

Higher Education and Employment Issues in India: A Case Study of B-school Students of Dehradun

*Piyush Mittal**

ABSTRACT

The mushrooming of the technical institutions in India has contributed million of students and technocrats' to the Indian labor market but employability among these pass out students is commonly discussed topic in almost every HR forum. The current research paper is an effort to check the employability status of management students of Dehradun district. The objective of the research is to identify the level of employability skill of the students and suggest measures to improve their employability. The study is based on primary data collected through questionnaire. It is based on data obtained from 200 management students who are in final year of their MBA/PGDBM course. The data have been analyzed using SPSS 21.0. The analysis reveals the average and moderate level of employability skills among the students. Finally, the study provides suggestive measures to the current topical issue.

Keywords : Higher Education, Indian Labor Market, Employability Skills.

1. Introduction

The rapid development of the current working world needs proficient workers mainly in fields which involve latest technologies. The importance of the employability in the Indian labor market is now commonly discussed topic in almost every HR forum. According to a MCKINSEY-NASSCOM survey report, each year over 3 million graduates and post-graduates are added to the Indian workforce. Of these, only 25 percent of professionally qualified graduates and 10-15 percent of regular graduates are considered employable by the industry. Most of the proficient and non-proficient workforce is produced by public and private training institutions. A research conducted by Nation's Higher Educational Research Institution stated that the matter which concern employers the most, is the training received by the students that could increase the level of their productivity. The employers stated that most trainees took at least six months to build the confidence and skills in their occupations. This could cause loss to the employers as a long period of time is taken up to train and build up confidence and skills among their workers.

2. Employability Skills

Employability skills are the basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well into job. It is a group of important skills instilled in each individual in order to produce productive workforce. This is parallel with individuals who have a strong sense of determination, and are creative in facing the challenges of the national as well as global platforms. Employability skill is crucial in all professions including education (Overtoom, 2000).

3. Classification of Employability Skills

Employability skills, while categorized in many different ways, are generally divided into three skill sets: (a) Basic Academic Skills, (b) Higher-Order Thinking Skills and (c) Personal Qualities. The three skill sets are typically broken down into more detailed skill sets as shown in Table 1.

Although the academic skill level required by some entry-level jobs may be low, Basic Academic Skills are still essential for high job performance. Ideally, new recruits will have the ability and will want to learn. They also need the ability to listen, read instructions and carry out instructions. When asked for information, these individuals should be able to respond appropriately both orally and in writing, including recording and relaying information. Reading ability includes comprehending what has been read and using a variety of written materials, including graphs, charts, tables and displays. Entry level employees also need the ability to do basic math computations accurately. Perhaps even more important to job success than having good basic academic skills is having good Higher-Order Thinking Skills. The ability to think, reason, and make sound decisions is crucial for employees desiring to do well and advance into their respective career. A person who can think critically, act logically, and evaluate situations to make decisions and solve problems, is a valuable asset.

Application of higher order thinking skills in the use of technology, instruments, tools and information system takes these higher order skills to a new level making the employee even more valuable. Employers will usually try to help valued employees by arranging for them more advanced training, thus widening the gap between those

* Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Kumaon University, Nainital.

Table 1: Employability Skill sets and Sub sets

Basic Academic Skills	Higher-Order Thinking Skills	Personal Qualities	
Reading Writing Science Math Oral Communication Listening	Learning Reasoning Thinking Creatively Decision Making Problem Solving	Responsible Self Confidence Self Control Social Skills Honest Have Integrity Adaptable and Flexible	Team Spirit Punctual and Efficient Self Directed Good Work Attitude Well Groomed Cooperative Self Motivated Self Management

Source: Robinson P. The Work System, Volume 1, Issue 3, Albana Cooperative Extension System

with higher order skills and those possessing basic academic skills alone.

If basic academic skills and higher order thinking skills are so important, why then are employers deeply concerned with personal skills? Because in most jobs, it is difficult to utilize workers effectively who lack personal skills. Entry-level employees with good personal skills have confidence in themselves and deal with others honestly and openly, displaying respect for themselves, their co-workers, and their supervisors regardless of other people's diversity and individual differences. They view themselves as a part of a team and are willing to work within the culture of the group. They have a positive attitude and take the initiative to learn new things to get the job done. They feel accountable for their action. They also have the ability to set goals and priorities in their work and personal lives so that resources of time, money and other resources may be conserved and managed. These individuals practice good personal habits, come to work on time and dressed appropriately and are agreeable to change when necessary. Failure to equip young people with the job readiness skills critical to job success is equivalent to placing employability barriers in their path. Allowing students to graduate with these deficiencies has far reaching implications.

4. Literature Review

The word employability has many connotation in term of its usability and its applicability. Yorke and Knight (2003) define employability as a "A set of achievement – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy." Here the focus is on the prerequisites of employment. In another definition coded by the University of Exeter it is referred to as "The establishment of clear mechanisms by which students can develop their abilities to use and deploy a wide range of skills and avail opportunities to enhance their own academic learning

which enable them to become more employable (Lee,2000)". Employment and employability is not the same thing and should be differentiated (Lee, 2002). "Being employed means having a job, being employable means having the qualities needed to maintain employment and progress in the workplace." The study done by Smith (2004) regarding the involvement of teenagers in occupations found that employers laid the importance of displayed attitudes in opting for new workers. Smith also discovered that 60% of final year students in colleges and universities in Australia worked part time in order to train themselves as well as to gain experience as new employees. New students who wanted to increase their capabilities and business skills were encouraged to work part time. Employers also felt that one of the key factors that will be given consideration when searching for new employees is their employability skill that is required for development of career path (Smith, 2004). This skill consists of the characteristics required by employers, which comprise of technical and non-technical skill sets. The characteristics of employability skill are reading, counting (basic arithmetic), and other skills such as problem solving, decision making, broad mind, trustable, good attitude, cooperative and effective (Buck and Barrick, 1987).

According to Robinson (2000), employability skill is not similar to an occupation or technical skill. This skill derives naturally compared to job specifications and consists of all types of industries, business sizes and phases of occupation. Apart from that, Robinson also stated that employability skill is the basic skill needed for one to get a job and enable him or her to carry out duties well. This skill is closely related with attitudes and actions. For instance, employees must cooperate with senior employees apart from voicing out their opinions, suggestions and to come up with decisions. They should also possess the skill to facilitate strategic fit among their functioning. Fugate et. al, (2004) provide a conceptual definition of employability skill in which it is a form of an active adjustment of individuals towards certain occupations until they identify

and recognize existing career opportunities in the work place. Employability skill could also assist employees to adjust themselves towards various changes and to increase working abilities which suit the working environmental needs. The focus of the current study is to analyze the employability qualities of the management students.

5. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research is to analyze the employability skills of management students. The specific objectives of this research are as listed below:

- i. To identify the level of employability skill among students.
- ii. To identify the differences of students' employability skill based on the selected demographics.
- iii. To compare the employability skills among the genders.
- iv. To evaluate the relationship between their high order thinking skills and core skills.
- v. To give suggestive measures to the institutions to bridge the skill gap.

6. Methodology

Researchers have evaluated the participants under four main skills. First is Basic academic skills, second Higher Order Thinking skills, third Personal skills and fourth Core skills, and these skills have various sub-skills. The data has been collected through a questionnaire that was distributed among 200 management students of different management institutes of Dehradun. Out of the total population, 178 students have furnished the complete information. Data is analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistics.

Descriptive analysis involves frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation whereas inferential analysis involves t-Test. Frequencies and percentages are used to explain the demographic items of respondents whereas mean and standard deviation are used to analyze level of employability skill of respondents. The t-test is conducted to identify the differences between employability skills with the demographic variables. A significance level of 0.05 is used by the researcher.

7. Instrument Description

Questionnaire is focused on the four sets of skills usually observed as requisite skills in the management students. These four sets of skills are further divided into sub skills. The first basic academic skills are carrying 6 sub skills, second is Higher Order Thinking Skills which includes 5 sub skills, third is Personal Skills which encompasses 16 sub skills and fourth is Core Skills which is having two sub skills

(Technical Skills and Subject Knowledge). The respondents were required to give rating of their skills/sub-skill in terms of Good, Average and Poor where Good has been indicated by 3, Average by 2, and Poor by 1. Total 32 items have been rated by the respondents mentioned in the instrument.

8. Hypothesis

On the basis of the data obtained, the following Hypothesis have been tested in the present study:

- H1: Management students of Dehradun district are good in employability skills.
- H2: The male student have better employability skills.
- H3: There is a strong relationship between the students' Core and High Order Thinking Skills.
- H4: There is a strong relationship between the students' Personal and Basic Academic Skills.

9. Results

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for all aspects of employability skills. As a whole, respondents' employability skills are at the moderate level with (M = 1.60, SD = 0.31). Observations on every aspect of employability skills show that most of the aspects are at the moderate level or have been rated as good and only personal skills are in the average or poor rated. Other than that, core skills show a mean score of 1.50 and standard deviation of 0.40 where it is fine. The quality of basic academic skills which should be given emphasis on is also of moderate level (M = 1.78, SD = 0.38)

Table 2: Employability Skills

Items	Mean	Std Dev
Basic Academic Skills	1.78	0.38
High Order Thinking Skills	1.68	0.45
Personal Skills	1.46	0.02
Core Skills	1.50	0.40
All	1.60	0.31

Table 3 explains further means and standard deviations for every item of basic academic skills. Table 3 displays 4 items of basic academic skills such as reading, writing, communication, general awareness in which "Reading" as one of the items of the basic skills has the highest mean level (M = 2.6, SD = 0.5) followed by "Communication" (M = 1.87, SD = 0.36). Whereas, "General Awareness" has the lowest mean level with (M = 1.15, SD = 0.76). The findings also show that three of the four items of basic skills are of moderate level.

Table 3: Basic Academic Skills

	Mean	Std Dev
Reading Skill	2.60	0.50
Writing Skill	1.24	0.12
General Awareness	1.15	0.76
Communication	1.87	0.36

Table 4 shows that the highest mean item for the aspect of high order thinking skills is "Reasoning" with (M = 2.13., SD = 0.31). Respondents also have a high skill in terms of "thinking creatively" with (M = 1.92, SD = 0.28) and 'problem solving' (M = 1.28., SD = 0.58). The item "learning" has the lowest mean score (M = 1.20, SD = .64) for the aspect of thinking skills. The findings also show that communication and reading skills are of moderate level.

Table 4: High Order Thinking Skills

Items	Mean	Std Dev
Learning	1.20	0.64
Reasoning	2.13	0.31
Thinking Creatively	1.92	0.28
Problem Solving	1.28	0.58
Decision Making	1.89	0.44

Mean and Standard Deviations of different aspects of Personal Skills are given in Table 5. This indicates highest mean for self awareness (M = 1.93, SD = 0.38) and lowest mean for "Commitment" (M = 1.11, SD = 1.10). It may be noted that self-confidence, self-awareness, self-control, interpersonal skills, integrity and tolerance to stress skills are of moderate level.

Table 5: Personal Skills

	Mean	Std Dev
Self-Confidence	1.82	0.38
Self-Awareness	1.93	0.32
Self-Control	1.91	0.25
Responsibility	1.16	0.52
Commitment	1.11	1.10
Adoptability	1.20	0.57
Flexibility	1.18	0.82
Self-Directed	1.23	0.52
Team Spirit	1.13	0.94

Interpersonal Skills	1.89	0.39
Leadership	1.20	0.63
Co-operative	1.21	0.10
Initiative and Proactive	1.14	1.08
Integrity	1.90	0.28
Tolerance to stress/Emotional Resilience	1.90	0.36

Table 6 gives the perspective on the respondent's core skills. This shows the highest mean with the "updated knowledge of the subject" (M = 1.91, SD = .28) and the lowest with the computer literacy (M = 1.23, and SD = .52). The items such as subject knowledge and the understanding of the concepts, facts principles and theories have the same moderate value for their mean.

Table 6: Core Skills

	Mean	Std Dev
Technical Skills	1.28	0.50
Computer Literacy	1.23	0.52
Hands in Case Solving	1.26	0.39
Subject Knowledge	1.87	0.32
Understanding of Concept, Facts, Principles and Theories	1.87	0.44
Breadth of Knowledge	1.87	0.44
Application of Knowledge to Practical situation	1.34	0.34
Updated Knowledge in Subject	1.91	0.28

10. Test Result for the Hypothesis

H1: Management students of the Dehradun district are good in employability skills. The overall rating of the employability skills has been of (Mean=1.60 and SD=0.31) moderate level. So the employability skills of the management students are not good. Hence H1 is being rejected herewith.

H2: The male students have better employability skills. Table 7 reveals that there is not any significance difference between the employability skills of male and female participants.

H3: There is a strong relationship between the students' core and high order thinking skills. While calculating the coefficient of correlation of the skills it is observed that $r = -1$. Thus, there is perfect negative correlation between both the skills and hence the third hypothesis has also been rejected.

Table 7: Employability Skills of Male and Female students

	Male		Female		t-Value	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Employability Skills	1.6166875	0.5243125	1.588125	0.73625	0.040593	p<0.5

H4: There is a strong relationship between the students' Personal and basic academic skills. The value of correlation between these two variables is $r = +1$. Thus, there is perfect positive relationship between the students' personal and basic academic skills and hence the fourth hypothesis is accepted.

11. Findings

The findings of the research stated that students' employability skills as a whole are at the moderate level. In terms of basic academic skills, the 'General Awareness' item is found to have a low mean score. General Awareness is an important element to carry out duty especially in day to day business activities. Even an employer gives priority to it. While taking the gender wise analysis the mean score for the basic academic skills of male is more than the female. When it comes to the High Order Thinking skills, 'Learning' item has the lowest mean score. Learning is truly significant to make consistence performance in ones job. The good observance into this skill is that reasoning among the respondents has been found good. This is helpful in making quick decisions logically or to interpret something and making conclusion. The conclusion should be based on thinking as well as other related considerations. The reasoning and decision making skills are found to be of moderate level.

Gender based comparison for the High Order Thinking skill has given that females' mean score are more than the males. Aspect of Personal skills has showed the 'commitment' item with low mean. This is not a good sign. The highest mean has been observed with the items 'self awareness' and 'self control'. The item confidence comes into the fourth ranking into the task. In terms of employability, this item should be with good ranking. The analysis has revealed low score even with the items like 'adaptability', 'responsibility', 'commitment', 'team spirit', and 'self directed'. The scenario today is that people need to be self directed, committed, responsible and accommodative. Despite this the respondent have given low score to these components of personal skills, which is not a good sign. In gender-wise analysis, the mean score for the female is more than the male in the personal skill set. While exploring the Core Skills of the respondents the items 'understanding the concept, facts, principles and theories', 'subject knowledge', and 'breadth of knowledge' have been given the highest ranking among the components of core skills. This is a good observation that

the respondents are good in the content knowledge. While taking the perspective of the complete employability skill among the two genders there is not any big difference between the employability skills of the two genders.

The respondents' core and high order thinking skills are not found to be significantly correlated, implying that those who are good in core skills may not be good in high order thinking skills. However, the respondents' personal and basic academic skills have indicated positive relationship implying that those who are good in basic academic skills are also good in personal skills.

12. Conclusions

The present research suggests that the employability status of the respondents requires improvement. Being good at one skill cannot facilitate the competency in the other. So today's scenario is that the applicant who is multi tasking can sustain and gain in the employment. The base of the entire career and its growth lies on the primary education and its further hierarchical stages; hence the focus towards the learning should start from the primary education and then should go further till the end of learning. And learning is continuous and it does not end with completion of the curriculum. Hence, in this regard individual centric approach is needed. The redesigning of the University curriculum with more apprenticeship and live industry projects will facilitate the pre-job training which will surely enhance the employability among graduates. The Indian educational governance is the one which is in earnest need of reform. Besides that, instructors should practice employability skill during teaching and learning session so that it could assist students to understand ways of applying the skills by themselves.

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