

# Why are part-time MBA programmes so popular?

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Formal management education in India is a little more than 50 years old. But over the past few decades, there has been a meteoric rise in MBA education, especially the part-time MBA programme.

Young professionals want to grow professional and keep up with changing trends at the workplaces. In the 1980s and 90s, it was mostly mid-career professionals who pursued part-time MBAs. Over the last decade, young professionals in their late twenties and early forties, with experience ranging from four to twenty years have been applying for MBA programmes.

An increasing number of women are also enrolling in part-time MBA programmes, from less than 10% in the 1990s to 20 - 40% today.

Many women also pursue a part-time

MBA after marriage, after they have kids, or take a break in their career for personal reasons. Interestingly, our research reveals that 80% of the mid-career professionals who undertake part-time management education programmes in premier B-schools are over 36 years old. Also, nearly 90% of participants are male.

Most of the participants are from IT and engineering backgrounds, while others are from manufacturing, retail, telecom, and banking sectors.

Part-time MBA is basically for those looking to 'Learn as they earn'.

The participants usually have clarity regarding which areas to specialise and grow in and decide to pursue a part-time MBA with the intention of expanding into general managerial positions from functional domains.

They prefer the premium business schools in India: the IIMs, XLRI/XIM, SP



Jain Mumbai, to name a few.

Most participants prefer specialising in General Management, Strategy, Digital Management, Product Management, Marketing or Finance, IT,

and occasionally HRM.

## Funding part-time education

Many organisations sponsor part-time MBAs for their top talent as part of employee engagement policy.

However, more and more participants seem to be self-sponsoring their studies, keeping in mind their ambition for growth and to prevent obsolescence. Mid-career professionals also enrol in distance learning management programmes from top universities.

We observe that many multinational firms and Indian conglomerates support mid-career professionals by sponsoring their higher education, providing them with financial assistance to secure their future.

Also, many professionals bear the entire cost of management education on their own or by taking a bank loan.

A part-time MBA does not automatically lead to a fast-track management position or promotion. However, many talented employees who fail to get fast-track promotions in their organisation usually switch jobs and get better roles outside.

The part-time MBA also helps mid-career professionals who want to switch their job profiles.

## Perceived benefits

A part-time MBA is a great enabler for many professionals to accelerate their career growth, particularly in a country like India where management education is valued significantly.

A mid-career education equips professionals with new skills and competencies and accelerates their career to achieve success.

A recent exploratory research I conducted with a few hundred part-time

/weekend MBA students of a long-term executive general management programme, showed they perceived the following benefits: A faster track promotion within the organisation, better growth opportunities outside their organisation, enhanced personal branding, high self-esteem and high social/ professional networks.

Overall, more people are pursuing part-time or weekend MBAs for future readiness.

In addition to part-time MBAs, the last decade has witnessed a boom of focused executive education of one week to one-year duration in the areas of Strategy, Leadership, Marketing, Business Analytics, and Operations. So this trend of part-time study is here to stay.

*(The author is a professor of practice and chairperson of the weekend MBA programme (PGEM) at IIM Bangalore.)*