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# Satisfied MBAs: Career Switchers and Career Enhancers from Around the World

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*GMAC® Research Reports • RR-07-11 • June 7, 2007*


## Abstract

MBA students from around the world share multi-dimensional ambitions of attaining expertise in the management realm. However, there are unilateral aspects across each student's pursuit. Obtaining an MBA degree creates opportunities for career enhancement for some and optimizes the pursuit of career changes for others. Career enhancers enroll in MBA programs to remain marketable in the business world. Their post-MBA career goals focus on seeking opportunities for advancement within their pre-MBA professions. Career switchers desire to evolve from one career path to another, with the hope of changing their professional areas or industries upon graduation. These critical motivations affect student satisfaction with the MBA degree, which directly relate to the confidence they build by learning new skills or improving existing skills in the program. This study compares degree satisfaction and skill improvement following completion of MBA programs for 4,757 students who deemed themselves either career enhancers or career switchers. Citizenship (world region) differences of both the enhancer and switcher groups are presented.


This study is based on a sample of 4,757 MBA program graduates who completed the Global MBA® Graduate Survey conducted by the Graduate Management Admission Council® (GMAC®). The survey included questions regarding career goals, degree satisfaction, skill improvement, and demographic variables. Analyses for this study focus on responses to the survey questions that help provide a global perspective on the differences between career enhancers and career switchers among MBA program graduates.

Specifically, degree satisfaction and skill development of MBA graduates from around the world were examined based on students' career goals. Responses from students who hoped to enhance their careers or switch job paths after attaining MBA degrees were compared. The analyses determine whether career switchers or enhancers can be distinguished by their levels of satisfaction with their MBA degrees and their perceptions of skill improvement since entering into their graduate programs.

To determine whether career goals differed based on citizenship, respondents were also categorized based on their world regions of origin. Six different citizenship (world region) subgroups were established: Asian, European, Latin American, Canadian, and American (U.S.), plus one for all other countries of origin. These data were used to determine the likelihood of being a career enhancer or career switcher given one's citizenship subgroup. Career enhancers and career switchers were closely analyzed by examining several factors that might help differentiate them from one another, including degree satisfaction, perceived skill improvement, and country of origin. The results will further develop an understanding of the major differences that distinguish career enhancers from career switchers.

## Background

Career choices made by MBAs are difficult to interpret without knowing what influences graduates to select certain careers. In this study, MBA program satisfaction and perceived level of skill improvement are compared among graduates with different career goals. Attainment of an MBA degree is the static variable in the analysis. The decision to pursue an MBA degree to enhance or change career paths may be connected to the satisfaction students feel with regard to their MBA programs. Developing skills to augment a current vocation is an essential component to remaining marketable, which is partly a reaction to the

demands of a globally diverse economy. Technologies continually change, creating a challenging and competitive job market. To remain on the cutting edge, employees seek to gain business intelligence through work experience and higher education.

Both MBA graduates and employing organizations portray the MBA degree as a powerful ticket to success (Dougherty, 1993). An MBA can create opportunities for career enhancement and expansion by providing general or specific training, depending on program type (Sheikh, 2006). Essentially, the degree both affords students the opportunity for learning and growth and provides an enhanced workforce to businesses.

The networking opportunities an MBA program presents enable MBA students to engage more deeply with people who can expand their professional opportunities. Because MBA students often have pre-MBA work experience, they likely have additional self-insight and a more realistic appraisal of their skills, values, and needs (Dougherty, 1993). MBA students may have predetermined career paths that led them to enroll in their programs, or they may have developed and/or adjusted their career goals based on the skills and experiences they gained while earning their degrees.

The Global MBA® Graduate Survey is an annual survey of graduating MBA students. The survey objective is to determine how students select their schools, evaluate their educational experiences, and choose their careers and jobs. Respondents to the Global MBA® Graduate Survey are asked, upon graduation, whether they plan to work in the same business industries in which they worked before entering the MBA programs. In 2006, slightly more than half of the respondents planned to switch industries (Schoenfeld, 2006). Comprehensive survey results further determined that MBA students in full-time programs were significantly more likely than others to be career switchers. Conversely, most part-time and executive students had had prior work experience and were seeking higher education to enhance their current careers. Career enhancers consequently tended to have higher levels of experience than career switchers.

Overall, graduates showed increased interest in occupations in finance/accounting, consulting, and products/services industries upon graduation, whereas employment consideration within the high-tech, nonprofit/government, and healthcare/pharmaceuticals industries appeared to decline (Schoenfeld, 2006). Survey results also analyzed career switching and enhancing behavior by each school's geographic location, but that analysis did not differentiate. Globally, it seems MBA programs serve as a vehicle for developing career competencies, and the MBA degree is becoming the qualification of choice for those who are serious about developing their careers (Ledger, 2003). The MBA degree often serves as a catalyst for entry into an upper-level position with a higher salary, but when such career benefits are not found, the value of the MBA is often questioned (Pffefer and Fong, 2002).

Increased salary is not necessarily an accurate measure of career success, however. For many career enhancers, advancement within a chosen field that results in more challenging work can be at least as satisfying as increased salary. Likewise, starting a new career path using new abilities can be the primary goal for career switchers. The satisfaction graduates feel upon completion of their MBA programs derives from a general sense of accomplishment as well as the fulfillment of graduates' personal goals. For this study, program satisfaction was examined separately based on the graduates' career goals (i.e., career enhancement or career change). Perceptions of skill improvement resulting from completion of MBA programs may also vary depending on graduates' career goals. Graduates desiring to enhance their careers might have higher expectations for skill improvement that are directly related to their current occupations. On the other hand, career switchers may be more focused on learning the most innovative techniques and taking advantage of networking opportunities. Therefore, perceptions of skill improvement were examined separately for career enhancers and career switchers.

## Methodology

### Global MBA® Graduate Survey

Survey results for the Global MBA® Graduate Survey indicate that graduate business schools around the world are meeting their students' personal expectations (Schoenfeld, 2006). In particular, graduating students were asked to rate their satisfaction with various potential

benefits of their MBA degrees, listed in Table 1. Respondents used a five-point scale (i.e., extremely satisfied, very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied, and not at all satisfied) to indicate their levels of satisfaction with each potential benefit.

| Table 1: MBA Satisfaction |
|---|
| **My MBA degree has given me…** |
| An opportunity for more challenging/interesting work in the future. |
| A sense of personal satisfaction and achievement. |
| Advancement potential. |
| Credentials I need to increase career options. |
| Respect and recognition. |
| Confidence I need to succeed. |
| The ability to switch industries. |
| The ability to change occupational area. |
| The ability to expand my international employment opportunities. |
| The right connections to get a good job in the future. |
| An increase in long-term potential through the development of skills/abilities. |
| The ability to remain marketable (competitive). |
| The potential for long-term income and financial stability. |

The survey also asked respondents to indicate how their education helped them improve their skills and abilities in 18 specific areas, listed in Table 2. Respondents rated skill improvement on a six-point scale (i.e., a great deal, a good amount, some, little, not at all, or not applicable because of a previous high level of ability). Although the survey included many more items aimed at understanding market trends and the expectations of students, only part of these data were examined. The present study focused on identifying the differences in program satisfaction for the 13 potential outcomes and the perceived skill improvements in the 18 different areas based on respondents' career goals.

| Table 2: Skill Improvement |
|---|
| **Skills and Abilities Improved at Different Levels** |
| Ability to adapt/change to new situations |
| Ability to integrate information from a wide variety of sources |
| Ability to think analytically |
| Ability to think strategically |
| Ability to make decisions with imperfect information |
| Ability to think globally |
| Quantitative skills |
| Technological skills for your specialty |
| Initiative/risk-taking ability |

| Table 2: Skill Improvement |
|---|
| **Skills and Abilities Improved at Different Levels** |
| Interpersonal skills |
| Oral communication skills |
| Written communication skills |
| Creative problem-solving skills |
| Leadership skills |
| Project management/implementation skills |
| Recruiting, managing, and maintaining staff |
| Cultural sensitivity and awareness |
| Skills in corporate ethical conduct |

## Sample

A total of 20,063 graduate management education students with projected graduation dates in 2006 were surveyed for the 2006 Global MBA® Graduate Survey (Schoenfeld, 2006). Of those surveyed, 31% (N = 6,139) responded to the Web-based questionnaire. This sample was composed of students representing 111 different countries and 147 different schools. Respondents were enrolled in full-time (58%), part-time (32%), executive (9%), and other MBA program types (1%). The majority of respondents were male students (67%).

For skill development and career goal questions, respondents were given the opportunity to indicate that items were not applicable or that they were undecided about their responses. As a result, the sample sizes for the various analyses may differ. When asked about their career goals, 2,326 respondents indicated that they would like to enhance their careers, and 2,431 indicated that they hoped to switch careers after graduation. This sample of 4,757 respondents also provided responses for all degree-satisfaction questions. Of the 4,757 respondents who supplied information on their career goals, 4,339 to 4,697 respondents also provided responses for the various skill improvement and development questions. Because respondents could indicate that skill improvement in a particular area was not applicable due to a previously high level of ability, the number of respondents varied for each of the 18 different skill items.

## Response Options

Though five response options were provided for the degree satisfaction and skill development sections of the survey, the categories were combined for the purposes of this analysis. When the response options were evaluated, there were two positively worded categories, two negatively worded categories, and one neutrally worded category. To more easily distinguish between respondents who were satisfied and those who were not, similar categories were combined. As a result, responses for degree satisfaction items were grouped into three main categories: satisfied (i.e., extremely or very satisfied), somewhat satisfied, and not satisfied (i.e., not at all or not very satisfied). Correspondingly, level-of-skill-improvement item responses were also separated into three categories: much improvement (i.e., a great deal or good amount), some improvement, and no improvement (i.e., not at all or a little).

## Analyses

To compare respondents with different career goals, chi-squared tests ($\chi^2$) of independence were conducted. Chi-squared test statistics compare the observed and expected frequencies and are based on the null hypothesis that there are no differences between these two frequencies. Statistically significant findings indicate that there is not an equal number of observed and expected subjects and that there is a relationship between the variables being examined. For this study, chi-squared tests determined

whether expected and observed cross-classifications of citizenship (world region), degree satisfaction, or skill development categories with career goals were significantly different from one another. Adjusted residuals also provide cell-by-cell comparisons between the expected and observed frequencies. These results help determine which group differences are more meaningful for each chi-squared test. Adjusted residuals that exceed an absolute value of 2 or 3 indicate that the two variables are not independent (i.e., there is a relationship).

Although chi-squared tests can be used to determine the difference between categorical variables, there are some limitations. For instance, chi-squared test statistics are influenced by sample size. Large-sample chi-squared tests, such as the ones conducted for this study, often result in non-significant results or findings that indicate that there is a relationship between the test variables. As such, a measure of effect size provides information on relationships between variables that are not dependent on sample size (Cohen, 1988). The phi coefficient provides an estimate of the effect size or practical significance of the differences between career goals and citizenship (world region), satisfaction, and skill development groups. Phi coefficients can be interpreted as the correlation between the two variables. Cohen's suggestions[1] for the interpretation of correlation values are appropriate for phi coefficient estimate explanations.

## Results

### Degree Satisfaction and Career Goals

Career switchers' and career enhancers' levels of satisfaction with the outcomes of their MBA degrees were also compared. The results can be found in Table 4. For the 13 items, enhancers and switchers differed significantly with regard to their levels of satisfaction for six of the different outcomes ($p < .05$). However, when phi coefficients were examined, the differences between switchers and enhancers in degree satisfaction were only slight. Phi coefficient values ranged from .02 to .17 for the 13 different items. Group differences are described here.

### Enhancers

Career enhancers were more likely to report that they were somewhat satisfied that their MBA programs provided them with the opportunity to obtain more challenging or interesting work and the potential for advancement, long-term income, and financial stability. Enhancers were also more likely to report that they were not at all, not very, or only somewhat satisfied with their abilities to switch industries, change occupational areas, expand international employment opportunities, and develop the right connections for future employment following degree completion. Enhancers were slightly more satisfied than switchers that their MBA programs had given them a sense of personal satisfaction, respect, recognition, and the ability to remain marketable.

### Switchers

Career switchers more often reported that they were extremely or very satisfied with the outcomes of their MBA degrees. Specifically, switchers were more satisfied than enhancers that their MBA programs provided them the opportunity to obtain more challenging or interesting work, switch industries, change occupational areas, expand international employment opportunities, develop the right connections for future employment, and establish the potential for long-term income and financial stability. It appeared that the majority of career switchers were satisfied that their MBA programs had provided them with this opportunity.

[1] Cohen suggested that the following interpretation can be made regarding correlation values: small relationship = .1, medium relationship = .3, large relationship = .5.

| Table 4: Cross Classification of Degree Satisfaction and Career Goal | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Outcome** | Goal | **Not satisfied** | **Somewhat satisfied** | **Satisfied** |
| An opportunity for more challenging/ interesting work in the future* ($\chi^2$ = 18.07, df = 2, p < .01; Phi = .06) | Enhancer | 49 (2.1%) | 366 (15.7%) | 1,911 (82.2%) |
| | | *.8* | *4.1* | *-4.2* |
| | Switcher | 43 (1.8%) | 283 (11.6%) | 2105 (86.6%) |
| | | *-.8* | *-4.1* | *4.2* |
| A sense of personal satisfaction and achievement ($\chi^2$ = 3.45, df = 2, p = .18; Phi = .03) | Enhancer | 51 (2.2%) | 200 (8.6%) | 2075 (89.2%) |
| | | *-.5* | *-1.8* | *1.8* |
| | Switcher | 59 (2.4%) | 245 (10.1%) | 2127 (87.5%) |
| | | *.5* | *1.8* | *-1.8* |
| Advancement potential* ($\chi^2$ = 6.86, df = 2, p = .03; Phi = .04) | Enhancer | 37 (1.6%) | 364 (15.6%) | 1,925 (82.8%) |
| | | *-1.5* | *2.2* | *-1.6* |
| | Switcher | 53 (2.2%) | 325 (13.4%) | 2,053 (84.5%) |
| | | *1.5* | *-2.2* | *1.6* |
| Credentials necessary to increase career options ($\chi^2$ = 4.06, df = 2, p = .13; Phi = .03) | Enhancer | 43 (1.8%) | 299 (12.9%) | 1,984 (85.3%) |
| | | *-1.9* | *.8* | *.1* |
| | Switcher | 65 (2.7%) | 295 (12.1%) | 2071 (85.2%) |
| | | *1.9* | *-.8* | *-.1* |
| Respect and recognition ($\chi^2$ = 1.08, df = 2, p = .58; Phi = .02) | Enhancer | 86 (3.7%) | 491 (21.1%) | 1749 (75.2%) |
| | | *-.3* | *-1.0* | *1.0* |
| | Switcher | 94 (3.9%) | 541 (22.3%) | 1796 73.9%) |
| | | *.3* | *1.0* | *-1.0* |
| Confidence to succeed ($\chi^2$ = 3.41, df = 2, p = .18; Phi = .03) | Enhancer | 74 (3.2%) | 449 (19.3%) | 1803 (77.5%) |
| | | *-.5* | *1.8* | *-1.5* |
| | Switcher | 84 (3.5%) | 420 (17.3%) | 1,927 (79.3%) |
| | | *.5* | *-1.8* | *1.5* |
| The ability to switch industries* ($\chi^2$ = 143.22, df = 2, p < .01; Phi = .17) | Enhancer | 252 (10.8%) | 769 (33.1%) | 1,305 (56.1%) |
| | | *5.8* | *9.2* | *-11.9* |
| | Switcher | 149 (6.1%) | 516 (21.2%) | 1,766 (72.6%) |
| | | *-5.8* | *-9.2* | *11.9* |
| The ability to change occupational areas* ($\chi^2$ = 79.97, df = 2, p < .01; Phi = .13) | Enhancer | 187 (8.0%) | 666 (28.6%) | 1,473 (63.3%) |
| | | *4.5* | *7.0* | *-8.9* |
| | Switcher | 118 (4.9%) | 485 (20.0%) | 1,828 (75.2%) |
| | | *-4.5* | *-7.0* | *8.9* |
| The ability to expand international employment opportunities* ($\chi^2$ = 37.63, df = 2, p < .01; Phi = .09) | Enhancer | 341 (14.7%) | 819 (35.2%) | 1,166 (50.1%) |
| | | *4.1* | *3.3* | *-5.8* |
| | Switcher | 260 (10.7%) | 747 (30.7%) | 1,424 (58.6%) |
| | | *-4.1* | *-3.3* | *5.8* |

| Table 4: Cross Classification of Degree Satisfaction and Career Goal | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Outcome | Goal | Not satisfied | Somewhat satisfied | Satisfied |
| The right connections for future employment* ($\chi^2 = 59.00$, df = 2, $p < .01$; Phi = .11) | Enhancer | 411 (17.7%) | 774 (33.3%) | 1,141 (49.1%) |
| | | *4.8* | *4.4* | *-7.5* |
| | Switcher | 308 (12.7%) | 666 (27.4%) | 1,457 (59.9%) |
| | | *-4.8* | *-4.4* | *7.5* |
| An increase in long-term potential through the development of skills/abilities ($\chi^2 = 2.97$, df = 2, p = .23; Phi = .03) | Enhancer | 54 (2.3%) | 305 (13.1%) | 1,967 (84.6%) |
| | | *1.0* | *1.3* | *-1.7* |
| | Switcher | 46 (1.9%) | 288 (11.8%) | 2,097 (86.3%) |
| | | *-1.0* | *-1.3* | *1.7* |
| The ability to remain marketable ($\chi^2 = 1.86$, df = 2, p = .39; Phi = .02) | Enhancer | 39 (1.7%) | 278 (12.0%) | 2,009 (86.4%) |
| | | *-1.1* | *-.8* | *1.2* |
| | Switcher | 51 (2.1%) | 309 (12.7%) | 2,071 (85.2%) |
| | | *1.1* | *.8* | *-1.2* |
| The potential for long-term income and financial stability* ($\chi^2 = 12.79$, df = 2, $p < .01$; Phi = .05) | Enhancer | 60 (2.6%) | 457 (19.6%) | 1,809 (77.8%) |
| | | *-.6* | *3.6* | *-3.1* |
| | Switcher | 70 (2.9%) | 382 (15.7%) | 1,979 (81.4%) |
| | | *.6* | *-3.6* | *3.1* |

Note. Italicized values represent the adjusted residuals for testing independence.
*p < .05

## Skill Development and Career Goals

To evaluate perceptions of skill development throughout their MBA programs, respondents were presented with a series of 18 items, which are listed in Table 5. These items addressed skills that could have been developed during their programs. Career enhancers and career switchers differed significantly with regard to perceived ability development for eight of the 18 skills examined. Similar to the findings for the degree satisfaction items, the significant results of the chi-squared analyses did not yield large practical phi coefficient differences between the groups. Effect size estimates ranged from .01 to .09, indicating small differences between enhancers and switchers in terms of perceived skill improvement.

### Enhancers

Career enhancers were more likely to report that they had little or no skill improvement for many of the abilities examined in this study. Specifically, abilities such as the integration of information, strategic thinking, and technological skills were perceived as areas of little development for the enhancers. When combined with the findings regarding degree satisfaction, it is possible that for enhancers their perception of only slight skill improvement is related to their lower satisfaction with the degree. Another reason for low satisfaction with skills improvements among enhancers might be that the programs do not sufficiently address the skills that they wish to develop.

### Switchers

Career switchers more often reported greater skill improvement for 17 of the 18 areas examined in this study. Switchers also indicated more often that they had developed a great deal or good amount of skill in integrating a wide variety of information, thinking strategically and analytically, making decisions with imperfect information, solving quantitative problems, specializing in technological skills, communicating orally, and becoming culturally sensitive. The largest difference in perceived skill improvement between switchers and enhancers involved the areas of technological skill

development for their specialties. Career switchers were more likely to report that they had developed a great deal or good amount in skills related to their specialties. Increased career satisfaction for career switchers is likely tied to attaining the skill set required for their career goals.

**Table 5: Cross Classification of Skill Development and Career Goal**

| Skill | Goal | No Improvement | Some | Improvement |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ability to adapt/change to new situations ($\chi^2 = 5.71$, df = 2, p = .06; Phi = .04) | Enhancer | 147 (6.6%) | 434 (19.5%) | 1,648 (73.9%) |
| | | *2.0* | *1.0* | *-2.0* |
| | Switcher | 120 (5.2%) | 423 (18.3%) | 1,771 (76.55) |
| | | *-2.0* | *-1.0* | *2.0* |
| Ability to integrate information from a wide variety of sources* ($\chi^2 = 13.08$, df = 2, p < .01; Phi = .05) | Enhancer | 137 (6.1%) | 420 (18.6%) | 1,697 (75.3%) |
| | | *2.1* | *2.7* | *-3.6* |
| | Switcher | 110 (4.7%) | 368 (15.6%) | 1,874 (79.7%) |
| | | *-2.1* | *-2.7* | *3.6* |
| Analytical thinking* ($\chi^2 = 7.40$, df = 2, p = .03; Phi = .04) | Enhancer | 131 (6.0%) | 389 (17.8%) | 1,662 (76.2%) |
| | | *1.3* | *2.2* | *-2.7* |
| | Switcher | 117 (5.1%) | 351 (15.3%) | 1,820 (79.5%) |
| | | *-1.3* | *-2.2* | *2.7* |
| Strategic thinking* ($\chi^2 = 9.97$, df = 2, p = .01; Phi = .05) | Enhancer | 99 (4.3%) | 261 (11.4%) | 1,935 (84.3%) |
| | | *2.5* | *1.8* | *-2.9* |
| | Switcher | 71 (3.0%) | 235 (9.8%) | 2,096 (87.3%) |
| | | *-2.5* | *-1.8* | *2.9* |
| Ability to make decisions with imperfect information* ($\chi^2$ 19.42, df = 2, p < .01; Phi = .07) | Enhancer | 167 (7.3%) | 483 (21.2%) | 1,628 (71.5%) |
| | | *1.8* | *3.8* | *-4.4* |
| | Switcher | 143 (6.0%) | 402 (16.9%) | 1,835 (77.1%) |
| | | *-1.8* | *-3.8* | *4.4* |
| Global thinking ($\chi^2 = 5.27$, p = .07; Phi = .03) | Enhancer | 192 (8.4%) | 419 (18.4%) | 1,664 (73.1%) |
| | | *1.7* | *1.4* | *-2.2* |
| | Switcher | 169 (7.1%) | 400 (16.9%) | 1,798 (76.0%) |
| | | *-1.7* | *-1.4* | *2.2* |
| Quantitative skills * ($\chi^2 = 9.61$, df = 2, p < .01; Phi = .05) | Enhancer | 193 (8.7%) | 521 (23.6%) | 1,498 (67.7%) |
| | | *1.0* | *2.7* | *-3.1* |
| | Switcher | 181 (7.9%) | 464 (20.2%) | 1,652 (71.9%) |
| | | *-1.0* | *-2.7* | *3.1* |
| Technological skills for your specialty* ($\chi^2 = 31.78$, df = 2, p < .01; Phi = .09) | Enhancer | 522 (24.7%) | 668 (31.6%) | 921 (43.6%) |
| | | *3.7* | *2.7* | *-5.6* |
| | Switcher | 457 (20.1%) | 633 (27.9%) | 1,182 (52.0%) |
| | | *-3.7* | *-2.7* | *5.6* |

| Table 5: Cross Classification of Skill Development and Career Goal | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Skill | Goal | No Improvement | Some | Improvement |
| Initiative/risk-taking ability ($\chi^2$ = 5.10, df = 2, p = .08; Phi = .03) | Enhancer | 233 (10.3%) | 572 (25.3%) | 1,455 (64.4%) |
| | | *1.5* | *1.4* | *-2.2* |
| | Switcher | 211 (9.0%) | 552 (23.6%) | 1,580 67.4%) |
| | | *-1.5* | *-1.4* | *2.2* |
| Interpersonal skills ($\chi^2$ = 4.40, df = 2, p = .11; Phi = .03) | Enhancer | 200 (9.1%) | 543 (24.7%) | 1,451 (66.1%) |
| | | *.6* | *1.9* | *-2.1* |
| | Switcher | 196 (8.6%) | 509 (22.4%) | 1,571 (69.0%) |
| | | *-.6* | *-1.9* | *2.1* |
| Oral communication skills* ($\chi^2$ = 6.49, df = 2, p = .04; Phi = .04) | Enhancer | 182 (8.2%) | 481 (21.7%) | 1,552 (70.1%) |
| | | *1.0* | *2.2* | *-2.5* |
| | Switcher | 170 (7.4%) | 438 (19.1%) | 1,684 (73.5%) |
| | | *-1.0* | *-2.2* | *2.5* |
| Written communication skills ($\chi^2$ = .29, df = 2, p = .87; Phi = .01) | Enhancer | 257 (12.0%) | 566 (26.4%) | 1,319 (61.1%) |
| | | *-.2* | *.5* | *-.3* |
| | Switcher | 268 (12.2%) | 565 (25.7%0 | 1,364 (62.1%) |
| | | *.2* | *-.5* | *.3* |
| Creative problem-solving skills ($\chi^2$ = 4.54, df = 2, p = .10; Phi = .03) | Enhancer | 184 (8.2%) | 457 (20.4%) | 1,604 (71.4%) |
| | | *1.9* | *.8* | *-1.8* |
| | Switcher | 158 (6.7%) | 456 (19.5%) | 1,728 (73.8%) |
| | | *-1.9* | *-.8* | *1.8* |
| Leadership skills ($\chi^2$ = 2.47, df = 2, p = .29; Phi = .02) | Enhancer | 186 (8.2%) | 440 (19.4%) | 1,647 (72.5%) |
| | | *1.6* | *-.3* | *-.6* |
| | Switcher | 164 (7.0%) | 465 (19.7%) | 1,726 (73.3%) |
| | | *-1.6* | *.3* | *.6* |
| Project management/implementation skills ($\chi^2$ = 3.66, df = 2, p = .16; Phi = .03) | Enhancer | 265 (11.8%) | 574 (25.5%) | 1,408 (62.7%) |
| | | *1.8* | *.3* | *-1.4* |
| | Switcher | 237 (10.1%) | 589 (25.2%) | 1,512 (64.7%) |
| | | *-1.8* | *-.3* | *1.4* |

| Table 5: Cross Classification of Skill Development and Career Goal | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Skill | Goal | No Improvement | Some | Improvement |
| Recruiting, managing, and maintaining staff ($\chi^2$ = .14, df = 2, p = .93; Phi = .01) | Enhancer | 437 (19.1%) | 696 (30.4%) | 1,154 (50.5%) |
| | | *.0* | *-.4* | *.3* |
| | Switcher | 455 (19.1%) | 736 (30.9%) | 1,190 (50.0%) |
| | | *.0* | *.4* | *-.3* |
| Cultural sensitivity and awareness* ($\chi^2$ = 22.16, df = 2, p < .01; Phi = .07) | Enhancer | 321 (14.8%) | 568 (26.1%) | 1,287 (59.1%) |
| | | *1.9* | *3.8* | *-4.7* |
| | Switcher | 289 (12.8%) | 479 (21.3%) | 1,486 (65.9%) |
| | | *-1.9* | *-3.8* | *4.7* |
| Skills in corporate ethical conduct ($\chi^2$ = .87, df = 2, p = .65; Phi = .01) | Enhancer | 311 (14.1%) | 560 (25.3%) | 1,340 (60.6%) |
| | | *.1* | *.9* | *-.8* |
| | Switcher | 325 (14.0%) | 562 (24.2%) | 1,436 (61.8%) |
| | | *-.1* | *-.9* | *.8* |

Note. Italicized values represent the adjusted residuals for testing independence.
*p < .05

## Summary

This study indicates that career switchers are more likely than career enhancers to be extremely or very satisfied with their degree programs and to believe that they have developed greater skills as a result of attaining their MBA. When citizenship (world region) was examined, Asian and Latin American citizens more often indicated that they were career switchers, and U.S. citizens more often indicated that they were career enhancers. Statistically significant differences between enhancers and switchers were found for several of the satisfaction outcomes and skill development areas. When practical significance was examined, the differences between the two career goal groups were not as noteworthy. These results indicate that differences in career goals are related to satisfaction with an MBA degree, and from a global perspective, citizenship can be a relevant factor in determining the career goals of an MBA student.

## Career Goals and Citizenship (World Region)

Respondents were grouped based on their citizenship (world region) to determine whether different citizenship subgroups were more likely to be career enhancers or career switchers. Subgroups were created for world regions with at least 50 respondents. Five world regions were identified for the 4,678 respondents: Asia, Canada, Europe, Latin America, and the United States (U.S.). A chi-squared test revealed that career goals significantly differed by citizenship ($\chi^2$ = 42.50, p < .05, df = 4). However, the phi coefficient for this analysis (.10) indicated that there was only a small association between citizenship and career goals despite the significant $\chi^2$ statistic.

Table 6 presents the cross classification of citizenship by career goal. The observed frequencies demonstrate the number of respondents in each classification, and the

adjusted residuals provide an approximation of fit between the expected and observed frequencies. The percentages provide the proportion of students within a given citizenship subgroup that are enhancers or switchers. For this example, the adjusted residuals indicated that career goals were related to citizenship for the Asian, Latin American, and U.S. subgroups. Asian and Latin American students are more likely to switch careers upon graduation rather than enhance their pre-degree occupations. Conversely, U.S. citizens were more likely to return to their pre-degree professions with the hopes of becoming more marketable.

**Table 6: Cross Classification of Citizenship (World Region) and Career Goal**

| Career Goal | Asia | Canada | Europe | Latin America | United States |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Enhancer | 282 (40.5%) | 100 (46.7%) | 188 (44.9%) | 78 (41.1%) | 1653 (52.3%) |
| | *-4.8* | *-.6* | *-1.7* | *-2.2* | *6.7* |
| Switcher | 415 (59.5%) | 114 (53.3%) | 231 (55.1%) | 112 (58.9%) | 1505 (47.7%) |
| | *4.8* | *.6* | *1.7* | *2.2* | *-6.7* |

Note. Italicized values represent the adjusted residuals for testing independence.

## Discussion

Although the differences in satisfaction and perceived skill improvement were not large, there may have been additional variables that were not measured by the current study. It is conceivable that—within the career enhancers and career switchers categories—satisfaction levels and perceived skill levels also differ by citizenship (world region). For instance, Asian career switchers may have been more satisfied with their MBA degree outcomes than U.S. career switchers. It could also be the case that citizenship is more important than career goals in determining satisfaction.

Slightly lower satisfaction among enhancers also may be related to age and prior work experience. Demographic results indicated that enhancers tend to be older than switchers. Research further revealed that enhancers were usually part-time or executive MBA students who had already achieved some expertise in their vocations. It is conceivable, then, that enhancers often set their expectations unrealistically high because they have already accomplished so much in their careers. Career switchers, on the other hand, tend to have less experience and expertise. Thus, it is not surprising that switchers may observe a greater increase in their skills and be more satisfied upon completion of their MBA degrees than their enhancer counterparts.

Respondents from Asia and Latin America may be more likely to be career switchers as a means to relocate after obtaining their MBA degrees. The MBA degree might be seen as a way to increase career options, providing the opportunity to excel in a path not taken before. For respondents who seek employment outside their native countries, it is plausible that different job markets and economies affect their career goals. Citizenship (world region) group comparisons did not reveal a significant difference between career-oriented motivations of the respondents. Research instead shows that citizenship is not an imperative factor in making choices about any vocation. From a global perspective, a multitude of MBA students are working hard to achieve success in management education. However, the motivating factors for these MBA students differ, and their goals are not limited by factors such as their locations or citizenships.

Additionally, this study only examined two career goals, career enhancement and career switching. There are a number of other career goals and related variables that could influence the decision to attain an MBA. For instance, students entering graduate programs directly from undergraduate programs tend to have little work experience, which may limit their ability to select meaningful career goals. Consequently, this group's goals may be different than the ones examined in this study, and

their satisfaction with their degrees and their perceived improvement of skills may be more or less related to these unknown goals.

Overall, the small differences in satisfaction and skill improvement indicated that career switchers and enhancers were similar on these factors. Future research should examine other potential differences between students with these goals, as well as the characteristics of students who have alternative goals.

## Contact Information

For questions or comments regarding study findings, methodology or data, please contact the GMAC® Research and Development department at research@gmac.com.

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