



# REPORT

## THE STATE OF TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOCIAL SECTOR

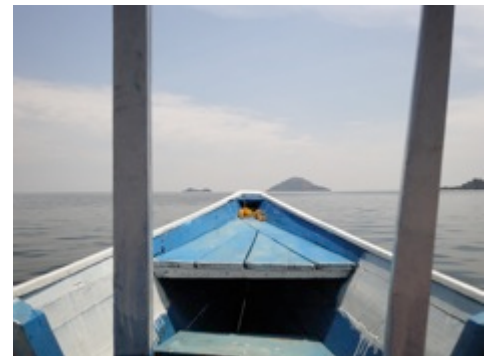
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## Executive Summary

- ① Numerous reports show that employers find it difficult to recruit because of the skills gap between what employers expect and what recent graduates can provide. The Amani Institute surveyed both employers and employees at leading organizations in the social sector to determine the nature of the skills gap
- ① The core finding of this study was that the attributes employers most value in prospective employees are largely things not received from a typical university degree.
- ① For instance, academic and theoretical grounding—the one topic that almost all employees agree that universities are most equipped to teach—is not in the top five skills that employers (of all sizes and types) are looking for
- ① Employers consistently rank leadership and problem-solving initiative, project management skills (including program evaluation), and communication skills as more important than academic and analytical/quantitative skills
- ① In providing these types of skills, they believe that universities generally fare poorly.
- ① Employers and employees believe that the attributes needed for a successful employee are often best acquired through non-traditional means such as specialized workshops or living in a different country for 6 or more months



- ④ Regarding the preparation that employers are looking for in prospective employees, the type of education received is not as important to employers as extracurricular experience in the field. In other words, whether at a start-up or at the United Nations or anywhere in between, field experience and evidence of leadership matter more than what type of degree was received and from where.
- ④ When asked about the attributes of a good and bad employee, nearly all answers dealt with personality-based traits over specific skill-sets. For employers in the social sector then, who a person is matters a great deal, at least as much as what they know and what they can do.
- ④ Graduates might believe themselves to be more prepared for their jobs than they really are, or at least more prepared than they are in their employers' eyes. This leaves open the possibility of overconfidence—a trait that employers especially dislike.
- ④ Since the person matters as much as their skills, the education of change makers must needs to focus on that aspect too. Opportunities for leadership development, problem-solving skill, empathy, cross-cultural fluency, and self-mastery need to be systematically baked in to higher education training programs.
- ④ Given that universities as currently structured cannot bridge the skills gap between employers and employees, graduates should look to supplement their studies with other types of training opportunities (long-term international experience, diverse travels, field internships, and so on) to fully prepare themselves for the rigors and challenges of the field, and to fill the gap between universities and employers.

**Table of Contents**

<b>I. Introduction: The Challenge</b>	2
<b>II. Literature Review: What Experts are Saying</b>	3
<b>III. Survey Respondent Demographics</b>	5
<b>IV. Survey Analysis</b>	6
A. The Most and Least Important Attributes for Career Success	6
B. Acquiring the Key Attributes for Success	8
C. International Experience and Internships	10
D. University Report Card	11
E. Types of “Education” Most Valued by Employers	14
F. Best and Worst Employees	17
G. Most and Least Useful University Classes	17
<b>V. Implications</b>	18
A. The Education Gap	18
B. Who You Are Matters More than What You Can Do	19
<b>VI. Conclusion: The Way Forward</b>	20
<b>VII. Appendices</b>	23



## I. Introduction: The Challenge

**D**espite high unemployment rates around the world, employers constantly complain that they find it difficult to hire suitable talent. This problem spans all sectors of the economy, but our concern here is with work and organizations that seek to solve social problems around the world. And within that sector, we focused on organizations that run programs to deliver a set of services to populations in need *or* fund those programs *or* build leadership capacity for people in those programs. We did not target organizations whose primary aim is research or analysis, for which the current academic system is reasonably well equipped to cater to. (Indeed, some of the survey results bear that out, even though it was not our focus)

Whilst most of these organizations are non-profits, there is a growing group of “social businesses” entering the sector – organizations whose mission is to address a social problem but who operate as a for-profit business. Yet, *regardless of how they are financed*, the problem remains the same. They are faced with the prospect of hiring recent graduates whose educations rarely afford them the skills needed to meet the demands of the current global economy. There is a growing awareness of the mismatch between the skills offered by prospective employees (derived from their formal educations) and the skills that employers prefer. One CEO of a renowned non-profit in the United States even went so far as to say, “Our biggest constraint to growth is not funding – it is finding the right people.”

**What does this job market want? What are the skills and experiences students can acquire to make an employer feel they could be a successful change maker? And what type of training would get us there?**

## II. Literature Review: What Experts are Saying

**T**hese questions are increasingly on people’s minds as the global economy shrinks and the skills called upon in the modern-day workforce shift all the time. Thus, it is no surprise that several influential and thought-leader organizations have expended considerable resources in studying these trends.

*The Economist’s* Special Report in September 2011 called “The Great Mismatch,”<sup>1</sup> explained how “globalization and technological innovation are bringing about long-term changes in the world economy that are altering the structure of the labor market.” The traditional university preparation that most graduates receive is no longer enough for the changing demands of the global market. As a result, employers cannot find suitable hires and graduates cannot find suitable jobs. *The Economist* argues that “lowering this new natural rate of unemployment will require structural reforms, such as changing education to ensure that people enter work equipped with the sort of skills firms are willing to fight over.” There is a growing need for a different model of education that addresses the skills that current graduates lack. Universities are excellent at creating academics, but would-be practitioners need to understand that academic research is not sufficient preparation for employment and they will need to supplement their traditional education in order to meet the changing demands of employers.

A 2010 Manpower report titled “Navigating the Changing World of Work,”<sup>2</sup> also addresses employer hesitancy to hire from the widely available pool of recent graduates. Although “unemployment is persistently high in developed and even in many developing countries”, the say, “organizations worldwide report difficulty filling key positions.” Employers cannot find graduates with the necessary skill sets to function in the new world economy because “there are not enough sufficiently skilled people in the right places at the right times.” These new skills encompass both hard and soft skills, as “it is vital to recognize the importance of soft skills, rather than focusing only on candidate assessments on the easier-to-measure hard skills.”

The McKinsey Institute’s 2010 report, “What Happens Next,”<sup>3</sup> considers the gap between employers and employees “a growing talent mismatch” caused by Western countries’

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<sup>1</sup> *The Economist*. “The Great Mismatch.” 11 Sept. 2011: Print.

<sup>2</sup> *Navigating the Changing World of Work*. Milwaukee: Manpower, 2010. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Bisson, Peter, et al. *What Happens Next?* McKinsey, 2010. Print.



inability to create a workforce optimized for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century global economy. “Companies across the globe consistently cite talent as their top constraint to growth.” They recognize that “governments aren’t moving fast enough to educate workers with the skills needed to meet the productivity imperative, and businesses can’t afford to wait.” To address this talent mismatch, prospective employees need to recognize the skills they lack and find solutions to address those problems.

A US Institute of Peace study in 2010 titled “Bridging the Gap”<sup>4</sup> also details the problems of graduates entering the field of international conflict resolution and peacebuilding with only a university-curated skill-set. USIP found that “graduate level academic institutions are not adequately preparing their students for careers in international peace and conflict management.” Specifically, a well-balanced curriculum must include “more applied skills, cross-sector coursework, and opportunities to gain field experience.” Non-traditional skills such as field experience and project management are every bit as vital to a graduate as academic research skills and other traditional university preparations. Specifically, employers find that “having overseas experience with strong experiential components is the most valuable asset,” albeit one that a traditional university experience does not provide. The study found that while over 90 percent of faculty and staff and the surveyed universities felt that their graduates were well-prepared for their careers, over 50 percent of employers felt otherwise.

A 2010 study from the Institute for the Future, “Future Work Skills,”<sup>5</sup> claims that a greater emphasis must be placed on non-traditional skill-sets because they have been proven to be better suited for today’s global economy. The recent trend away from traditional management/organizational theories and towards “a new generation of organizational concepts and work skills” creates a work environment suited for the technological and social innovations that employees are expected to cope with. In this view, some of the most important new work skills needed to operate in the global workplace include the ability to determine deeper meanings, social intelligence, adaptive thinking and cross-cultural competency. Unfortunately, these skills are not developed because “educational institutions at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels, are largely the products of technology infrastructure and social circumstances of the past.”

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<sup>4</sup> Zelizer, Craig, et al. *Bridging the Gap*. US Institute of Peace, 2010. Print.

<sup>5</sup> Davies, Anna, et al. *Future Work Skills 2020*. Palo Alto: Institute for the Future, 2010. Print.

One of the leading organizations in providing young people with non-traditional educational experiences is AIESEC. After a recent initiative, AIESEC Canada published an op-ed where they reported that what companies believe separate effective employees from the rest was excellent “soft skills,” which “can’t be learned through books”, and that “[the] university system is not providing opportunities to acquire them.”<sup>6</sup> These soft skills include out-of-the-box strategic thinking, being genuine, networking, people management, and teamwork. There is a critical gap in educational methodology that must be addressed so that employers can hire the talent they need for their organizations to function effectively.

### III. Survey Respondent Demographics

In order to understand the nature of that gap, the Amani Institute conducted the following study. The Amani Institute surveyed 43 executive-level leaders or recruiting directors (53% male and 47% female) in 34 leading organizations in the social sector. Similarly, 39 “future leaders” – defined as graduates of higher education institutions with less than three years of work experience – working in 35 leading organizations in the social sector (38% male and 62% female) answered a slightly different survey. The organizations of both sets of survey respondents fall across the following six sector categories:

- ④ Government and Multilateral Agencies
- ④ International Organizations and NGOs
- ④ Foundations and Donors
- ④ International and Local Non-Profits
- ④ Social Enterprises/Businesses, and
- ④ Organizations Supporting Social Sector Leadership.

**(For a full breakdown of the organizations surveyed, see Appendix A.)**

For the survey, the Amani Institute targeted a sample of organizations that individually and collectively comprise some of the most respected names in this field. Nearly half the organizations (49%) employ more than 300 staff (including contractors and consultants), and another 32% employ more than 30 people. Not surprisingly then, the survey respondents work for organizations making an impact all around the world: nearly 60% operate in more

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<sup>6</sup> Ruggiero, Cassandra. "Soft Skills." *Arbitrage*. 25 Nov. 2012. Web. 21 Dec. 2012. <[http://www.arbitragemagazine.com/general/soft\\_skills\\_employment/](http://www.arbitragemagazine.com/general/soft_skills_employment/)>.





than 30 countries and another 16% work in the range of 6 to 30 countries. Just under 20% of them remain focused on their home country,

Coming to the future leaders surveyed, 90% of them have at least a master’s degree, while the rest have at least a bachelor’s degree. For the most part, they have majored in international affairs-related fields of study such as conflict resolution, diplomacy, government, and international relations. While most of them attended universities in the US and UK, there were also respondents from universities ranging from India to Costa Rica, China to the Netherlands, and Switzerland to South Africa. In addition to their diversity, these future leaders also attended some of the most famous universities in the world including the University of Oxford, the London School of Economics, and American Ivy Leagues such as Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Brown University.

#### **IV. Survey Analysis**

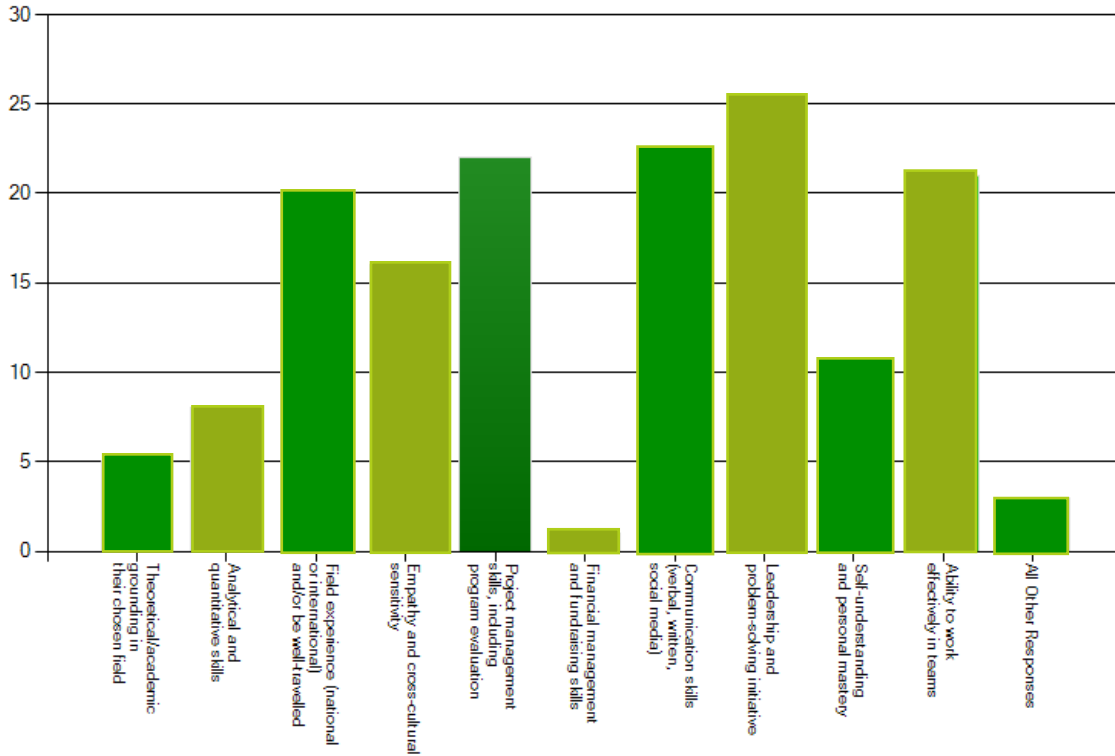
##### *A. The Most and Least Important Attributes for Career Success*

When asked about the most important attributes a graduate must have in order to be an effective practitioner in the field (each was asked to list their top 3 attributes), employers’ choices were:

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Highest Priority Attributes</b>	<b>Lowest Priority Attributes</b>
1	Leadership and problem-solving initiative (58%)	Financial management and fundraising skills (2%)
2	Project management skills including program evaluation (51%)	Fluency in more than one language (7%)
3	Communications skills (51%)	Theoretical/academic grounding in an employee’s chosen field (12%)
4	The ability to work effectively in teams (49%)	
5	Field experience and/or being well travelled (47%)	



What are the three MOST important attributes that you believe any master’s graduate must have in order to be an effective practitioner in the social sector? Please only choose your top 3



Employers also stated that they would like to see more information processing and research ability, as well as evidence of dedication, determination, and resilience in the face of difficulty or uncertainty. They also emphasized that writing skills are a very important component of communication skills, and the need for relevant field experience that builds hard skills.



*“Prospective employees need **relevant field experience** that builds hard skills such as **technical work** or **project management**. Work experience in general is very helpful, too many students go straight from undergrad to Master’s never having a real job.”*

**-Lisa Bender, Specialist, UNICEF**

These preferences remain relatively stable regardless of organizational size. However, when separated by age, employers tended to have some interesting differences in their preferences. It was striking to note that as employers increased in age (and gain more experience), they begin to rank theoretical/academic grounding with increasingly less importance. Younger employers rated both academic theory and financial management skills as being important while disregarding the individual’s own self-alignment; it was almost the reverse with older employers.

#### *B. Acquiring the Key Attributes for Success*

Both employers and future leaders were fairly consistent in their opinions of the best methods to acquire the necessary attributes for success in the social sector. For instance, the majority believe that theoretical/academic grounding (86% and 92% respectively) and analytical and quantitative skills (61% and 64%) are best received from a master’s program, but that field experience should be acquired by living in a different country for 6 months or more (54% and 62%) and project management skills would come best from doing an internship (63% and 56%). *For detailed graphs please contact the Amani Institute.*



Putting these slices of analysis together, we see the following:

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Key Attribute</b>	<b>How Best to Acquire - EMPLOYERS (Majority Opinion %)</b>	<b>How Best to Acquire - FUTURE LEADERS (Majority Opinion %)</b>
1.	Leadership and problem solving initiative	Travel widely and have diverse life experiences (37%)	Internship (28%) OR Live in a different country for 6 months or more (26%)
2.	Project management skills including program evaluation	Internship (63%)	Internship (56%)
3.	Communications skills	Internship OR Independent Course/Workshop (both 26%)	Live in a different country for 6 months or more (OR Travel widely and have diverse life experiences (both 26%))
4.	Ability to work effectively in teams	Internship (52%)	Internship (50%)
5.	Field experience and/or being well travelled	Live in a different country for 6 months or more (54%)	Live in a different country for 6 months or more (62%)
6.	Empathy and Cross-cultural sensitivity	Travel widely and have diverse life experiences (56%)	Travel widely and have diverse life experiences (56%)
7.	Self-Understanding and Personal Mastery	Travel widely and have diverse life experiences (72%)	Travel widely and have diverse life experiences (59%)
8.	Analytical and quantitative skills	Master's degree (61%)	Master's degree (64%)
9.	Theoretical/academic grounding in chosen field	Master's degree (86%)	Master's degree (92%)
10.	Fluency in more than one language	Live in a different country for 6 months or more (66%)	Live in a different country for 6 months or more (64%)
11.	Financial management and fundraising skills	Independent Course/Workshop (63%)	Independent Course/Workshop (51%)

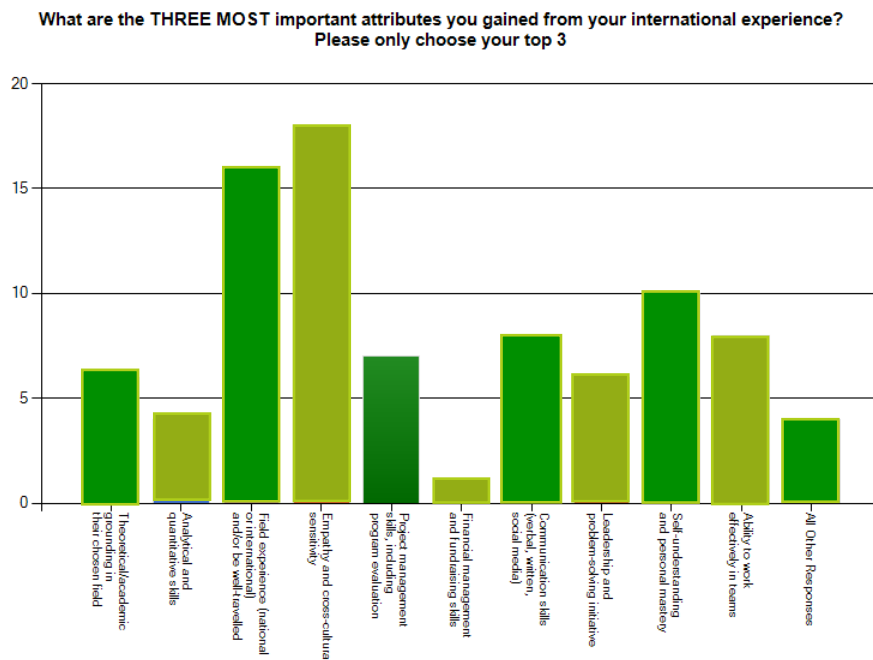
Thus, universities have a clear advantage in teaching theoretical/academic grounding and analytical and quantitative skills, but the remaining attributes that employers are explicitly looking for – leadership and problem-solving initiative, project management and communications skills, ability to work effectively in teams, and field experience – are best

taught through a wide variety of travels, living in a different country for 6 months or more, internships, and independent courses/workshops.

***In other words, what employers most value in prospective employees are largely things that are not received from a typical university degree.***

### C. International Experience and Internships

Future leaders were specifically asked about their international experiences during their degree - three out of every five (61%) respondents had completed some form of international experience, with the majority of those experiences having to do with academic research. The duration of these experiences varied from 2 weeks to an entire year, but most clustered around 1-2 months.



They were also asked about their internships during their degree - six out of every seven (86%) future leader respondents had completed an internship during their degree.

Comparing the top attributes gained by future leaders when pursuing an internship and/or international experience during their degree, we see the following ranking.

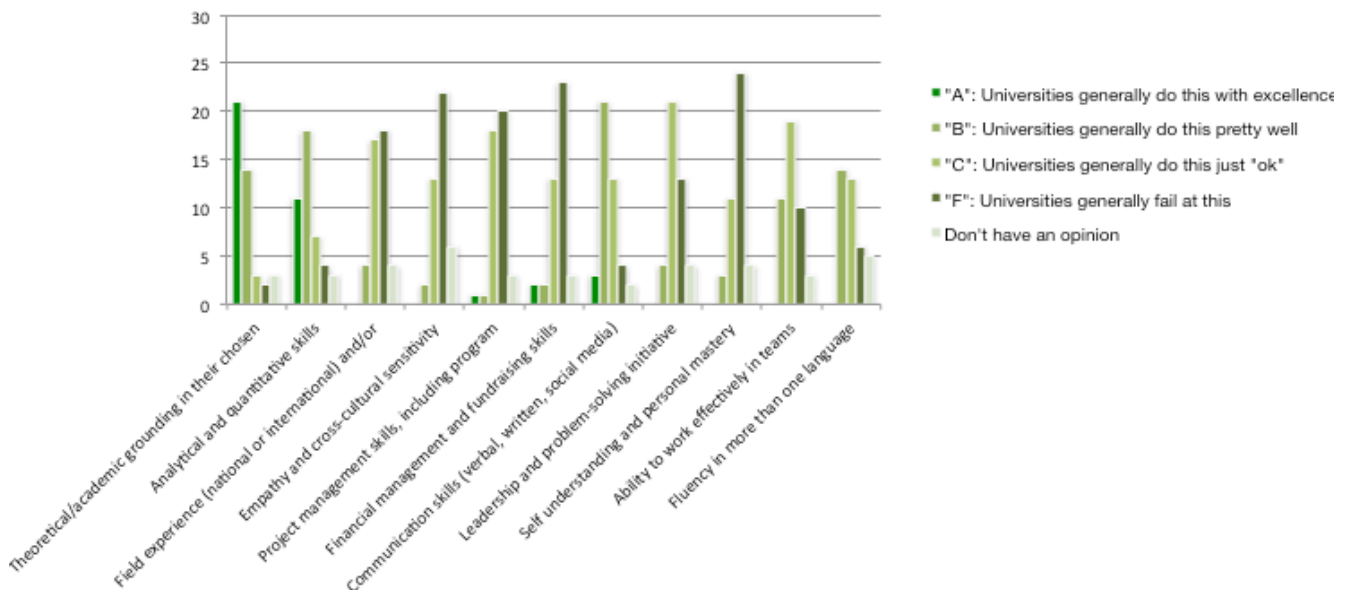
#### D. University Report Card

Rank	Attributes Gained from International Experience	Attributes Gained from Internship
1.	Empathy and cross-cultural sensitivity (62%)	Communication skills (40%)
2.	Field experience and/or being well travelled (55%)	Field experience and/or being well travelled (37%)
3.	Self-understanding and personal mastery (35%)	Leadership and problem-solving initiative (31%)

#### Employers

Although universities are capable of teaching theoretical/academic grounding and analytical and quantitative skills at a high level, they fail at providing the skills that employers are most looking for at that same level.

Given your experience with recent graduates, please "grade" the performance of universities in providing each attribute needed by young professionals.

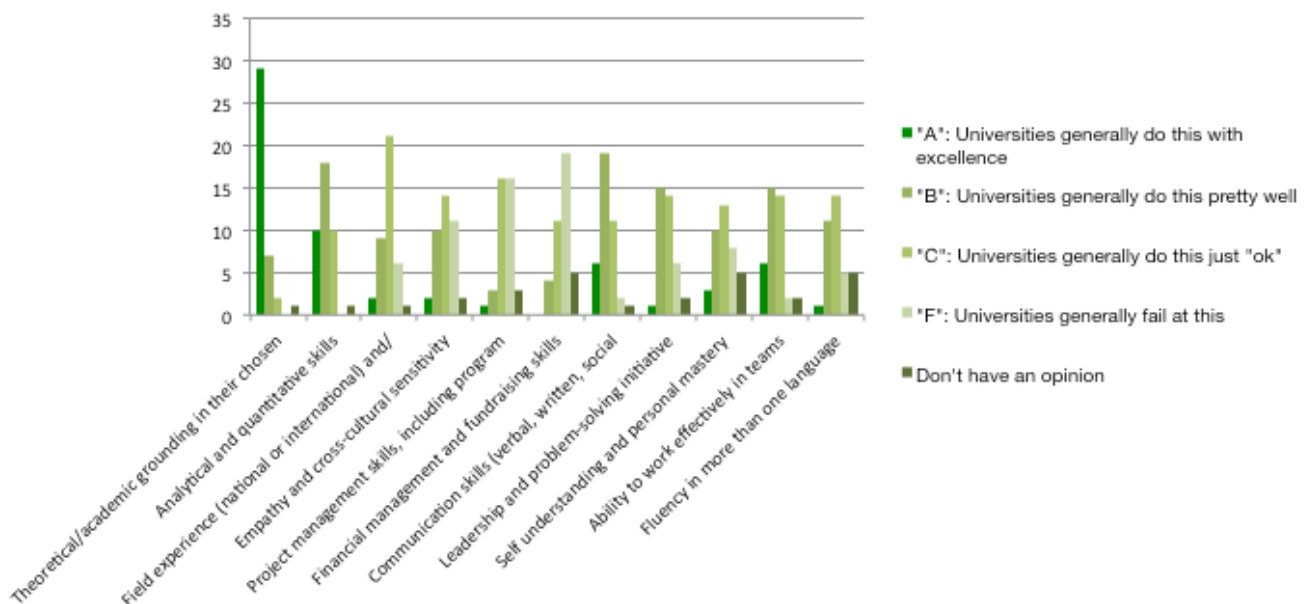




## Future Leaders

When asked to reflect on the work experience they had had since they graduated, and then to look back on the skills they acquired during their master’s degree, future leaders rated their universities’ performance as follows:

**Given your own educational experience, grade the effectiveness of universities in providing the critical skills and attributes needed by young professionals.**



Future leaders also credited universities for providing excellent critical thinking skills, writing skills, advanced statistical training, and access to a network of peers that they will call upon throughout their careers. On the other hand, they felt that universities lacked the ability to provide relevant career guidance, hard skills such as program evaluation, and relevant international experience.



“I think the most important...skills are best learned in an immersive environment - i.e. in the country or context that is being studied. It is harder to build depth of skills in these areas on a remote basis.”

**-Sushant Mukherjee, Manager of Financial Planning and Analysis, Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation**

Comparing the importance of the attribute with the performance of universities in delivering that attribute across both sets of respondents, we get the following chart:

Rank	Key Attribute	Employers' Grade (Majority Opinion)	Future Leaders' Grade (Majority Opinion)
1.	Leadership and problem solving initiative	C	B/C
2.	Project management skills including program evaluation	F	C/F
3.	Communications skills	B	B
4.	Ability to work effectively in teams	C	B/C
5.	Field experience and/or being well travelled	F	C
6.	Empathy and Cross-cultural sensitivity	F	C/F
7.	Self-Understanding and Personal Mastery	F	C
8.	Analytical and quantitative skills	B	B
9.	Theoretical/academic grounding in chosen field	A	A
10.	Fluency in more than one language	B/C	C
11.	Financial management and fundraising skills	F	F

Thus, **while universities help their graduates well in areas such as theoretical/academic grounding, these are areas which employers do not consider very essential.** Leadership and problem-solving initiative—the number one attribute that employers are looking for—is taught at a C level, say 50% of employers. Project management is considered the second-most critical skill though universities provide this skill at a much lower level (C or F level) than the academic grounding that they provide. Other



important skills that universities don't appear to provide well are an understanding of the social sector, innovation, strategic thinking, and presentation skills.

*“Another area where universities need to improve is to **build the confidence in students for how to approach the practical "work" reality, to relate the structure and method ingrained in students for academic pursuits to the much less structured and much more "context-driven" reality of the work world.**”*

**-Thais Lopes, Consultant, World Bank**

Although both employers and future leaders were highly critical of universities' performance in providing the skills that the workplace need, **neither group begrudged universities for their failure to provide these essential skills.**

**Some suggested that it is not the university's responsibility to provide these skills; the employee must make sure she acquires these skills through a combination of the other formats outlined above. Several also believe that master's degrees are to provide an intellectual grounding from which to then build a working career, something that universities do provide with excellence**

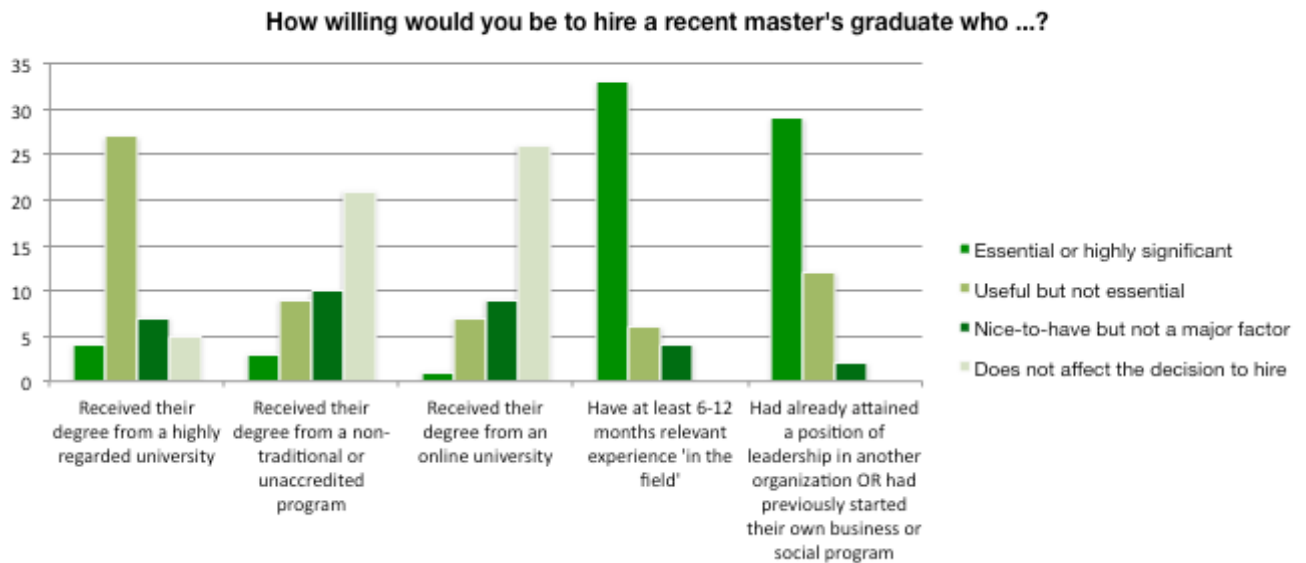
#### *E. Types of "Education" Most Valued by Employers*

##### Employers

Regarding the preparation that employers seek in prospective employees, the type of education received is not as important as extracurricular experience in the field. Most think that a degree from a highly ranked university is 'useful but not essential' (63%), while a degree from either a non-traditional program or an online university 'does not affect the



decision to hire' (49% and 61%, respectively). However, 6-12 months of field experience or attaining a leadership position in another organization are 'essential' (77% and 67% respectively).



It's worth noting that this holds true across all different sizes of organizations. In other words, ***whether you work at a start-up or at the United Nations or anywhere in between, your field experience and evidence of leadership matter more than what type of degree you received and from where.***

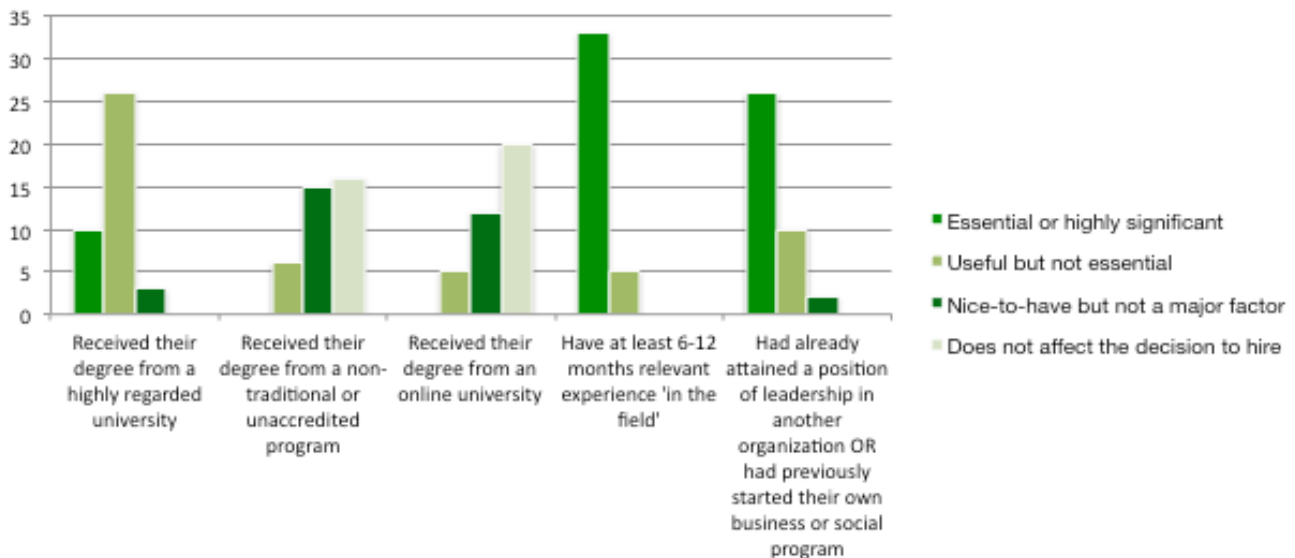
*“I am no longer impressed by academic backgrounds or credentials, and I pay little attention to them. **What ultimately stands out are the humility and respect towards realities and circumstances they are not familiar with. We deal with...people from too many different backgrounds, countries and cultures, and we have to be willing to make extra efforts often to get things done.**”*

***-Hernan Bonomo, Program Officer, Open Society Foundations***

## Future Leaders

Future leaders were asked a slightly different question: whether they would feel more or less prepared for the type of job they want given the range of ‘educational’ experiences available. Yet, their answers coincided with what employers said. In regards to the different types of preparation, future leaders believe that a degree from a high-ranking university is viewed as ‘useful but not essential’ (66.7%), and that a degree from a non-traditional program or online university ‘does not affect the decision to hire’ (43.2% and 54.1%, respectively). However, they have found that both 6-12 months field experience and having attained a leadership position in an organization are viewed by employers as ‘essential’ (86.8% and 68.4%, respectively).

**Would you feel more prepared to get the type of job you most desire if you...?**



Interestingly, while future leaders do seem to understand that extracurricular experience is more valuable to employers than university experience, the data suggests that they do not uniformly participate in the international experience and internships that contribute and lead towards these extracurricular activities.



## F. Best and Worst Employees

When asked about the qualities of their best employees, employers responded with the following types of attributes: humility, creativity, versatility, effective communication, positivity, sense of initiative, and willingness to learn and work hard.

*“Versatility—especially in young organizations, there is a great need to focus on recruiting staff one day, then leading Monitoring and Evaluation the next day. How do you train someone to be versatile? Also, comfort with uncertainty - we need not only to be comfortable with uncertainty (in our work, goals, and the situation around us), **but actually eager for that uncertainty**, knowing that it is the clay out of which progress is molded.”*

**-Eric Glustrom, President, Educate!**

Their worst employees tended to exhibit the following types of attributes: unenthusiastic, negativity, limited initiative, poor presentation skills, sense of entitlement, and overconfidence.

*“My most disappointing hires were those who were always coming up with reasons for why something won't work, waiting to be told what needs to be achieved, and performing the role as a task that needs completion as opposed to [an attitude of] achieving the goal.”*

**-Vishal Talreja, Executive Director, Dream a Dream**

What's most noticeable about these responses is the fact that *the majority of the best and worst **qualities are all personality-based traits***; they are about the employee as a person. Apart from communication skills, none of the other traits can really be classified as either knowledge or skills. For employers in the social sector then, **who a person is matters a great deal, at least as much as what they know and what they can do.**

*“We need people to have a **personal desire and passion** to be part of the change process, [with] a willingness to use their skills and energy to positively influence a specific field of interest.”*

**-Shona McDonald, Founder and Director, Shonaquip and Uhambo Foundation**

## G. Most and Least Useful University Classes

Although there was a wide variety in responses across the board, employees:





- Viewed classes on research methodologies and program evaluation as some of the *most useful* that they took during their master’s degree.
- Viewed classes like law, finance and various types of history courses as the *least helpful*.
- Wished their university offered more classes on program evaluation, project management, statistical analysis, and social innovation or social entrepreneurship.

## V. Implications

*“Social change work in practice is far less rumination about abstract theories of change and far more about rolling up your sleeves in the trenches. People seeking long-term futures in social change-related careers must understand that they should expect to work as hard and engage in as many difficult and frustrating tasks as counterparts in the private sector. Moments of inspiration, achievement, and recognition are much rarer than challenging or frustrating moments, or moments requiring tenacity, diligence and hard work.”*

**-Conor French, President & COO, Indego Africa**

### A. The Education Gap

The central and core finding of this study is as follows: ***although universities excel at providing a) high-quality academic grounding, and b) analytical skills, these are not primarily what employers of their graduates are looking for.*** Both attributes were ranked 9th and 8th respectively among 11 key attributes for social change practitioners. Instead, employers much prefer their incoming recruits to have high levels of leadership and problem-solving initiative, project management skills, and communication skills, and they don’t believe universities, on average do a good job of teaching those skills – they believe that universities provide these skills at a C or F level.



Instead, these highly sought after skills as well as the next three on the list (ability to work in teams, field experience, empathy and cross-cultural sensitivity) are best acquired through a combination of workshops, internships, diverse life experiences and extended periods of time away from one's home country – and not in a traditional university program. Because even when universities do offer opportunities for international field experience, often that experience is not relevant to students' career aspirations.

**Also, most international experiences last between 1-2 months, which employers believe is too short a time period to master any skills**

Furthermore, ***though employers consider field experience more important than academic grounding, over a third of our future leaders had not had any international experience in their academic career.***

For those future leaders who did have an international experience, they gained empathy and cross-cultural sensitivity, qualities that employers rank more highly than the academic grounding that forms the universities' core competence. And employees that had an internship during their master's program, regardless of whether they had international experience or not, found that they acquired analytical, quantitative, and project management skills. This suggests that ***a mix of international experiences and more traditional internship programs are necessary to fill the gap between universities employers.***

#### *B. Who You Are Matters More than What You Can Do*

From the rating of university performance, an intriguing finding was that future leaders are more likely than their employers to rate universities as capable of teaching needed skills. For instance, future leaders believe universities are only failing ("F" grade) at teaching financial management (which employers do not consider a critical skill), but employers think universities are also failing at providing field experience, empathy, project management, and self-understanding (which they do consider important skills); it's clear then that ***future leaders might believe themselves to be more prepared for their jobs than they really are, or at least more prepared than they are in their employers' eyes.*** This leaves open the possibility of overconfidence—a trait that employers have explicitly stated that they

dislike. Employers have found that overconfident employees do not perform well, and that we need a concerted effort to give prospective employees a realistic vision of their abilities.

But future leaders do recognize that their universities did not prepare them for the hard skills necessary in their professional settings or the soft skills necessary for effective practice. This lack of soft skills is visible in employers' descriptions of their best and worst employees. Employers find their best employees are actively engaged and full of initiative rather than being stuck in traditional ways of thinking and waiting to be told what to do. For that reason, it is important to expose students beyond the brick walls of their university using relevant field experience to build both their professional skills and their individual creativity and initiative. ***Significant international field experience is a key way of developing these desired personal qualities.***

## **VI. Conclusion: The Way Forward**

Coming back to our original questions: what does this job market want, what skills and experiences can students acquire to be a successful change maker, and what type of training would get us there – its clear that the most important things employers seek are in the realm of personal qualities (as are the most undesirable qualities) more than in the realm of specific knowledge or intellectual pedigree. Since *the person* matters as much as their skills, the education of change makers must needs to focus on that aspect too. ***Opportunities for leadership development, problem-solving, empathy, cross-cultural fluency, and self-mastery need to be systematically baked in to higher education training programs.***

Finally, as both employers and their recent hires recognize that universities are not structured in a way that enables them to provide the full range of skills that are needed in the workplace, it is clear that ***other types of training opportunities (long-term international experience, diverse travels, field internships, and so on) are necessary to fully prepare graduate students for the rigors and challenges of the field.***

*“I don't think universities are equipped to generate quality leadership. People coming from academia, or practitioners from specific fields have [shown] little understanding of what's needed for managing a project and a team of people working towards common goals, despite their knowledge of specific subjects.”*

***-Hernan Bonomo Program Officer, Open Society Foundations***

These results lead to the following conclusions for aspiring social change practitioners, educational institutions and employers in the social sector:

#### *Aspiring Social Change Practitioners*

- ④ Realize that classroom education is only the beginning of their professional training. Adults learn much more by doing than they do by listening and writing, something all employers already know.
- ④ Actively seek opportunities beyond the university to develop the personal qualities and skills in high demand by employers
- ④ Show courage in stepping out of comfort zones to achieve experience and excellence in the type of work desired

#### *Educational Institutions*

- ④ Accept that their traditional areas of excellence (academic grounding and analytical skill-building) are no longer sufficient preparation for the workforce
- ④ Move towards greater integration with the larger society so that classroom learning is more grounded in messy reality, thus giving students a greater understanding of their current ability to make change and where they need to further develop their skills
- ④ Seek partnerships with innovative training organizations that point to where the university itself needs to grow to stay relevant to society beyond academic research



### *Employer Organizations*

- ① Communicate more explicitly to students and universities that formal credentials are less important than personal qualities
- ① Move from internships to apprenticeships – insist on interns spending longer periods of time working, in order for both parties to gain more from the apprenticeship
- ① Advocate more explicitly with universities and policymakers for a shift in the way students are trained for their careers

## VII. Appendices

### Appendix A: Organizations Surveyed

#### Executives

#### Future Leaders

#### Government and Multilateral Agencies

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)  
 United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in  
 the DR Congo (MONUSCO)  
 US Peace Corps  
 The World Bank

The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)  
 United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)  
  
 United Nations Development Program (UNDP)  
 United Nations Volunteers (UNV)  
 The US Agency for International Development  
 (USAID)  
 US Institute for Peace (USIP)  
 The World Bank

#### International Organizations and NGOs

Food for the Hungry  
 Greenpeace  
 The International Federation for the Red Cross  
 Mercy Corps  
 People in Aid  
 Save the Children UK

Greenpeace  
 International Committee of the Red Cross  
 International Organization for Migration  
 Mercy Corps  
 Oxfam America  
 People in Aid  
 Save the Children UK

#### Organizations Supporting Social Change Leadership

AIESEC  
 Ashoka: Innovators for the Public  
 Atlas Corps  
 Forum for the Future  
 International Peace and Security Institute  
 The Salzburg Global Seminar  
 Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship

AIESEC  
 Ashoka: Innovators for the Public  
 Atlas Corps  
 Forum for the Future  
 International Peace and Security Institute  
 iVolunteer  
 The Salzburg Global Seminar  
 Tulane University Payson Center for  
 International Development



The World Economic Forum

**Foundations and Donors**

Grameen Foundation  
National Endowment for Democracy  
Open Society Foundations  
The Rockefeller Foundation  
The Young Foundation

The Acumen Fund  
National Endowment for Democracy  
The Young Foundation

**International and Local Non-Profits**

Dream a Dream  
Educate!  
International Center for Nonviolent Conflict

Child & Youth Finance International  
Dream a Dream  
Educate!

Polaris Project  
Teach for America  
Wildscreen & Wildscreen USA

Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation  
Innovations for Poverty Action  
Perkins School for the Blind  
Project on Justice in Times of Transition  
RTI International  
Search for Common Ground

**Social Enterprises**

Dialogue Social Enterprise  
Frontline SMS  
The Global Emergency Group  
Indego Africa  
The Peace and Collaborative Development Network  
Shonaquip  
Tribewanted

FrontlineSMS  
Indego Africa

## Appendix B: Content of Survey

### Survey to Executives

The two respondent groups received slightly different surveys. The survey to the executive-level respondents began by listing 11 critical attributes that employees might be expected to have, and then asking each respondent to pick their *top three*. These attributes were:

- ① Theoretical/academic grounding in their chosen field
- ① Analytical and quantitative skills
- ① Field experience (national or international) and/or being well-travelled
- ① Empathy and cross-cultural sensitivity
- ① Project management skills, including program evaluation
- ① Financial management and fundraising skills
- ① Communication skills (verbal, written, social media)
- ① Leadership and problem-solving initiative
- ① Self-understanding and personal mastery
- ① Ability to work effectively in teams
- ① Fluency in more than one language

Respondents were also given space to suggest other attributes they felt to be critical. They were also asked to list the key attributes (whether on this list or not) of the best recent graduate they had hired as well as the most disappointing recent graduate they had hired.

They were then asked to pick the best strategy for an aspiring practitioner wanting to gain these attributes. They could pick from the following list:

- ① Study it as part of a master's degree
- ① Take an independent course/workshop in that area
- ① Do an internship
- ① Live in a different country for 6 months or more
- ① Travel widely and/or have diverse life experiences

They were then asked to “grade” the performance of universities in providing these attributes to their students, on the following scale:



- "A": Universities generally do this with excellence
- "B": Universities generally do this pretty well
- "C": Universities generally do this just "ok"
- "F": Universities generally fail at this
- Don't have an opinion

Finally, executives were asked about the relative importance they assigned to the different types of educational backgrounds and experiences (on a four-point spectrum from highly significant to unimportant) of the people they wished to hire. The different educational backgrounds were as follows:

- Received their degree from a highly regarded university
- Received their degree from a non-traditional or unaccredited program
- Received their degree from an online university
- Have at least 6-12 months relevant experience 'in the field'
- Had already attained a position of leadership in another organization OR had previously started their own business or social program

### Survey to Future Leaders

In the survey to future leaders, defined as graduates of higher education institutions employed in leading organizations with less than three years of work experience, they were presented the same list of 11 key attributes and asked about the extent to which they gained each attribute from their internships or international experiences.

They were then asked, based on their professional experience after graduating, to pick their top three of the eleven attributes that universities both did and did not provide effectively. The goal behind this question was to understand both what these future leaders have learned is most important for long-term career success after they finished their degree as well as the extent to which their degree provided opportunities to gain or master those attributes.

Just like the executives, the future leaders were asked to choose from a range of options for gaining each of these attributes, from studying it in a formal degree



program to simply travelling widely and having diverse life experiences. And they too were asked to grade the performance of their universities in providing each of these attributes, using the same scale as the executives did. They were then also presented with the range of educational experiences (from getting a reputed degree to starting their own organization) and asked to choose which would have best prepared them for their ideal job.

Finally, the future leaders were asked to pick the most useful and least useful classes they took in their degree programs, as well as the one class they wished they had been able to take that they didn't.