

EMPLOYERS EXPECTATIONS ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS OF FRESH GRADUATES - AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract—Employability skills refers to set of skills and knowledge required by the graduates in the workplace to satisfy their needs and corporate expectations. In Indian perspective, graduates feel that theoretical knowledge is more important than application but when they are recruited by corporate; the corporate don't have a choice but to spend their money, Time and Resources to train the students to become employable graduates. This article mainly concentrate on factors like communication skills, leadership skills, sector specific skills, team working skills, reading skills, writing skills and problem solving skills and expectation from the recruiters. The conclusion tells that how their curriculum, internship and placement activity plays a major role in developing their employability skills and how it should be applied in the interview session.

Keywords—Employability Skills, Employers Expectation, Education System, Employable Graduates, Problem Solving Skills

INTRODUCTION

The term employability is a set of achievements – 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. Employability skills have been defined as: “A set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy.” CBI

Factors:

The factors that help to make people employable include:

- Knowledge and abilities relating to a particular job;
- The ability to identify suitable job opportunities;
- Self-presentation (on applications and at interviews);
- External factors such as the job market and personal circumstances.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) in 1982 argued that employability is better understood as a social construct and stressed that to see it as only an individual issue was to miss important aspects of the concept. Therefore, NIACE believes that employability is a responsibility shared more equally between: • individuals who must be responsible for accepting the consequences of choices they make; • businesses which, in employing a workforce and serving customers, inculcate particular values and attitudes as well as shaping behaviours. (In many senses, what makes “employability” is determined by employers). Employers have a particular responsibility to develop the employability of their staff – for business reasons more than altruistic ones; • public bodies (schools, colleges, universities, the benefits agency, local and national government agencies) which have a duty to secure the employability of all citizens.

The CBI contributed to the discussion on employability in their report, ‘Time well spent: Embedding employability in work experience’, (CBI 2007). They define employability skills as: • Positive attitude • Self-management • Team working

• Business and customer awareness • Problem solving • Communication and literacy • Application of numeracy and • Application of information technology

A study by Archer and Davison (2008), considering the perspectives of employers on graduate employability, provides a contrast between what some universities are promoting and what is required by industry. Employers were in agreement about what were considered to be the most important skills that they look for in graduates. Archer and Davison (2008) found that regardless of the size of the company, 'soft skills' (e.g. communication skills and team-working) were perceived to have more weight than technical or 'hard skills' (e.g. a good degree qualification, IT skills). Indeed, Glass et al (2008) found that a minority of employers in their case studies recruit individuals from universities specifically for the technical skills that they hope will be beneficial to the organization. Rather, most employers see a degree as a proxy for achieving a certain level of competence that represents the minimum standard that they are seeking in a new recruit. Archer and Davison (2008) stress that such findings convey a strong message to HEIs. The findings here illustrate that universities need to equip graduates with 'deep' intellectual capabilities and a battery of applied practical skills which make them more 'work-ready'. Archer & Davison (2008, p8).

Skills and Capabilities for New Recruits

- Sector-specific skills
- Team working Skills
- Foreign language skills
- Reading skills
- Writing skills
- Communication skills
- Computer skills
- Being able to adapt to new situations
- Ability in reading/writing and analytical
- Problem-solving skills

Employers ranked skills and capabilities similarly when asked about the importance of various skills and capabilities and their general satisfaction with employees' skills and capabilities.

Skills and capabilities for future graduates

The highest number of employers selected basic capabilities, such as having good numeracy, literacy and computer skills, as it is most important for future graduates. Most of the employers think that graduates with bachelor's degrees best match the skill requirements in their company than a master's degree a best fit followed by graduates with PhD degree would best fit the skill requirements in their company. The recruiters have good coordination with universities based on curriculum design and study programs. Their preference is to go on internship programs since they have ample time to access the graduates' performance before offering them a full-term employment with their company. Nowadays recruiters from the industry sector were more likely to highlight the importance of foreign language skills because of globalization. As expected, a higher proportion of graduate recruiters with international contacts indicated that foreign language skills are very important when recruiting higher education graduates.

Internship is a crucial asset for new recruits

Besides the set of skills, work or Internship experience of graduates was highly important for recruiters. In total, most of the recruiters felt that Internship experience is a crucial asset for new recruits. Consequently, employers most frequently selected sector-specific work placements as an integral part of study programme when asked how universities could improve the employability of their graduates. Including practical experience in courses was the second most selected choice. Majority of recruiters has the potential to considerably enhance particular skills valued by employers like team working skills, communication skills, ability to adapt to new situations as skills regarded more important in the foreign language skills.

What skills do employers expect from graduates?

Employers look for a range of skills in graduate applicants, many of which are common to a number of different career areas. Those most frequently mentioned are communication, team working, leadership, initiative, problem-solving, flexibility and enthusiasm. Many skills overlap with one another. Leadership, for example, encompasses a number of other skills including cooperating with others, planning & organizing, making decisions and verbal communication.

Verbal communication itself involves various means of communication, some of which may vary from person to person like talking over the phone, making a presentation to a group or explaining something to a person with more limited understanding of the topic.

Need of a formal and continuous Knowledge Enhancement

There are many reasons for going to university, including – naturally – a love of the subject to be studied, and the opportunity to experience a different way of life. Higher education is much more than a production line for work-ready graduates. Some graduates and their employers say more could be done to develop students' wider skills and attributes, including team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking and problem solving. Everyone seems to agree that work placements and internships make a huge difference to employability skills. However, access to placements is patchy, to say the least.

While there are variations in the classification of employability, there is a broad understanding of what qualities, characteristics, skills and knowledge constitute employability both in general, and specifically for graduates. Employers expect graduates to have technical and discipline competences from their degrees but require graduates also to demonstrate a range of broader skills and attributes that include team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and managerial abilities.

The concept and definition of employability has been discussed for a number of years but there has been a growing interest in graduate employability over the last decade. As the interest in promoting graduate employability has increased numerous studies have produced detailed breakdowns and taxonomies of particular skills and attributes required to promote graduate employability such as core skills; key skills; transferable skills; essential skills; functional skills; skills for life; generic skills and enterprise skills.

Graduate Skills and Attributes that are valued by Employers

The scoping interviews with employer found that there are characteristics, skills and knowledge and intellectual capability elements that are required for specific roles. In addition, combinations of transferable skills were also particularly relevant. These were Team working, Problem solving Self-management, Knowledge of the business, Literacy and numeracy relevant to the post, Good interpersonal and communication skills, Ability to use own initiative but also to follow instructions, Leadership skills where necessary in addition to these skills, employers also highlighted the need for particular attitudes and outlooks including motivation, tenacity, and commitment.

Employers stressed that efforts put into creating a good first impression, CV preparation and self-presentation at interviews were also very important, but many graduates appeared to lack the skill and motivation to impress at this initial stage. For example, a common criticism was that graduates often do not take the time and care to craft CVs geared to a particular employer and some employers highlighted that candidates often had limited motivation to apply themselves to their interview and do background research on the Company where they are appearing for the interview.

Larger employers placed importance on interviews and initial assessment centres to help highlight those candidates who possessed the motivation and range of skills required. In particular, the broader generic skills were assessed using role play, presentations and other interactive activities. Some of these employers used follow-up workshops and sessions with similar methods to maintain and build the capacity of newly-recruited graduates.

What do employers, students and graduates see as effective methods to promote graduate employability?

Employers, students and graduates saw placements/ internships and work experience as particularly effective modes to enhance graduate employability. This was apparent across all sectors and sizes of employer. However, a key factor in the usefulness of work experience and placements was the duration of the experience.

Graduates tended to value the extra-curricular experiences at university and work experience more highly than their degree's content (except in specialist areas), seeing these as adding to their CVs and helping to secure employment. Employers noted that where course work involved work-related learning such as teamwork projects, there was more of an opportunity for the academic component of the degrees to provide generic skills.

CONCLUSION

The student can't rely on their degree alone to automatically open doors after graduation. It will certainly unlock doors - in other words it will make you eligible to apply for jobs that specify "must be a graduate", Once their degree has unlocked the door, they need the right mix of skills, abilities and personal qualities in order to turn the handle and give the door the

push that will open it to you. The degree subject and academic ability may influence the choice, but skills, values, interests and personality will be just as important in making final decisions on choice of career. This does not mean that degree is irrelevant to employers - the subject and standard of your degree may be essential or useful in helping you enter your chosen career - but it does mean that, in parallel with your studies, you should aim to develop skills that will be of help to you in your future career as such skills are sought by all kinds of employers. The skills you should be developing are the skills that reflect your own personality, interests and abilities - as these are the qualities that will influence your eventual choice of career. The world of work is in a state of continual change: your career today may involve moving between a number of different job functions and employers, and those jobs and employers are themselves likely to change and develop during the time you are employed in them. Employers are therefore seeking graduates who are enterprising, resourceful and adaptable and who, as well as their degree, possess a range of skills which can be used in a wide variety of settings as well as in their careers. These are known as employability skills.

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