



Improving Employability Skills Through Industry Oriented Education Programme: A Study among Freshers in Delhi-Ncr

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ABSTRACT

India, currently is facing an employment crunch since the graduates and the post graduates those are churned out every year are lacking in employability skills. Employability skills are considered to be non-technical which are essential in gaining employment and participate in the work force, however there is no consensus as of what constitutes employability skills. Hence it is of utmost importance to explore the key employability skills. This study endeavoured to explore key employability skills and also empirically tested the effectiveness of industry oriented education programme in improving the employability skills and in reducing the gap between the desired and actual level of employability skills. The study yielded a six factors' model for employability skills and the effectiveness of industry oriented training programme was also quite evident in improving the employability skills and in reducing the gap between the desired and actual level of employability skills.

KEYWORDS : Employability Skills, GAP Analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Reliability Analysis, Cronbach's Alpha, Radar Chart, T Test

INTRODUCTION

India's population is huge at 1.21 billion. It is fast expanding at a rate of 17% and integrating rapidly into the global economy. India is among the 'young' countries in the world, with the proportion of the work force in the age group of 15-59 years, increasing steadily. India has remarkable 60% of the total population available for working and contributing towards GDP. India is uniquely positioned to take advantage of this favorable demographic profile where 15-59 age brackets constitute of 64% of the population by 2021 (GOI, 2012). India has gradually evolved as a knowledge-based economy due to the abundance of capable, flexible and qualified human capital. With the constantly rising influence of globalization, India has immense opportunities to establish its distinctive position in the world. However, there is a need to further develop and empower the human capital to ensure the nation's global competitiveness. Despite the emphatic stress laid on education and training in this country, there is still a shortage of skilled manpower to address the mounting needs and demands of the economy.

Employability skills can also be defined as "skills required not only to gain employment but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contributes successfully to enterprise strategic decision. There is a common misperception in the society that the verbal meaning of employability is confined to the narrow meaning of a salaried job. Alternatively, it can be stated that the terminology employability implies to be employed as well as employment generating ability indicates entrepreneurial skill on doing an independent profession. Employability skills are skills that across a variety of jobs and life contexts. They are sometimes referred to as key skills, core skills, life skills, essential skills, key competencies, necessary skills, transferable skills.

According to The India Skills Report (2014), about 6 billion of young population are not employable. If researches are to be believed, then only 10% of the MBA graduates are employable despite robust demand (Assocham). Further researches also suggested that India today produces about a million engineers every year (1.5 million), and according to the research out of this number somewhere between a 20-33% bear the risk of being unemployed. National Vision Document of India @75, a report by CII, BCG and YII, India would require a supply of 700 million skilled work force so as to match the demand of the growing industries, however, the forecast according to a few industry re-

searches is there would be a gap of 75-80% in skilled workforce across various industries.

In short, one market will grow creating an increase in jobs and need for skilled manpower, but against the demand there would be a scarcity of skilled workforce.

Whether its behavioral skills, domain knowledge or communication skills. Corporates today want to have a framework to identify the skill levels of employees, firstly to identify if they fit for a particular job, secondly to take steps for developing these skills. Therefore, this research probes more into the problem of employability and also steps that should be taken to reduce the same or otherwise corporate industry of India will face a deep crisis of unemployable youth.

NEED OF THE STUDY

According to a very recent study by Chithra (2013), there is a strong need for awareness among the Indian graduates to know the employability skills required by the global talent market. The research also suggested that it is necessary to update the curriculum at regular interval to cater the needs of the industry. The research concluded that there should be long and sustainable plan to train young graduates to raise their bar to attain jobs in the global talent market. At the same time, it's essential to increase the industry-academia contact. However, this research was only limited to engineering students.

Though employability as a concept has been around for a very long time, it's only recently that the academics have finally begun acknowledging it. There's a lot of speculation around what constitutes employability skills with no empirical evidence substantiating this. A 2009 study conducted in UK (The employability challenge report) compared over 20 different definitions and concluded that there was no consensus in determining what employability skills are.

This study aimed to bridge the gap in the past researches in a twofold way: first, this research endeavoured to identify the key employability skills that enhance the employability quotient among the jobseekers and second, this research would aim for gaining empirical evidences of the impact of industry oriented training programme on the employability quotient among the jobseekers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the key Employability Skills
- To check the Reliability and Internal
- Consistencies of the questionnaire
- Implementing Cronbach's Alpha.
- To perform the gap analysis between actual level of employability skills and the desired level of employability skills.
- To analyse the impact of industry oriented education programme on the Employability Quotient of the potential job seekers.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

This study had following hypotheses:

- H_0 : there was no impact of industry oriented education programme on the employability quotient of the potential jobseekers
- H_A : the industry oriented education programme had a positive impact on improving the employability quotient of the potential jobseekers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The nature of the study was exploratory and empirical as well, since the aim of the research was to explore the key employability skills along with gaining empirical evidences of the impact of industry oriented training programme on the improvement of the level of employability skills.

The study was conducted in multiple phases. First a set of students were randomly picked up and a set of questionnaire was supplied to them, asking them to self-assess on the employability skills. Then they were engaged on an industry focussed education programme and after the education programme, they were again asked to self-assess on the same questionnaire that was supplied to them prior to the education programme. The process was repeated with different sets of students from different institutions.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

To achieve the objectives of the study, Exploratory Factor Analysis was implemented to identify the key skills and for the construction of the scale for Employee Skills while Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability. Extraction of factors was carried out implementing Principal Component Method while Varimax rotation was used in order to obtain uncorrelated factors. T Test was implemented to empirically test the impact of the industry oriented education programme on the employability skills while Radar Chart was used to exhibit the gap between actual level of employability and the desired level of employability.

SAMPLING FOR THE STUDY

Convenient sampling was implemented for this study. The sample was collected from a set of graduate and post graduate colleges which offer courses in various domains.

DESIGN OF QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire consisted of skills related to the assessment of the level of employability among the respondents. The items were given the format of a proper questionnaire along with instructions in order to carry out the empirical evaluation of these items. A seven point Likert type scale was used with the following anchors: "1 -Strongly disagree", "2-Disagree", "3-Somewhat Disagree", "4-Undecided", "5-Somewhat Agree", "6-Agree", "7-Strongly Agree".

DATA ANALYSIS

Table:1

KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

KMO Measure of Sample Adequacy	.940
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	.000

Table: 2

Final Selected Items for Employability Skills

Factors	Variables
Communication Skills	listening and understanding
	speaking clearly and directly
	negotiating skills
	reading and deciphering
	using numeracy effectively
	Empathising
	persuading effectively
	networking skills
	probing skills - asking the right question to the client
	being assertive
	sharing information
	speaking correct English in a neuter accent
	time management skills
Organizational Skills	planning and strategizing skills
	translating ideas into action
	resource optimization skills
	Coordinating and organizing people and activities in an orderly manner
	establishing clear project goals and deliverables
	collecting, analysing and organizing information
	understanding basic business systems and their relationships
	predicting- weighing up risk, evaluating alternatives and applying evaluation criteria
	decision making skills
	solving team conflicts
Problem Solving Skills	applying teamwork in a range of situations e.g. planning and problem solving
	pragmatic problem solving skills
	skills to solve problems in a team
	skills to solve problems independently
	skills to apply problem solving strategies across a range of areas
	skills to use mathematics including budgeting and financial management to solve problems
Team Member Skills	skills to work with different demographic groups
	skills to leverage technology to facilitate collaboration
	skills to define a role as a part of a team
Technological Skills	applying teamwork in a range of situations e.g. planning and problem solving
	working as an individual and as a member of a team
leadership skills	skills to leverage technology to facilitate collaboration
	a range of IT skills to complete various projects and tasks

Table: 2

Eigen Values and Percentage of Variances explained by six factors of Employability Skills (n=516)

Factors	Eigen Value	% of Variance Explained By The Factors	Cumulative % of Variance
Communication Skills	20.48	47.628	47.628
Organizational Skills	2.041	4.746	52.374
Problem Solving Skills	1.446	3.363	55.737
Team Member Skills	1.720	4.000	59.737
Technological Skills	1.216	2.828	62.565
Leadership Skills	1.283	2.984	65.549

Table: 3
Cronbach's Alpha Reliability and Internal Consistency of Employment Skills Questionnaire (N=477)

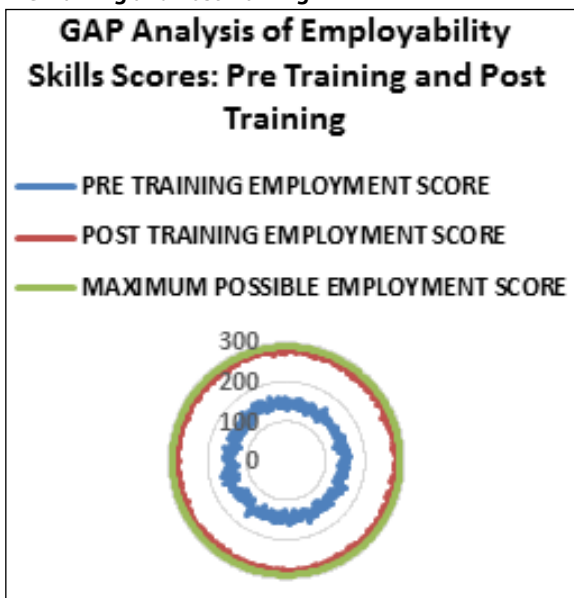
Cronbach's Alpha	.96
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Table: 4
Paired T Test: Impact of Industry Oriented Education Programme on Employability Skills Score

Factor	Pre Training Score	Post Training Score	Mean Difference	Sig Value
communication skills	38.1	82.5	-44.4	0.000**
organizational skills	48.03	90.06	-42.03	0.000**
Problem Solving Skills	23.92	45.02	-21.1	0.000**
Team Member Skills	19.98	37.56	-17.58	0.000**
Technological Skills	5.48	7.51	-2.03	0.000**
Leadership Skills	10.06	15.03	-4.97	0.000**

**significant at 0.05 level of significance

Figure 1: GAP Analysis of Employability Skills Scores: Pre Training and Post Training



FINDINGS OF THE STUDY
Employability Skills

Results of factor analysis for Employability Skills yielded six factors of Employability Skills and labelled as Communication Skills, Organizational Skills, Problem Solving Skills, Team Member Skills, Technological Skills and Leadership Skills. The six factors accounted for around 66% of variance which indicated that these six factors explained 66% of Employability Skills. The factors along with the variables comprising the factors are given in Table 1.

Table 2 showed that Factor I (Communication Skills) had an Eigen value of 20.48, which explained 47.628% of the total variance, whereas Factor II (Organizational Skills) had an Eigen value of 2.041 and explained 4.746% of the total variance. Factor III (Problem Solving Skills) had an Eigen value of 1.446 and explained 3.363% of variance; while Factor IV (Team Member Skills), Factor V (Technological skills) and Factor VI had Eigen values of 1.720 and 1.216 and 1.283 respectively explaining 4%, 2.828% and 2.984% of the total variance respectively. The total variance explained by the five factors was 65.549%.

In order to establish the internal consistency and reliability of the Employability Skills questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was computed and the results were shown in Table 4. Results in the Table 4 showed a highly satisfactory level of reliability coefficients for the Employability Skills construct. The reliability of the Employability Skills construct was 0.96 which indicated high internal consistency.

Impact of Industry Oriented Education Programme on Employability Skills Score

Paired T Test was carried out for each of six dimensions of Employability Skills to measure the impact of industry oriented education programme on the score for each category and from the results it was evident that the significant results were obtained for Communication Skills, Organizational Skills, Problem Solving Skills, Team Member Skills, Technological Skills and Leadership Skills since for each dimension the Sig Value was .000 which was lesser than the set level of significance i.e. α , which was .05. Hence it can be mentioned that industry focused training had proved to be effective in increasing the scores of the potential job seekers for all the dimensions of Employability Skills which proved the effectiveness of the education programme.

Gap Analysis for Employability Skills Scores: Pre and Post Training

Gap Analysis for Employability Skills scores were conducted to obtain insight about the effectiveness of the training and the results were depicted through the Radar Chart. It was evident from the Radar Chart that while there was a huge GAP between the obtained pre training Employment Skills scores and the maximum possible Employability Skills score, however, the GAP between the obtained scores and the maximum scores decreased substantially after the training, which suggested the effectiveness of the industry focused training program that was being conducted to bridge the gap in employability Skills among the potential job seekers.

CONCLUSION

The objectives of the study were to identify the key employability skills and to empirically investigate the impact of industry oriented training programme on the employability level of potential jobseekers. The study yielded significant findings. First, the study had been successful to explore the key skills that are relevant across most of the industries. Along with it, the results proved that the industry oriented training programme was able to improve the scores of employability skills and thus, in the process it was successful to reduce the gap between actual level of employability skills and the desired level of employability skills. Hence, it could be said that the training programme which focused on enhancing the employability skills was successful in its objective and facilitated in better grooming of the fresh would be graduates and post graduates. The results of the study thus supported the suggestions made by the earlier researchers that there should be a blend of academia and industry in order to make the work force of the nation more employable.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to identify the key employability skills among the potential job seekers in Delhi-NCR. The study revealed six primary factors and they were Communication Skills, Organizational Skills, Problem Solving Skills, Team Member Skills, Technological Skills and Leadership Skills. The satisfactory test statistics for reliability analysis indicated high internal consistency among the questionnaire. However, Confirmatory Factor Analysis should also be carried out in order to reconfirm the findings of the study.

Further, the impact of industry oriented training programme was also evident to improve the employability skills and thus it also proved to be instrumental in reducing the gap between actual employability skills and the desired level of employability skills. Thus taking the findings of the study in consideration, it is recommended more such industry oriented education programmes should be carried out to enhance the employability quotient among the workforce. This study also recommends that a proper competency model should be developed which must encompass the following steps: identification of key competencies, the competency gap and a proper training model at place to reduce the gap. This would ensure a steady supply of competent work force and thus would facilitate in the economic growth of the country.

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