ISSN No. 2349-7165

An Assessment of employers perception towards student employability skills in Madhya Pradesh.

Dr. Anita Ahuja
Assistant Professor, IPS Academy, IBMR, Indore
Email : anitaahuja@ipsacademy.org

ABSTRACT

Globalization has changed the employability demand at all levels. This has increased the need for graduates that can cope with this changing demand. Employers today are in the search for ready to be placed employees rather than amateur people who need basic training. Hence, there exists a need to enhance the quality of Indian technical education to become globally recognizable and competitive. The study focuses on the present scenario of technical education in India and makes an effort to identify the gap that exists between the expectations of the employer and the actual level of employability skills possessed by the technical graduates in Madhya Pradesh, India. The analysis shows a gap between the actual and expected values of employability skills of Indian technical graduates. Some of the recommendations given are the inclusion of research, practical learning, creating self-awareness and involvement of parents in career planning of their wards.

Keywords: Higher Educational system, educational institutes, employability skills, technical education.

Introduction:

The progress and evolution of university and professional education have been extraordinary since the privatization of higher education in India. Almost all colleges attract students who meet the prerequisite eligibility criteria for enrolling in any of these colleges, but regrettably, they are radically inadequate in soft skills and have a poor command on the English language. This, in turn, makes over 70% of these students unemployable in spite of them completing four years of an engineering degree or three years of a generic degree course.

The economic prosperity of a country, however, depends on industrialization and technological advancements. With the world fast evolving and technology challenging the speed at which these changes come into being, it is vital that we train our people for upgrading their skills more frequently than before. Having said that, educational training, re-training and keeping abreast with technology by providing adequate resources such as infrastructure and technical personnel in emerging areas of interest such as Engineering, Science and Technology, Medicine etc. play a key role in the development and growth of a nation. Sangeeta Gupta, Senior Vice President, NASSCOM said, "Our engineers are not unemployable, they just don't have industry-ready talent. In other words, they lack the skills required for the jobs that are available to them."

It is now to be believed that technical education and degrees alone do not suffice to meet the expanding needs and requirements of industries and businesses. Students showcasing a positive attitude, effective communication ability, problem-solving ability, time management skills, inclusive team spirit, self-confidence, the ability to handle criticism etc., all of which are collectively known as soft skills, have a better chance of succeeding and making a mark for themselves in a competitive corporate world than when compared to those students who do not possess these soft skills.

Acknowledging this line of thought, this study aims to analyze factors influencing entry-level employability of graduates and argues for an equity-based approach to offer fair and inclusive higher education to all

(Kuczera and Pont 2007) regardless of personal or social circumstances. It also implies restructuring policies, legislative measures and accreditation systems to raise the bar on quality. The study advocates for an equitable, transparent, affordable and effectively deregulated and robustly benchmarked education system. It should address practices inside and outside schools and be acutely aware on how resources are allocated to ensure that minimum standards in education are delivered without discrimination.

Review of Literature:

Cranmer (2006) stated, "Dating back to 1989 there has been a steady stream of reports and papers urging the higher education sector to take the key, core, transferable and employability skills into the heart of students' learning experience". Two decades later, contemporary researchers echoed the same sentiment, indicating that the skill gap continued to exist and presented an ongoing disconnect between employer expectations and post-secondary institutions' preparation of graduates.

Rothwell and Arnold (2007) concluded that self-perceived employability can usefully be thought of as either a unitary construct or one with two related components internal to the organisation and external employability. The measure very successfully distinguished employability from professional commitment and career success. Only slight variations in employability could be attributed to demographic characteristics.

Rao (2010) articulated that skilful management of the intellectual capital could be a driver for growth and is imperative for the Indian economy. He stated that the institutes should identify the employability skills required of young graduates and assess how they can create value through effective knowledge management by means of pedagogy, evaluation process and feedback mechanisms.

Bhatt (2011) identified that one of the approaches to tackle the issue of lacking job readiness in the Indian IT sector is to partner the industry with academia. Many organizations have taken such initiatives to help provide hands-on experience and practical and soft skills to aspirants in order to bridge the training gap required for the ever-changing landscape of the job market. However, such initiatives are very limited in number.

Malhotra et al (2001) pointed out that there exists a difference between what an employer needs in his employee and what employees aspire from their employer. Employers expect a lot many things from their employees such as open-mindedness, reliability, punctuality, prior intimation, honesty, professional conduct, communication skills, dependability, discipline, positive attitude, responsibility, motivation, dedication, time management skills, creative problem solving skills, team player, confidence, flexibility, working well under stress, ability to take criticism and improve on it, proper academic qualification and co-cooperativeness. Employees on the other hand aspire to receive timely and accurate compensation, personality development and training sessions, safe working environment, constructive feedback, timely meetings and proper communication channels, cooperativeness, goals, autonomy, opportunities for innovation, transparency, respect, equality, encouragement and appreciation, flexibility, a prospering organization culture, roles suited for their skill set, unity of direction, career advancement, telecommute, attention etc.

Sudha (2013) found that the need to compete internationally has forced industries to change which in turn necessitated the graduates to realign their skills, knowledge and abilities to meet the global competitive reality and evolving standards. From the results of the study, it was evident that graduates do not fully possess this range of skills necessary for succeeding in the workplace. Institutions have to take necessary steps to enrich the skills of their students.

Sumitra (2014) has opined that most of the technical degree programs in our country are not equipped with a comprehensive curriculum which can help make the students 'industry ready' alongside their skill development. The author further emphasizes that training schedules should be planned and executed only

after comprehensively evaluating the candidate's needs and should target a certain set of competencies. A feedback from the Mentors focuses on the development of communication, leadership, team working, and adaptability skills in technical education programs at the undergraduate level. The study aims to analyze the challenges which the current educational system faces and how training can provide an opportunity to bridge the gap between campus and corporate needs.

Joel Rubano, (October 2017) in his study has compared the development methodologies that are common in industry and academia and has proposed incremental modifications to existing finance curriculum. He is of the opinion that this would produce stronger graduates that are able to move directly into commercial positions at financial firms. His study discusses introductory finance classes, real-money portfolio management courses, and market simulation programs.

Research Objectives:

1) To analyse the Gap between employability skills in students.

2) To understand employers perception towards employability skills in students.

Research Methodology:

Measuring Parameters:

The measures applied in the study are based on employer's actual perception on skill gap in Graduates Considering their Employability. The study investigates the employer's perception towards employability skills in students who face the placement interview in their respective campus. Employers were approached to complete the questionnaire where Purposive sampling method was used for the study. The objective of the current study is to test the overall 19 items of EP (Employer's Perception) based on skill gap. A Five-point Likert-type scale, ranking from (1) Not Ready to (5) Adequately Ready was used for the developed questionnaire.

Sample:

Data collection was done in Indore with various Engineering and Management Institutes. Total of 45 employers (Managers/Employers who came for placement, were approached for feedback) out of which 36 usable responses were used for analysis. Non– probable convenient sampling method is used and is on purely opportunistic basis from a readily accessible subgroup of population (Baker, 1990). A structured questionnaire was designed to gather the data required for this research. Data has been collected from employers/managers of Jaro Education, Infosys, HCL etc.

Hypotheses:-

H1: There is a positive impact of employability skills on employers' perception.

Data Analysis & Result:-

Part 1

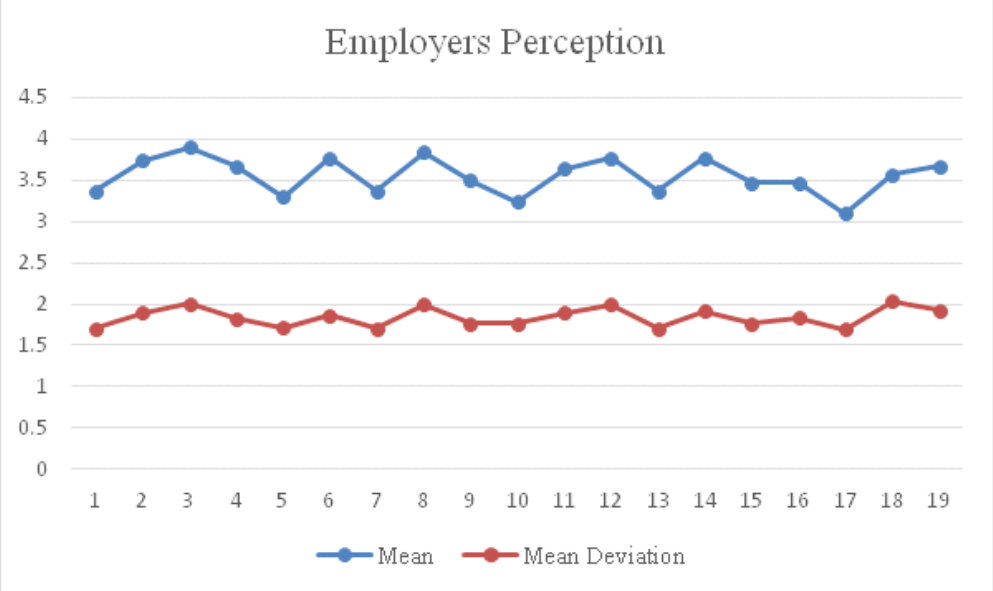
For first research objective – To analyze Gap between employability skills has been calculated with mean and mean deviation on employer's perception of skills, which is presented with the help of "Overall" line with marker graph on each parameter. Mean deviation is a measure of dispersion, computed by taking the arithmetic mean of the absolute values of the deviations of the functional values from some central value, usually the mean.

Table 1: Employers Perception

	Mean	Mean Deviation
Communication and Interpersonal Skills	3.36	1.7
Problem Solving Skills	3.73	1.9
Professional Skills	3.9	2.0
Using Your Initiative and being self-motivated	3.6	1.82
Working under pressure and to dead-lines	3.3	1.71
Organization Skills	3.76	1.86
Team Working	3.36	1.7
Ability to learn and adapt	3.83	2
Numeracy	3.5	1.76
Valuing Diversity and Differences	3.23	1.76
Negotiation Skills	3.63	1.9
English Language Test	3.76	2
Quantitative Ability	3.36	1.7
Logical Ability	3.76	1.91
Computer Fundamentals	3.46	1.76
Technical Subject Knowledge	3.46	1.83
Group Discussion	3.1	1.69
Personal Interview Technical and HR	3.56	2.03
Personality Development	3.66	1.92

Mean of each items was varying from 3.1 to 3.83and mean deviation was varying from 2.03 to 1.693.Highest mean was derived from ability to learn and adapt and lowest from group discussion which makes it clear that nowadays students have the ability to learn but majority of them are not able to perform in group discussion because of many reasons like communication, stress management and many more which should be improved by them. Highest mean deviation came from personal interview technical and HR because all students put their efforts on the same and lowest deviation came from group discussion, reason behind it can be less preparation.

Overall line with marker graph 1 on Employers Perception



With the help of graphical presentation it is evaluated that none of the parameters is moving beyond Mark 4 based on readiness of students for placement from employer's perception on the 19 parameters. These all are areas of improvement.

Part 2

For second research objective - To understand employers' perception towards employability skills in students has been calculated with one sample t test which was applied on 36 respondents.

Table 2: Perception of Employer's

S. No	Statements	Mean	S.D	T value	Sig
1	Communication and Interpersonal Skills	3.36	1.03335	4.594	.000
2	Problem Solving Skills	3.73	.73968	9.133	.000
3	Professional Skills	3.90	.71197	10.770	.000
4	Using Your Initiative and being self motivated	3.66	.88409	7.228	.000
5	Working under pressure and to dead-lines	3.30	1.05536	4.152	.000
6	Organization Skills	3.76	.62606	11.082	.000
7	Team Working	3.36	.80872	5.870	.000
8	Ability to learn and adapt	3.83	.74664	9.781	.000
9	Numeracy	3.50	.86103	6.361	.000
10	Valuing Diversity and Difference	3.23	1.22287	3.285	.000
11	Negotiation Skills	3.63	1.21721	5.100	.000
12	English Language Test	3.76	.89763	7.729	.000
13	Quantitative Ability	3.36	.71840	6.608	.000
14	Logical Ability	3.76	.89763	7.729	.000
15	Computer Fundamentals	3.46	.73030	7.250	.000
16	Technical Subject Knowledge	3.46	1.27937	4.138	.000
17	Group Discussion	3.10	1.02889	3.194	.000
18	Personal Interview Technical and HR	3.56	1.04000	5.618	.000
19	Personality Development	3.66	.88409	7.228	.000

Highest mean of perception of employers has been calculated under Professional skills by (3.9) which is followed by Organization skills with mean of (3.833) after that logical ability and English test by (3.7667), followed by Personality development with a mean of (3.667). The lowest mean is found in group discussion by (2.785). Standard deviation is varying from 1. 279to .62606. Overall t value of each item is varying from 11.082 to 3.285. The p value of all parameters is less than 0.05 which is why the hypothesis has been accepted showing a positive impact of employability skills on the perception of employers.

Employability skills required

Based on the various surveys conducted basic employability skills required by a management and technical graduate are:

1. Problem-solving, analytical and decision-making skills: Employers are looking for those employees who are able to gather the required information from the environment and generate the best suited solution to the problem by proper analysis of the information thus gathered.

2. Team-building and leadership skills: Here employees are required to confidently co- ordinate with their colleagues and motivate them towards the attainment of organizational, social, economic as well as global goals.

3. Communication skills: In this skill set the employers wants their employee to be confident and clear in the expression of their thoughts, both orally and in written form.

4. Flexibility: In this dynamic business world, employers wants their employees to be flexible and adaptable towards the changing and challenging business situations and environment.

5. Commercial and self-awareness: A good manager not only is aware of her/his goals, abilities, strengths, weaknesses and value system, but is also aware of the commercial realities affecting the health of business.

6. Self- motivation and drive: Employees should take initiatives understanding the opportunities presented to them and should also be able to do things in a better way. They should be proactive in presenting new ideas and generating best suited solutions.

7. Time management: Dead-lines play a major role in today's competitive world. To accomplish a task on time or before is a great tool in the hand of management. This helps them both in saving money by reducing penalty involved in delaying of a project and also the fear of idea being stolen or becoming obsolete. Thus, time management plays an important role in today's managerial world. Organizations today need employees who are able to sequence and prioritize activities so as to make the most efficient use of available time.

8. Strong value system: Employees should be honest with themselves and should be loyal towards their work.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The findings of the study indicate that there is a large scope for broad remedial interventions in order to ensure that graduates are employable in the future.

1. Structural programmes keeping in mind the local industry needs which should reflect the kinds of employers in the community and their preferences.

2. Provide teacher-student support including setting up of summer internships, offering common preparation periods to plan interdisciplinary projects and hiring teachers for Planning/professional development over the summer break.

3. Encourage the use of performance/development assessments and the information they provide to develop student "employability profiles" that students can share with prospective employers.

4. It is important to make the students realise their ability to perform tasks successfully and that they are expected to do so; providing monitoring and encouragement to help them achieve success.

5. Agreements and Tie-ups with Supervisors at learning sites so that the importance of employability skill development may be emphasized at both college and workplace.

6. Help students to build employability 'profiles' or 'portfolios' that provide a more accurate picture of the students command of the skills and traits that the employers value.

Conclusion and Limitation

It is vital for Indian Higher Education Institutes to raise their level to the international education standards to meet the expectations of global business. Industry-academia collaboration is a must for the knowledge enrichment and the bright future of the graduates in India. This will help Indian technical graduates to fill the employability differences and gain competitive advantage. The scope of the present study is limited to the

state of Madhya Pradesh, but, could be extended to study the employer's expectation of employability skills and investigating employability gap of the technical graduates of other states of India too.

Reference:

- Balakrishnan, Sumitra, 'Bridging the Gap between the Campus and the Corporate: Increasing Employability' - Challenges, Opportunities and Methods (February 21, 2014). 7th National Management Convention (NMC), 2014. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2887265 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2887265
- Bhatt, S (2011): 'The option of an explicitly vocational university education', paper to Society for Research into Higher Education Summer Conference on Changing Student Experience, University of Central England, Birmingham. pp. 15-19.
- Cranmer, S. (2006). Enhancing graduate employability: Best intentions and mixed outcomes. Studies in Higher Education, 31, 168-184. doi:10.1080/03075070600572041
- Joel Rubano, (October 2017): A Comparison of Current Academic and Industry Pedagogies for Developing Traders, Electronic copy available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3057447
- Malhotra, L. (2001): Defining and measuring employability. Quality in Higher Education, 7 (2), pp. 97-109.
- Rao, R. (2010): Higher Education in the Learning Society. Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, HMSO, pp. 64-69.
- Rothwell, L. and Arnold, S. (2007): "Employability- the fifth basic skill", Eric Digest N0.14.Colunbus: Centeron Education and Training for employment. (1990) the Ohio State University (ERIC No.EDO-CE-90-104), pp. 125-130.
- Sudha (2013), "Total Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions." International Journal of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Research IJSSIR Vol. 2(6) June (2013).
- Sudha, L. (2013): Reconsidering Graduate Employability: the 'graduate identity' approach. Quality in Higher Education, 7, (2), pp. 111-119.