EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS - A STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF MANAGEMENT & TECHNOLOGY GRADUATES AND EMPLOYERS IN MUMBAI

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ABSTRACT

Education system is the foundation of society and responsibility is to develop the future. Employability skills are the skills, qualities and attitudes that employers essentially look in their prospective employees. Continuous advancements in technology have transformed the businesses and business models drastically. Under this unpredictable, fierce and competitive business world creating a right fit between individual and organization is highly challenging. There is a gap between management and technology curriculum content and industry expectations. This problem is also being faced by graduates when they enter into the corporate world. This phenomenon is also observed in uneven employment opportunity across different industry and sectors. Therefore, the motive for this research study was to explore and analyze the level of employability skills among management and technology graduates in Mumbai. Two sets of questionnaires were developed to assess of employability skills; applied, interpersonal and 21st-century skills. 20 corporate, 100 HR managers, and 700 graduates participated in this study. Collected data was analyzed using SPSS . Descriptive statistics was used to attain the objectives of the study. The research findings revealed that there is a difference between the perception of employers and graduates on the employability skills.

KEYWORDS: Curriculum, Management and MCA, Employability Skills, University & Higher Education Institutes

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INTRODUCTION

Long back the British introduced and implemented a well structured education system in colonial India to create a qualified pool of human resources who would help them to rule and manage the nation with a heightened administrative hold. More than 70 years have gone; we have not revamped the Indian education system. The result of this is poor employability of Indian youth at masses. In today's dynamic global business world; Management and technology education plays a vital role. Most MNCs require MBAs and MCAs graduates who are adaptable, flexible having an entrepreneurial attitude and who can act as change agents in the organization. Management and MCA graduates have to learn how to move from campus to corporate. They need to understand that what kind of readiness is expected by the industry. Practically, there is a vast gap between what industry needs and what is available in terms of skilled students. Enhancing employability skills in management and technology education is considered as an important task by all the universities and institutes. Augmenting employability skills in management and technology education is considered today as a major challenge by most of the educational institutions. Management education focuses on developing a broad range of managerial knowledge and abilities; whereas MCA focuses on developing logical reasoning and programming skills. In management more emphasis is given to the performance of the candidates on the job and this requires a set of skills that match the job. In addition

to subject-specific job, students are required to refine their team building and communication skills. Creative thinking, problem solving, decision making, developing entrepreneurial skills are much beyond the curriculum delivery. All MCA students cannot do coding and programming but they somehow manage to pass in examinations. The result of this that there are so many management and MCA graduates in the market but few get employment and remaining keep on struggling.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Geof Baker, in his article titled as “Promoting employability skills development in a research-intensive university”, published in Education & Training journal, considered the place of employability in universities, with a focus on research-intensive institutions, and to outline an initiative that was introduced to promote employability skills development at the University of Nottingham. According to the author, each higher education institute should create ready to employment graduates. Inside employment was the key term highlighted by the author. The author made a number of recommendations for developing opportunities for employability skills development in universities in general, and research-intensive universities in particular in Nottingham. **J. Santhi**, in his article titled as “Enrichment of Employability Skill among MBA Students – A Pathway to New India”, published in ICTACT Journal on Management Studies, highlighted that with the mushroom budding management institutes in India today management graduates are also increasing at a faster pace. The various study and survey reports have brought in light that with the increase in quantity of MBA students there is a decrease in the average quality in terms of employability skill. The objective of this study was to explore the employability skill required by management graduates and the ways and means to enrich the same. Author was of the opinion that by reinventing the MBA pedagogy, the critical thinking and problem solving skills should be made as an identity of management students which in turn will serve as a pathway to new India. **Vinitaa Agrawal, Santanu Dasgupta**, in their article titled as “Identifying the Key Employability Skills: Evidence from Literature Review”, published in IOSR Journal of Business and Management, presented the importance of employability skills in the current timing. Employability relates to the ability to be in employment, and, in particular, the set of quality that enhance the probability of an individual being in work. The key factor for getting into a job today depends upon the additional skills apart from the subject specific skills. Employers today seek employees with the right combination of generic, technical and job specific skills and ensure that they can transfer skills from one context to another. The employers are more interested in recruiting a “right” candidate with multidimensional skills rather than a graduate with very high academic knowledge but poor interpersonal skills. The change has taken place gradually but very steadily. With the gaining importance of employability skills, the higher education institutions are also looking into these factors seriously and are trying to include these skills as a part of their curriculum so that the students can readily adapt them during the study tenure and remain in the competition. The purpose of this study was to perform an in-depth study of employability skills necessary for the graduates to achieve employment in different fields. **Pauline A M Bremner**, in his article titled as “The gap between degree outcomes and employability skills”, published in 15th Enhancement Conference held on 7th June 2018, reveals that there is a mismatch between a degree learning outcomes and employability skills. By use of a mixed methods approach, inclusive of employer feedback, relevant data can be extrapolated to provide a fuller picture on skills gaps. This is in addition to other mechanisms such as student evaluation questionnaires (SEQs), National Student Surveys (NSS) and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) benchmarks. Together these approaches can aid in course development, informing educators and for students give an awareness of the meaning of a degree outcome to an employer. Ups killing moves quickly in today’s society, in a ‘disrupted’ workplace, which is seeing skill sets changing to meet the needs of the digital

economy (Gray 2016), otherwise termed the fourth industrial revolution (4.0)

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To investigate the perceptions of employers, management and technology graduates regarding the employability skills those help them to be employed.
- To determine whether there is a gap between the perception of graduates and employers.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This is an exploratory study. The researchers have developed two sets of questionnaires referring three areas of employability skills like applied skills, interpersonal skills and 21st-century skills. There were 20 corporate, 100 managers, and 700 graduates from 25 higher education institutions (Management & MCA) in Mumbai participated in the study.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The objective of this research study was to identify the employers and fresh graduate's perception towards employability skills in Mumbai region.

Demographic Statistics (Employer Size)

Table 1: Classification of Employers Based on the Size of the Employers

Company Size	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Large (>1000)	1	5
Medium(501-1000)	13	65
Small(<500)	6	30
Total	20	100.0

Source: Primary Data

In this research study 65 % of medium size company participated followed by small size 6 % and only 5 % respondents were from the large size company.

Work Experience (Gender -Wise)

Table 2: Work Experience of the Employers (Gender-wise)

Experience	Gender		Total	Total (%)
	Male	Female		
1 or Less	1	1	2	2
2 to 5 Years	25	9	34	34
6-10 Years	38	12	50	50
11 Years and above	14	0	14	14
Total	78	22	100	100

Source: Primary Data

The work experience table 2 illustrates that, mostly respondents were of executive and managerial level. The majority has 6 – 10 years (50 %) experience followed by 2-5 years (34%) and the least is respondent s with less than one year experience (2%).

Descriptive Statistics of the Students

Table 3: Demographic Statistics of the Graduates (Age and Gender)

Age	Gender		Total	Total (%)
	Male	Female		
21- 25 years old	325	338	663	94.71
26 to 30 years old	21	8	29	4.14
31and above	8	0	8	1.14
Total	354	346	700	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 presents, the majority of graduates who participated in this study were females between age 21 to 25 years old (95%) and the least those who were the age more than 31 and above.

Source: Primary Data

Figure 1

The figure 1 shows that majority or 538 graduates were male and they were from management and technology discipline whereas 162 are females.

Table 4: Top 10 Applied skills according to Employer and Graduate Students

Employer				Students			
Skills	Rank	Mean	SD	Skills	Rank	Means	SD
Organizing	1	4.32	.756	Problem-solving skills	1	4.22	.682
Problem-solving skills	2	4.24	.774	Multitasking	2	4.20	.746
Multitasking	3	4.17	.775	Tech-savvy	3	4.13	.658
Creative	4	4.16	.698	Decision Making	4	4.11	.784
Emotional Intelligence	5	4.16	.698	Time Management	5	4.04	.727
Decision Making	6	4.14	.798	Creative	6	4.04	.874
Time Management	7	4.12	.787	Organizing	7	4.02	.888
Service Orientation	8	4.11	.674	Service Orientation	8	3.99	.803
Tech-savvy	9	4.03	.739	Negotiation	9	3.99	.811
Negotiation	10	4.00	.762	Creative	10	3.93	.842

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 shows that employer and graduate have a huge difference in their perception regard to applied skills that are needed by the industry in Mumbai as shown in the mean score. Employers revealed that they need candidates with good organizing skills (4.32), problem-solving skills (4.24) as well as those who possess multitasking (4.17). On the other hand graduates perceived that the key applied skills needed by the employer are problem-solving skills (4.22), Multitasking (4.20) and Tech-savvy (4.17).

Top 10 Interpersonal Skills According to Employer and Graduate Students

Table 5: Top 10 Interpersonal Skills for Employers Vs Students

Employer				Students			
Skills	Rank	Mean	SD	Skills	Rank	Means	SD
Honesty	1	4.20	.703	Self Confidence	1	4.31	.768
Self Confidence	2	4.16	.734	Communication	2	4.30	.741
Communication	3	4.12	.660	Team Player	3	4.29	.715
Team Player	4	4.08	.692	Positive Thinking	4	4.25	.817
Critical Thinking	5	4.07	.700	Managing Times	5	4.24	.739
Positive Thinking	6	4.05	.717	Honesty	6	4.23	.713
Managing Times	7	4.04	.764	Flexibility	7	4.19	.807
Coping with pressure	8	4.03	.728	Coping with pressure	8	4.13	.910
Flexibility	9	4.01	.741	Critical Thinking	9	4.12	.886
Ability to accept constructive feedback	10	4.01	.743	Ability to accept constructive feedback	10	4.06	.875

Source: Primary Data

Table 5 shows that employers were of the opinion that key interpersonal skill they looked for are honesty and integrity (4.20), ability to work in a team (4.16) and those who possess good communication skills (4.12). Meanwhile, graduates perceived differently, they claimed that the ability to adapt to the different environment (4.31) is urgently needed by industry. It was followed by the ability to lead a group (4.30) and the ability to interact with others.

Top 10 21st Century Skills According to Employer and Graduate Students

Table 6: Top 10 21st Century Skills for Employers Vs Students

Employer				Students			
Skills	Rank	Mean	SD	Skills	Rank	Means	SD
Research	1	4.29	.701	Multitasking	1	4.32	.767
Collaboration	2	4.26	.738	Communication	2	4.25	.706
Communication	3	4.23	.771	Social Skills	3	4.22	.685
Multitasking	4	4.19	.696	Leadership	4	4.22	.685
Productivity	5	4.18	.657	Flexible	5	4.21	.753
Initiative	6	4.09	.664	Collaboration	6	4.18	.808
Flexible	7	4.09	.643	Creative	7	4.16	.824
Leadership	8	4.04	.630	Research	8	4.16	.741
Creative	9	4.04	.630	Productivity	9	4.14	.737
Social Skills	10	3.96	.696	Initiative	10	4.13	.686

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 reveals about 21st-century skills, that employers essentially look for in a candidate. Employers look for research skills (4.29), ability to collaborate with others (4.26) along with good communication skills (4.23). It differs with graduate perception, they perceived multitasking (4.23) is the most important; next was communication skills (4.25) and then comes social and leadership skills (4.22).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that employability skills are must for all the management and technology graduates. The outdated curriculum is one of the key factors for decline in job offers. Curriculum should be revised as a regular practice. Due to increased un-employability of graduates, the management and technology degrees have lost their prestige. According to a study conducted by ASSOCHAM; around 2,00,000 students graduated from 5,000 management institutes in the year 2016-17. While the top institutes still hold some merit in the industry, the others are hardly able to boast of

quality management education that can help their graduates secure employment and only 7% turn out to be employable. Unless the higher education institutes work seriously on graduate's employability, this issue of unemployment will continue. Research findings disclose that there is a huge difference in the perception regard to applied skills that are needed by the industry in Mumbai; those of perceived by graduates. According to employers organizing skills, problem-solving skills and multitasking is key for employment whereas the graduate's perception is that the key applied skills are problem-solving skills, multitasking and being techno smart. Honesty, integrity and team work, these are the key interpersonal skills required by the industry. Even there is a perceptual gap with regard to 21st century skills. Industry requires 'ready to use' graduate with sound problem solving skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, result oriented approach, domain knowledge expertise, decision making skills, leadership skills, team player skills etc. These skills can be developed through various skill development programs, value added certification courses. These certification courses must be a part of management and MCA curriculum. Authors are of the opinion that higher education institutions should build an intellectual faculty pool with a mix of Ph.D.'s and industry experts those who can understand and interpret the business need and train graduates in such a way that are ready to be absorbed by the industry.

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