Role of Private Training Institutions in Developing Employability Skills of Students with Special Reference to Soft Skills

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Abstract

The purpose of the students who go to schools and college are to get a job. Whether all the students who go to school and college get a job, is a very big question mark. In the education institutions they teach the subjects prescribed by universities to improve the knowledge of the students to work in the company. But the most important thing is how to get a job? How they can be made employable is very important? For this there are more private training institutions, which take care of training the students on the employability skills. In the recent years the education level of students are very high. The knowledge they have gained is enormous with the help of various sources of information. But one thing the students need to concentrate is their employability skills. Many students struggle a lot to get job, not because of the lack of knowledge, but for Employability Skills. Soft Skills are the part and parcel of employability skills. This paper describes the important employability skills which are being trained by the private training institutions to develop the students to be marketable in the job market.

Keywords: Employability Skills, Private Training Institutions, Job market, Soft Skills, Students’ Expectations

I. INTRODUCTION

Students studying in the college wish to get either a job or to start their own business or higher studies and get settled in the life. The most important things required for any student is KSA – Knowledge Skill & Attitude. As far as subject knowledge is concerned, they get this from the college thro’ books, lectures, seminars, presentations, internet, etc. Students need to approach private training institutions as far as other Skills are concerned – Aptitude, Employability, Soft & Technical. When it comes to Attitude – Behavioural and Personality aspects are important.

Employability is conceptualized as a form of work specific active adaptability that enables workers to identify and realize career opportunities. As such, employability facilitates the movement between jobs, both within and between organisations. Although employability does not assure actual employment, we contend that it enhances an individual’s likelihood of gaining employment. An individual is employable to the extent that he or she can parlay person factors effectively to negotiate environmental demands. (Chan, 2000)

II. BACKGROUND

2.1. Employability Skills

Employability is not just about getting a job. Conversely, just because a student is on a vocational course does not mean that show how employability is automatic. Employability is more than about developing attributes, techniques or experience just enable a student to get a job, or to progress within a current career. It is about learning and the emphasis is less on „employ” and more on „ability”. In essence, the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner. (Harvey, 2003)
We should not consider employability as a distinct set of achievements that can be added to the curriculum, but as a broad area which students should be encouraged to develop themselves so as to enable them to become more effective more rapidly within a work situation and to continue to grow and change within their working lives as they meet new situations. (Yorke & Knight, 2003)

Many graduates pass out from business schools with good grades but do not make it to the top owing to lack of personality and soft skills. Hence, it is imperative that organisations must have excellent people management process in place to retain such managers of exceptional caliber. (Showry, 2012)

Employability is the acquisition of attributes (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that make graduates more likely to be successful in their chosen occupations (whether paid employment or not). Employability usually refers to the employment of graduates but his includes self-employment. A broader definition includes any lifestyle choice, or refers to employability as the development of abilities to ensure graduates are critical life-long learners. There is a narrow alternative approach, once popular, especially with policy makers but now less used, which was to define employability as the proportion of graduates, from an institution that were employed within a specified period after graduation. (Dhileep Kumar M., 2010)

2.2. Institutions
The role of private training institutions is very important for the students. Students approach various institutions to equip their non-academic skills, such as – Job skills, Aptitude skills, Soft skills and Technical skills. Institutions deal with equipping the students for getting a job, sustain and perform effectively in their jobs.

The mushroom growth of private institutions make students to choose the institutions based on their requirement, as well as the areas of their lacking.

2.3. Soft Skills
The importance of development of soft skills to corporate employers, for the growth of socio-economic benefits is well established in most western societies: „American industry currently spends around USD 50 billion every year on training, and much of this training focuses on social and emotional skills“ (Talavera & Perez-Gonzalez, 2007)

Soft Skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual”s interactions, job performance and career prospects. Unlike hard skills, which are about a person”s skill set ability to perform a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are interpersonal and broadly applicable. Soft skills are often described by using terms often associated with personality traits. (Parsons TL, 2011)

From the perspective of educational interventions aimed at developing soft skills, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a research body of international standing in school programmes on „socio-emotional education“, has drawn up a list of socio-emotional skills and competencies that fall under four headings:

a. Knowing oneself and other people
   An example of this is the skill to recognize and label one”s own feelings
b. Taking responsible decisions
   For which it will be necessary to have, an appropriate emotional regulation
c. Caring for other people
   In which empathy is a key factor
d. Knowing how to behave
A group including verbal and non-verbal communication, the management of interpersonal relationships, and negotiating

It could, of course, be argued that the soft skills which are the subject paper should be embedded in the overall degree structure rather than taught in semi-isolation. There is an element of truth and an element of validity in this suggestion. Soft Skills develop in engineering students through their engineering courses, in particular during project work. However, the authors would argue that some explicit teaching, embedded or otherwise, is very beneficial to „kick-start” them in these activities; furthermore, unless soft skills development is taught and assessed explicitly. Soft Skills are a relatively new addition to engineering degree courses and perhaps the soft skills culture is not yet mature enough for effective embedding. (Susan et al, 2003)

Numerous works have been published on the subject of developing soft skills to university graduates. The interest seems to extend in virtually all specifications, such as engineering, financial studies, health care, etc. According to (Shuman et. al, 2005) were the specification of “professional skills” (including soft skills) determined by Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) are presented and analysed. The importance of soft skills to engineer”s employability and their contribution to salaries is emphasized.

The usefulness of developing soft skills of disadvantaged groups and for reasons other than workplace success, such as promoting social inclusion and reduction of school drop-out rate, is an underdeveloped, but very important, domain. However a search for relevant publications has not returned any. From this perspective, the MASS project methodology is innovative and also pioneer in its approach. (Kechagias K., 2011)

III. PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

The importance of soft skill for enhancing employability, personal fulfillment and social participation is widely accepted. However, it seems that there is not a single best approach, but rather the most appropriate one depends on the context under which the training is taking place. Hence in this research work, researcher has identified four major skills for evaluating based on the opinion of the private training institutes on the importance of the skills required by the students.

Many graduates pass out from business schools with good grades but do not make it to the top owing to lack of personality and soft skills. Hence, it is imperative that organisations must have excellent people management process in place to retain such managers of exceptional caliber. (Showry, 2012)

There are many different terms, often used interchangeably or in a vague sense (Binkley et al., 2005) to describe similarly concepts, including “enabling skills”, “generic skills”, “core skills”, “key competencies”, “essential skills”, and “necessary skills”. These different terms would seem to have slightly different implications, but they were often chosen to meet specific circumstances and preferences, and thus, are not related in any systematic way to differences in the way these skills were conceptualized.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research problem addressed by this study was to determine the importance of institutions in equipping the students with employability skills and other specific skills. Through an extensive literature review, the researcher found some articles that provide answers to the questions. A few articles were identified through a computer search of databases of published works and various manuals in the information area.
The articles were searched by the title based on the following four criteria, it must contain one of the key terms “Employability Skills”, “Soft Skills”, “Expectations of students” and “Role of private institutions”. The methodology adopted is to search for the basic components that contribute towards the employability skills required for the students.

The researcher has taken the questionnaire method to gather the details. The questionnaire is divided into two major divisions, such as firstly, demography – age, gender, degree (Arts & Engineering), branch, year of study (First to final year), medium of schooling, location, etc; secondly – a few major skills – Soft Skills, Technical Skills, Aptitude Skills, Job Skills (JAST). All the areas were supported by different authors in different concepts.

The institutions have ranked the skills based on their students” interest and expectations. The questionnaires were gathered from 20 training institutions directly. Few unanswered data from the respondents have been added to the maximum category to get uniformity. For this study the researcher has used convenient random sampling technique for data collection.

4.1. Sample selection methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample size of the population size</th>
<th>50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated proportion</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident Coefficient</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling Technique</td>
<td>Convenient Sampling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 1

4.2. Purpose

Many employees emphasized the importance of soft skills during interviews. Various studies have discussed that many employers spend significant amount of resources to provide employees with training for improvement in not only technical, but also soft skills (Wadhwa et al., 2008) Core employability skills and communication skills are often referred as soft skills. (Andreas, 2012) Nothing has impacted the willingness of companies to invest in soft skills development more than the fact that there are now studies to show that this stuff really works. “There”’s more empirical data coming out all the time to show that such skills as listening and building consensus really do affect the bottom line. (Hendrie, 1999)

4.3. Tools

The researcher tried to adopt the standardized tools to evaluate the soft skills required for the students from the institutions, he was able to find HKA agencies Appraisal form with different skills. It has ten major skills and 45 sub criteria. The researcher has not opted for that tool, as it not much relevant to his research study. And so he has developed his own skills, which are four major skills such as – Aptitude, Job, Soft & Technical skills (JAST).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aptitude Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Job Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Soft Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Technical Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 2

4.4. Limitations

Many private training institutions were not able to give their clear opinion based on their experience. As the employees of that particular institutions were not either permanent employees or long term employees. Definition of skills and a common understanding of what a skill is, pose a problem for comparability and interpretation. Given that the survey has to be relatively short to ensure an acceptable response rate, the questionnaire did not define each skill. However, it is possible that the
private training institutions may have perceived the meaning of the skills differently. However, there is no widely accepted categorization of skills that are exhaustive and non-overlapping. Hence, an overlap is unavoidable in our view.

V. RESULT DISCUSSION
5.1. Opinion of the Institutions on the four major factors required for the students to get a job:

This section discusses the four major factors (JAST) required for the student to get a job based on the opinion of the institutions. They were also ranked by the institutions based on their students’ interest and expectations.

5.1.1. Soft Skills
It is important to complement technical skills gained over time with much-needed soft skills such as communication, presentation and writing skills. Ultimately, these skills come in handy when delivering technical information. As these skills are not honed in the classroom, it is imperative that audit management or leadership coach teams in identifying opportunities to strengthen them. (Davis, 2007) The environment requires information security professionals to supplement their technical skills with a variety of soft skills such as managing, communicating, and stressing the business reasons for security objectives. (Krause, 2007) One third 37% of the institutions have chosen Soft Skill is required to get a job and ranked as First rank. (Mean = 6.27)

5.1.2. Job Skills
Job skill is a group of important skills instilled in each individual in order to produce productive workforce. This is parallel with individuals who have strong characteristics such as a high sense of self, innovative, productive, skillful, competitive, a strong sense of determination, and creative in facing the challenges of the nation as well as globalisation in the 21st century. Besides that Job skill is also crucial in all professions. (Overtoom, 2000) Nearly half of the institutions (40%) have chosen Job Skill as Second rank. (Mean = 3.45)

5.1.3. Technical Skills
The study suggests that Technical and Vocational Educational Department should provide a curriculum, which includes employment element skills which are needed by employers. The institutions and the industry should also create a compact joint-venture for students need in order to produce higher quality workers. (Kazilan, et. al, 2009) Majority 66% of the institutions have chosen Technical Skill is required to get a job and ranked as Third. (Mean = .93)

5.1.4. Aptitude Skills
Indeed, the concept of aptitude was initially introduced to help explain the enormous variation in learning rates for different tasks exhibited by individuals who seemed similar in other respects. (Bingham, 1937)
Understanding which characteristics of individuals are likely to function as aptitudes begins with a careful examination of the demands and affordances of target tasks and the contexts in which they must be performed. This is what we mean when we say that defining the situation is part of defining the aptitude. (Snow & Lohman, 1984) Mass majority 75% of the institutions have chosen Aptitude Skill is required to get a job and ranked as Fourth. (Mean = .82)
5.2. Research Findings

Many Private Training Institutions emphasized the importance of various skills required for the students. We test the importance of these skills relative to gender and brand. Therefore, the variables (Aptitude, Job, Soft and Technical skills - JAST) are created by combining various skills. Then, the following is statistically tested with t test, chi square and correlation.

As far as the private training institution and 4 major factors are concerned, with the help of the t test we came to know that there are no significant differences between Institution and the Aptitude Skills; Institution and Technical Skills. There are significant differences between Institutions and Soft Skills; Institution and Job Skills.

As far as the Brand and 4 major Skills are concerned, correlation test is used to measure the relationship between two or more variables. With the help of the correlation test and taking into consideration the level of significance as .05, we came to know that there is a positive correlation between Brand & Technical Skills; but all other three factors are negatively correlated. They are between Brand & Soft Skills; Brand & Aptitude Skills and Brand & Job Skills. Technical Skill is the only positive correlating factor with Brand. The same is shown in the Table 3.

To know the association between Brand and 4 major skills, $\chi^2$ test is used. We came to know that there are significant associations between Brand and Soft Skills, Brand and Job Skills. There are no significant association between Brand and Aptitude Skills and Brand and Technical Skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Name</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Soft Skills</th>
<th>Tech Skills</th>
<th>Job Skills</th>
<th>Apt Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand Name</td>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Skills</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech Skills</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>-.091</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td>.006*</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Skills</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.051</td>
<td>-.241</td>
<td>-.156</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apt Skills</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>-.112</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>-.279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (1-tailed)</td>
<td>.291</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.430</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)
As far as type of the private institutions are concerned, there are significant differences between Type of the Private Institutions and Aptitude Skills ($t = 2.795, 0.005 < 0.05$). Apart from this Aptitude Skills, there is no significant difference between type of private institutions and all other skills.

VI. CONCLUSION

Training students with a comprehensive and deep set of skills that are in demand would be of tremendous challenge to the private training institutions.

1. Students select the institutions based on the Technical skills and Aptitude skills. They cover subject knowledge and core area.
2. Students choose Private Training Institutions based on Soft skills and Job skills separately. They cover the behavioural and interpersonal skills such as delegating skill, listening skill, learning skill, on Soft Skills and immediate need for a student to get placed and to sustain in the company such as dress code, computer operations, group discussion, etc. on Job skills.

Based on the research findings, it is clear that all the major skills – Aptitude, Job, Soft and Technical skills (JAST) are very much required. However, while all the Employability skills remain important, Private Training Institutes consider soft skills the most important skills. Interdisciplinary will help the students to be more employable. Institutions and Students knew the importance of Soft skills.

Recommendations
Private Training Institutes recognized that Soft skills are important. Technical knowledge and Aptitude are fundamental to students that can be learnt in colleges. Students’ soft skills need to be honed as well.

The role of Private Training Institutes is to prepare their graduates to meet the demand for skills from different sectors. Institutions should customize program outcomes based on the demand of the companies. Interdisciplinary will help the students to be more employable. Institution Industry Interaction will give more exposure to the students’ community to know the application of the Overall Employability skills.

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