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

3. Rate the effectiveness of the learning pedagogy that was used

		1	2	3	4	5
1	Classroom lectures					
2	In-class exercises and assignments					
3	Learning resources – notes/on-line learning resources					
4	Faculty					
5	Personal research and reading					
6	From peers and through group work					
7	Friends and colleagues					

4. Post-program, how did it support your career ambitions?

		1	2	3	4	5
1	I am happy with where I have reached w.r.t my career					
2	I believe that the money and time which I invested for the program was well-spent					
3	I feel that the skills I developed during programme are very <i>not relevant</i> with today's industry requirements					
4	I believe it made me better qualified for overseas assignments/job opportunities					
5	In my opinion, the career advancement opportunities available to me post the program were not too significant					
6	I don't think I am <i>satisfied</i> with the impact it has had on my compensation and emoluments					
7	I was better prepared to explore more job opportunities both within and outside the organization					
8	I felt that it helped enhance my personal brand/image in the industry					
9	I think it helped me build a strong professional network					
10	I was able to nurture and build a new career path subsequently					
11	I think it did not play a significant role in getting me into senior leadership roles					

5. Given the current and emerging workplace context, suggest the top three goals that mid-career education programs can focus on...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

6. Of the following three biggest challenges that organizations face today, rate your organization's priority

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	Facilitate career transition of senior managers to strategic roles					
2	Implement required on-going change in managing organizational imperatives					
3	Instil and socialize vision, mission, and values targeting innovation					

7. Would you recommend this program to your colleagues, friends, and relatives?

<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>

Personal profile information

Age group: Less than 30 years 30-35 years 36-40 years above 40 years

No of years of work experience: Less than 5 years 5-10 years 10-15 years
 15-20 years above 20 years.

Gender: Male Female Others

Qualification: Graduate (pls specify) _____

Post Graduate (pls specify) _____

Current role (title): _____ Current location: _____

Name of current employer: _____

Year of enrolment with Prog:

Year of graduation:

Role at the time of enrolling for Prog: _____

Name of the employer at the time of enrolling for Prog: _____

Please provide brief details of your last two roles:

Organization	Designation	duration from	duration to	key responsibility

Thank you for sharing your valuable feedback!