



Employability Skills Among Graduates

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Abstract

In today's world one of the most important things to survive is to find an employment. Generally people enter into employment as young adults, to be specific "Graduates". In order to employable these graduates and young adults are supposed to possess varied skills. Therefore this study is an analysis of different type of employability skills a graduate is supposed to have.

In this study we also discuss what "Employability" is. It indicates how much ones Employability skills are important. An exploration on four major skills. Self efficacy (belief in self), Team Effectiveness (ability to work in a team effectively), Stress Tolerance (attitude during times of stress) and Emotional Management (ability to manage emotions in any kind of situation) has been done in this study. These skills specially plays a very important role among the other skills .Employers especially those in the Human Resource team, are in fact looking for graduates who are very inventive, witted and compliant. This study mainly aims at finding the answer for why are occupational self efficacy, Team Effectiveness, Tolerance and Emotional Management skills so important in an Employee.

Keywords: Employability skills, Self Efficacy, Team effectiveness, Emotional Management and Stress Tolerance

1. INTRODUCTION

In the highly competitive business world of today one of the most important things to survive is to earn a lively hood by finding an employment or to be an employer and provide employment person to have a variety of skills that would make him employable. They can be a range of inborn skills that they possess from birth, which can also be called as Talent or they can be range of academic skills that are learnt during schooling and University studies until the person be graduate. Ben Mitchell et al,(2008)say that the term “Employability “is often related or rather closely associated to the term “job readiness”.

Employers mainly look for skills like language skills, analytical skills, ability to work under shift timings, ability to work in teams, etc. So every graduate today has to give a lot of importance to skills that employers focus on rather than focus on developing their own skills. The aim of this study is to discuss employability skills, their importance and the skill requirements for graduates from a graduate recruiter’s point of view .So we are studying about what the basic and the main skills are, that a graduate is supposed to have in order to perform well in his her job. Mostly multi skilled graduates are highly sought after these days.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term ‘Employability Skills’ has been defined by different authors and researchers in different ways i)Yorker’s (2006) definition of the term has been widely used, which simply says Employability skills are a set of achievements-skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduate more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations.

(ii) Verhaar and Smulders (1999) term employability as the latest buzz-word. It is due to the most important and latest term that has been creating confusion among graduates. Employers expect different kinds of skills from a graduate perspective are different from that of an employer.

(iii) Harvey (2002) in his report Employability and Diversity says Employability has many definitions but they break down into two broad groups .The first relate to the ability of the student to get a job after graduation.

(iv) Hillage and pollard 1998 Enhancing the students attributes and ultimately with empowering the student as a critical life-long learner.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Why Employability skills important in a Graduate entering employment?

How important are occupational self Efficacy, Team Effectiveness, Stress tolerance and Emotion Management skills in a graduate?

Will these four major skills make a Graduates entering employment employable?

If they are important, do Graduates in today's generation possess these skills?

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

1. Exploring ones Employability skills based on ones occupational self-efficacy, belief in Team Efficacy and stress Tolerance and emotion Management.
2. The level of these skills present in today's Graduates are relatively high or low only very few are the average levels of possessing these skills.
3. Occupational Self Efficacy, Team effectiveness, stress Tolerance, Emotion Management are four common skills that are the most sought after in Graduates entering employment.

Research Method

A Survey was conducted on graduates, Standardized questionnaires circulated consisted of questions related to one's self Efficacy, Team Effectiveness, Stress Tolerance and Emotion Management and graduates were asked to rate the questions on what they think about themselves, about people attitudes and their working under opposition or pressure.

Employability Skills

Each country in the world gives the term "Employability skills" a different name and a different description .These are different names used to describe "Employability Skills" in different countries.

Table:1 Employability skills

United Kingdom	Core skills, Common skills, key skills
New zealand	Essential skills
Australia	Key competencies, employability skills
Canada	Employability skills
United States	Basic skills, necessary skills, work place know-how
France	Transferable skills
Germany	Key qualifications

According to an article by the University of Liverpool, it is absolutely essential for graduates to have a degree for most careers and jobs, but until and unless graduates bond their degree with relevant skills, it will not be useful. Thus Employability skills are very important. It is not easy to find a job build a career with a degree alone. The Scottish Government has proved that Employability skills are very important in a way by making the development skills essential to help their children towards becoming successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors according to Effie Maclellan and Rebecca Soden (2004). Because of the importance of developing employability skills and becoming better employees in future, the Government trains them from childhood to graduation.

Employability skills give people not only the means with which to make a living but also the wherewithal to live meaningful life. With all these ideas of different people we learn that Employability skills are in great need in graduates and employers are looking for graduates who are well learnt in employability skills that make them employable and fit into their job role and position. If the focus of graduate is on both earning and building a proper career, giving quality time to enhance their employability skills is absolutely mandatory. Graduates minds can change easily depending on factors of age, mindset and trend. When graduates grow and learn about the different demands and needs of the market and the scenario, and thus, their minds tend to change according to the demand and the need of the hour. But, what they have been enhancing are the skills that their subject offers.

Thus Employability skills are supposed to be given more importance to, while completing graduation. These skills make lives meaningful, develop knowledge, shape careers, maximize

productivity of companies and organizations and primarily and solely make a graduate employable in all situations.

Rate of unemployment among graduates due to lack of skills

EconPort states that there are three kinds of unemployment. They are structural, frictional and cyclical types of Unemployment. Structural unemployment related to the situation where there is a mismatch of jobs and workers because of lack of skills. The series, “Youth employment crisis (2013) in the Youth Unemployment: it’s not the age that matters but lack of skills, states that the low skills comprise the bulk of the unemployment in the European countries. According to Kimberly Amadeo (2013) , in the “Current U.S Unemployment Rate Statistics”, the unemployment rate is a lagging indicator because employers resist hiring new workers until they are absolutely sure that the economy will stay strong. Considering the statistics in the U.S for the past two years 2012 and 2011, we see that at the end of December 2012, the number of unemployed remained at 12.2 million(7.8%). For the economy to stay strong the U.S had not been hiring new people , pondering about what could make them not hire new employees, we can assume many factors. Indeed, in the “Readers Respond “ form the article : Current U.S Unemployment Rate statistics by Kimberly Amadeo, for the question of what causes unemployment?, the various answers like increase in the rate of growth of population, corruption, Government instability, lack of acquisition of skills for the job, etc. are observed.

Looking at the reason for high unemployment of young people (1 to 25) in the UK, the first reason lack of qualifications, which can also be described as kills, where young people lacked the necessary skills and training to impress employers, according to Tejvan Pettinger (2012) in Reasons for Youth Employment, an article on a look at the economics reason for high youth unemployment in the UK between 2004- 2011. Thus , lack of skills and many other factors have been a cause of unemployment in different countries, as stated by AwourPonge (2013). Why does this happen? Is it because of the mismatch between Employers perspective of Employability skills in graduates and graduates perspective entering employment ?Lets us have a look through different literature studies that have found that indeed there is a mismatch between skills expected in graduates by employers and what graduates suppose to be the right ones.

Employers expectation of employability skills from graduates entering employment

Different employers look for different skills in graduates entering employment. Many researchers have been able to identify and tell us of what skills employers look for in a graduate

entering employment. Harvey et al (2002) stated that, most employers look for graduates who are proactive, can use higher level skills including, ‘analysis, critique, synthesis and multi layered communication to facilitate innovative team work in catalyzing the transformation of their organization’. Will Archer and Jess Davison (2008) have come up with a summary of what are the specific skills employers look for, they stated that:

1. 86% of employers felt good communication skills to be important, yet many employers are dissatisfied that graduates can express themselves effectively.
2. ‘Soft Skills’ such as team working are also vital and even more important than most ‘Hard’ skills.
3. Numeracy and literacy skills are considered essential by 70% of employers.
4. 65% of international employers indicate that having overseas professional work experience makes graduate more employable.

Williams and Owen (1997) state that the most perceived graduate qualities are the ability to learn, intelligence, idea and imagination and communication skills. Billing (2003) also puts in a thought that employers want employees who are “effective communicators, problem solvers and critical thinkers, and can work well within a team”. Coopers and Lybrand (1998) describe the term, ‘employability skills’ in terms of four key areas, the skills that employers would look for:

- 1) Traditional intellectual skills – e.g. critical evaluation, logical argument;
- 2) Key skills – communication, IT, etc.
- 3) Personal attributes – motivation , self – reliance
- 4) Knowledge of organizations and how they work.

Graduates perspective of employability skills

Graduates entering employment face problems such as not being able to know which kind of skills to enhance or are to be learnt and acquired. Primarily, the most important challenge they would face, is to know if they are fit to be employed by an employer for any kind of jobs. If they are employable, they are believed to possess the right kind of skills, but it does not end there. Entry level graduates would have not acquired the skills necessary for the job and possess skills required accurately for the job and are not prepared for the demands of industry career (Peddle, 2000). Today’s world of work and generation required new skills such as negotiating, networking, problem solving and skills to manage process rather than functional skills . Finding a good job after graduation is not the end of the story, as to be employed is to be at risk, to be

employable is to secure. The National Children's Bureau (2012) had come up with a list of soft skills that graduates think would be applicable to range of jobs as given in the Table below :

Table:2 Soft skills that would be applicable to a range of jobs

Skill	Attribute/ Definition
Self Confidence	Belief in oneself or one'
Self esteem	A positive or negative orientation towards oneself, an overall evaluation of one's worth or value
Motivation	Interest/ engagement , effort and prespective/ work ethic
Self - efficacy	Belief in one's ability to succeed in a particular situation
Communication skills	Ability to convey information effectively so that it is received and understood; appropriate verbal/nonverbal communication with colleagues, managers and customers/others.
Team work	Ability to work cooperatively with others
Assertiveness	Ability to confidently express views or needs without either aggression/dominance/ undue submissiveness towards other
Self -control	Ability to control own emotions and behavior, particularly in difficult situations or under stress.
Reliability	Attendance, time- keeping, consistent standards
Positive attitude	Keen to work , learn , accept feedback and take responsibility
Presentation	Consistently clean, tidy and appropriately dressed, with a polite and professional manner
Planning	Ability to plan tasks and monitor progress
Problem solving	Ability to identify problems and devise solutions
Prioritizing	Ability to identify and focus of priority tasks

Because of this mismatch between employers and graduates expectations, many young graduates today are unemployed. This study will stress on the importance of Employability skills such as

Occupational Self Efficacy which has determinant such as self confidence, positive attitude, command etc .Team Effectiveness which has determinant like dependability, cooperation etc. skills including levels of stress tolerance and emotion management. These are some of the skills that employers are looking for overall in graduates. This research will tell us if graduates possess these skills in high or average or low levels.

Occupational Self Efficacy

Self Efficacy is a term used in psychology, approximately analogous to a person's confidence in their own proficiency. According to Albert Bandura, Self efficacy is the belief in ones capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations.

Bandura described these beliefs and proficiency as criterion of how people think cognitively behaves physically and feel. Self Efficacy is determined by six different factors. The Webster's dictionary defines each of them as:

1. **Confidence:** The state of mind characterized by ones reliance on himself, or his circumstances a feeling of self-sufficiency.
2. **Command:** To order with authority to lay injunction upon
3. **Adaptability:** The ability to change or be changed to fit changed circumstances.
4. **Personal Effectiveness:** The quality of being able to bring about an effect
5. **Positive Attitude:** A quality or state characterized by certainty or acceptance
6. **Independence:** The state or quality of being independent ,freedom from dependence.

Team Effectiveness: Team effectiveness is defined globally to apply to a variety of work teams, consistent with current thinking .Team effectiveness depends on people taking up different responsibilities in a group while working. If there is no proper coordination, cooperation and decision making on who does what n the group, the success of the team is uncertain.

Team Effectiveness is determined by three different factors. The Webster's dictionary refers to each of term as:

Dependability: The trait being dependable or reliable.

Cooperation: the act of cooperating or of operating together to one end.

Sharing: Using or enjoying something jointly with others.

Stress Tolerance: Stress Tolerance is basically to be able to work well even under pressure and or even while facing opposition.It is rather the ability to maintain effective performance under pressure or adversity.Stress can be caused by various factors such as work overload,work under load,family problems,health problems,problems with peers,work time pressures,burn out etc.The level of stress tolerance is measured by measuring the stress Attitude in Gradutes.

Emotion Management: Peter Totterdell (2002)states that Emotion management refers to the ways in which people influence their own feelings and expressions and the ways in which they influence other peoples feelings. Graduate entering employment generally will not be able to control their emotions since they would be young. Most of the graduates lack experience and thus would not know how to control their emotions and deal with the situation .Considering a situation where an employer shouts at a new graduate who had just entered employment, the employee might become depressed or talk back if he/she is short tempered. But people who are experienced tend to calm down and think about what has gone wrong. In fact in real life situations, young people are always high at emotions, be it joy or sorrow or anger or any kind

of emotions. Thus emotions management in Graduates depends on the back ground of their growth education, physical traits and social factors to be precise.

Findings

Based on the scores(1-15) the following results have been obtained which are shown in the tables. The observations from the above study show the level of Employability skills in graduates. We will discuss about each factor related to each skill in detail.(refer to Appendix)

Occupational Self Efficacy: Most of the Graduates have a high level of Self Efficacy. They have a strong sense of self belief that they can do all the work effectively. About 37(61%) of them have a high level, 3(5%) have normal level and 19(31%) have low level of Occupational Self Efficacy.

Confidence: Most Graduates have a high level of confidence. 53(87%) of them have a high level of confidence, 8(13%) have a normal level of confidence. Out of 61 responses the score from 10-15 are ranked as high level and 7-9 ranked as Average level and below 7 ranked as low level. Same ranking followed for all criteria.

Command: Most Graduates have a high level of command 52(85%) have high level and 9(15%) of them have normal level.

Adaptability About 55(90%) have a high level and 6(10%) have normal level of Adaptability

Personal Effectiveness: 55(90%) have high level and 6(10%) have normal level of personal effectiveness

Positive Attitude: 50(82%) have high level and 11(18%) have normal level of positive Attitude.

Independence: 46(75%) have high level, 13(22%) have normal level and 2(3%) have low level of the quality of being independent.

Team Effectiveness: Most of the Graduates have a low level of Team Effectiveness. They don't have a strong belief in working as a team that will produce more and better results in the work that they do. About 24(39%) have high level, 5(8%) come under the normal range 32(52%) low.

Dependability: 28(46%) have normal level of the quality of dependability and 33(54%) have low level.

Cooperation: 24 (39%) have high level and 37(61%) have low level of cooperativeness.

Sharing: 55 (90%) have normal level and 6(10%) have low level of the quality of sharing.

Stress Tolerance: Most of the Graduates have a high level of stress tolerance and working against pressure and opposition. Stress Levels: 27(44%) have high level, 12(20%) have normal level and 22(36%) have low level of tolerance towards stress.

Emotion Management: Most of the Graduates have high ability to manage their emotions and have no problem I expressing their emotion being under stability .32(52%) have high level,5(9%)have normal level and 24(39%)have low level o emotion management skills.

Practical Implications:

1. Occupational Self Efficacy, Team Effectiveness, Stress Tolerance and Emotion Management along with their determinants are important skills that graduate need to focus on before entering employment.
2. Since Employability skills are very important, every graduate has to enhance their skills from the beginning of their graduation studies itself so that they will be ready for their career and be employable by the end of their studies.
3. This Exploratory study Employability skills among Graduates helps Graduate Recruiters to choose graduates who have the skills that will make them work effectively and efficiently.
4. It also helps graduates enhance their employability skills and gives them the knowledge of what kind of skills they need to have and develop before entering employment.

Table:3 Average of Levels of Occupational Self Efficacy, Team Effectiveness, Stress Tolerance and Emotion Management in Graduates

S.No	Age	Gen	OSE			Team Effectiveness			Stress Attitude			E.M		
			High	Avg	Low	High	Avg	Low	High	Avg	Low	High	Avg	Low
1	21	F	14			14				6	11			
2	23	M	10			12			15			14		
3	24	F	11					5	9				6	
4	23	M			6.5			4.5	14			9		
5	20	M		7			7		8				5	
6	21	F	10			11				5			6	
7	23	F	13					5		6			6	
8	21	M	12					5	9		13			
9	24	M	14			12		6	13		13			
10	22	F	10					5		6	14			
11	23	F		8			8		15		10			
12	20	F	11					5	14		12			
13	10	F	13					4.5	14		11			
14	22	F	14				8		15		12			
15	22	M	12					5		6			6.5	
16	22	M			6	13			13				5.5	
17	22	F	11					4.5		6.5			5	
18	23	M	13					6		5	12			
19	22	M	12				7.5		14			9		

20	21	F		7				5			6			6
21	22	M	14				8		12			10		
22	23	M	12					5	15			12		
23	23	M			5,5			5			5	11		
24	22	F			6.5			5			6	11		
25	25	F	13					3.5	12			14		
26	22	M	12					5	15			10		
27	21	F			6.5			4.5		9				6
28	21	F			6.5			5			6			5
29	21	M	13					5		8				6
30	23	M			6	11					5			6
31	20	F	11					5	15			12		
32	20	F	14				7.5		13			13		
33	26	M			6	14					6			6
34	22	F			5	12			15					6
35	22	M	15				8			9		10		
36	20	M	11					5		9				5
37	19	F			6	11					6		9	
38	21	M			6	12					5			4.5
39	21	M	12					6			6	11		
40	19	M			6.5			5	15			13		
41	21	M	12			13				8		12.5		
42	21	F			6.5	13					4	13		
43	22	M			6.5			6			4	14		
44	21	F			6.5	11			15					5.5
45	22	M	14					5			5			6
46	21	F			6.5		8			9				6
47	19	M	12					5		9		13.5		
48	21	M	11			11				8		11		
49	20	M			6.5	12			12			12		
50	23	M	14					4.5	15					6
51	22	M	11					4.5			6			6
52	22	M	13			14			13				9	
53	24	M	11			11			14			10		
54	22	M			6.5	13				9		10		
55	22	M	14			12			14					6
56	22	M	11					5	13			11		
57	22	M	13					5	15				9	
58	23	M	12			12			15					4.5
59	20	F			6.5			5	13					5
60	21	M	14			13					6	11		
61	18	F	13					5	13			12		

CONCLUSION

Hence, Employability skills of graduates have been explored based on their Occupational self-efficacy, belief in Team Efficacy, Stress Tolerance and Emotion Management by means of this study. The levels of these skills present in today's Graduates are relatively high or low, only very few are at the average levels of possessing these skills. Occupational Self Efficacy, Team Effectiveness, Stress Tolerance, Emotion Management are four common skills that are the most sought after in Graduates entering employment. In fact, Graduates have been enhancing these skills in themselves as they see the need for these skills rising to a high level in different companies including Government organizations. Earlier in India, Government organizations did not need employees to possess skills other than their qualifications, where MNCs needed candidates who possessed skills including good and moderate qualifications. But today, both Government organizations and MNCs look for candidates who possess these skills as well.

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