

EMPIRICAL STUDY ON COMPETENCY MAPPING AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS– A STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Competency mapping is a process of identifying the requisite talents to perform a task or role successfully in an organisation. The process of competency mapping acts as a platform to compare the present competency level of employees with the desired competencies to do a task effectively. This research study focused on six set of skills students should possess for their employment. Both primary and secondary data were used for the purpose of the study. Students’ expectation form the institutions were also studied and recorded.

Keywords: Competency Mapping, Employability Skills, Competency Level of Employees

INTRODUCTION

Competency Mapping is crucial in identifying the key strengths, skills and knowledge base of the students. Knowledge, skills set and attitude of the students should be measured in frequent intervals using competency mapping tools (Ruth, 2009). This will improve the readiness of the students for their placement. A competency map is a list of competencies that signify the factors that are essential for success of students in given job assignments that are part of their career plan. The word ‘mapping’ refers to comparison. Many educational institutions are using competency based training to train the students to get placed in organisations. Many graduates are unemployed and on the other hand jobs remain unfilled. Competency mapping helps to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates and also enable them to understand themselves better and where their career building efforts need to be channelized. Competency based approach when compared to traditional job analysis gives a clear idea on the potential candidates. Increased cost of recruitment, human resources, training and retention of employees, have influenced to introduce and implement competency mapping in organisations. Good aptitude, logical thinking, problem solving skills, team work, soft skills and leadership are some of the skills fall into the three major categories of skills (Knowledge, Skill & Attitude).

Employability Skills

Employability skills are the skills and traits that are helpful for the employees to perform in organisations (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). Employability skills encompass technical skills as well as soft skills (Anupama, 2016). Generic skills apart than conceptual skills from curriculum through text books and class room learning help students to build their employability skills and enhance their placement opportunities. Generic skills refer to the skills students learn to behave and interact effectively with others. Employability skills are not skills that not exactly job specific, but they are the skills that are necessary for all industries and for all types of jobs from entry level to chief executive officer (Blom & Saeki, 2011). The skills that are required not only to get a job, but also to perform the tasks effectively and progress in an organisation and contribute for the effective functioning of the firm. Sherer & Eadie (1987) specified that employers are generally having the opinion that

students passing out from the universities are not having sufficient skills. They need to get and improve required skills to meet the needs of the business and help the enterprise to manage the cut throat global competition.

Graduates should have the ability to express what they mean to say in a clear and also in a concise manner. Spoken and written skills are important in the tech era. Listening, comprehending, acting upon key instructions are also significant in polishing their employability skills (Weligamage, 2005). Problem solving skills is another significant skill that will fetch them a good job and take them to a good position. Students should have the ability to apprehend a problem, identify the key issues related to the problems, find the implications and identify the possible solutions. Application of knowledge from different areas and solving the problems is essential. Converting ideas into reality, involvement and showing a strong personal drive and being a self-motivated person to tasks on their own without instructions.

Graduates with good employability skills work efficiently in complex work environment, effectively interact with customers, flexible with work and co-workers, team players and need less supervision (Cappelli, 2008). John Griffith, Joint Chairman, KPMG stated that businesses organisations, colleges and universities should put their efforts together to train young people and prepare them for the workplace and provide them the information on career choices available to them. A portfolio of skills that enhances the employability of the candidates has to be imparted to them when they are graduating from colleges or universities (Vinitaa & Santanu, 2018).

Role of Stake Holders in Developing Employability Skills

Universities, Colleges and Placement Departments have a significant role to play in developing the employability skills of the graduates. They should act as a bridge between educational institution and employer. The needs and expectations of the corporate are to be informed to the graduates to create awareness among them before the skills are developed. The transition from education to employment should be taken care by the educational institutions and universities by incorporating skills development modules in the curriculum itself. Gaps in skills vary from industry to industry (Rajasekaran & Rajasingh, 2009). Skills based learning should be given importance by changing the curriculum, experiential learning through projects and internships, improving the communication skills of the students through class room presentations, case discussions, group discussions, and role plays. Learning environment provided to the students should be favourable to the students to build their skills. Graduates of the present generation need lot of encouragement to take part in the placement training programmes, because they are not understanding the importance of developing those skills. Every programme and course should have a component to enhance the employability skills of the students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive and conceptual in nature and based on both primary and secondary data. 1000 students from various arts & science colleges all over Tamilnadu were contacted and data were collected from them. A well-structured questionnaire was framed and the primary data were collected from students. The study covered set of skills expected by the employers, college education in India and students' perspective on employability skills.

Set of Skills Expected by the Employers

Various studies have been referred by the researcher to have a better understanding on

the employability skills that are expected by the employers. They are as follows (Table 1)

Table 1	
SKILLS BASED ON EMPLOYERS' EXPECTATION	
Communication skills (both oral & written)	Working with Teamwork
Problem solving skills	Listening
Being Self-motivated	Learning skills
Taking Initiative	Technical skills
Planning	Work Ethics
Self-management	Determination

These skills are required along with the conceptual knowledge they get through the lectures in the higher educational institutions. Curriculum embedded with these skills improves the student's competency and prepare them to face the interview. For example, giving group assignments and group projects improve their teamwork skills, giving oral presentations and asking them to blog improves their oral and written communication skills.

College Education in India

India's college going age group population will reach 140 million by the year 2030. This can be considered a boon or huge strength to boost the economy of the country. By channelizing the strength properly, youth of our nation can rule the world economy. All this is possible by imparting right and future knowledge to contribute better in the workplace. By imparting world-class inputs to them through curriculum and right education system, which is possible? Higher education system in Universities of India still far behind the standards when compared to best universities of the world. According to the data of QS World University Rankings of the year 2016, only two Indian universities were included in the top 200 and only ten came in top 700. Poor enrolment of students and Faculty shortage are the reasons for the low performance. According to the survey conducted in 28 states and Union Territories by Wheebox, an assessment firm on communications on their numerical ability and logical thinking, and domain knowledge revealed that only 34 percent of the graduates are employable. The study also found that employability skills of students from Punjab, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and West Bengal are good, whereas the employability skills of the students from Jammu & Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Bihar and Jharkhand are poor. As per UGC website, there are 789 universities, 37204 colleges and 11443 stand-alone institutions in India, up to the year 2017. Figure 1 depicts the growth of higher educational institutes in India.

The growth should also be proved in quality of education. Educational institutions, teachers, Universities and graduates have the shared responsibility for the growth of employability skills as well as the growth of the nation. The purpose of education is to impart knowledge which further leads to employment with the help of that knowledge. Favourable environment at college/classroom enhance the employability skills of the graduates. Students perception on their skills set was also analysed and the results are indicated on Table 2.

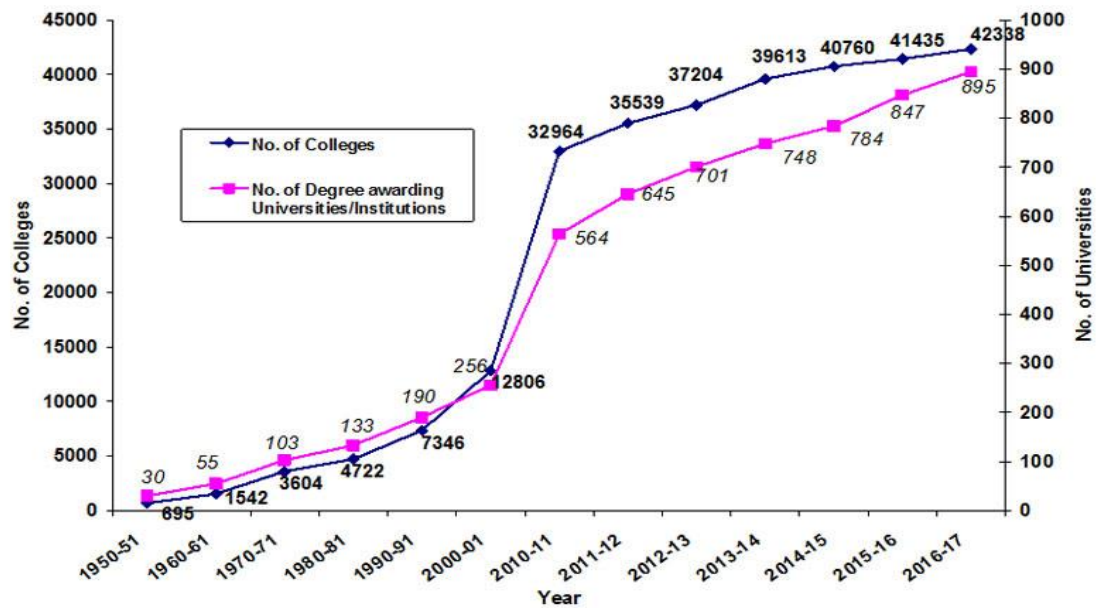


FIGURE 1
GROWTH OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

Table 2 indicates the competency mapping of skills based on students' perspective. Six major skills were considered and the top three traits in each skill were depicted in each category of skill based on the opinion of the students.

STUDENTS SKILL SET	Mean	SD	Mean Rank
Management Skills			
Goal-relevant activities, time allotment, scheduling	3.93	0.88	2.5
Effective study resource management	3.87	0.81	2.48
Self-skill assessment & performance evaluation	3.93	0.83	2.56
Work Ethics			
Punctual to meetings and events	4.22	0.82	2.78
Ability to achieve goals independently	4.09	0.87	2.56
Respecting polices & procedures	3.95	0.85	2.38
Communication Skills			
Expressing needs clearly	4.03	0.95	2.45
Listening carefully	4.01	0.97	2.40
Activities participation in classroom discussions	4.02	0.96	2.56
Career Management Skills			
Aptitude skills	4.02	0.96	2.51
Expressing knowledge to the expectations	3.94	1.06	2.44
Active involvement in projects	4.16	0.95	2.68
Course Content			
Ability to work in a team	4.22	0.92	12.50
Flexibility/Adaptability	4.11	0.98	11.73

Friendly/Outgoing personality	4.25	0.94	12.60
Entrepreneurial course of action awareness			
Builds relationships inside and outside the company	3.99	0.95	4.85
Accepts full responsibility and accountability	4.01	0.94	4.87
Enjoys the work, the challenges and the people	4.30	0.80	5.67

Major Findings on Students' Perception on their Skills

- Out of four management skills considered, students perceived that selecting goal-relevant activities, allocating time, preparing and following schedules, assessing skills and distributing work accordingly and evaluating performance and are acquiring, storing, allocating & using materials or space efficiently are the top three management skills they have.
- Out of nineteen factors considered to understand the contribution of course content on students' employability skills, it is observed that Friendly/Outgoing personality, ability to work in a team and flexibility/adaptability are the top three skills students acquire.
- 85 percent of the students agreed that they will maintain punctuality in attending meetings and events, capable of achieving organizational goals and personal goals independently and will respect organizational protocols and procedures.
- 70 percent of the students strongly agreed that they are able to communicate their intention, having good listening abilities, presenting assignments given to them and express their views in debates and group discussions.
- 67 percent of the students participated in the study strongly agreed that they always work hard to hone their job oriented skills, improving their aptitude along with studies and capable of communicating knowledge and actively involved in internships & projects.

SUGGESTIONS

This section presents the a few key suggestions to improve the employability skills of the students based on their perception on competency mapping.

- Students from urban areas are slightly having more exposure than the students from the rural section. Focusing only on academic skills is not sufficient to build employability skills, faculty members should involve them.
- Students should further develop their potential to understand their roles clearly to improve their competency. Students are expected to improve their confidence to apply their skills at various situations to prove their ability.
- A swot analysis on every student should be made by the faculty members to understand their strengths and weakness at regular interval will help the students to improve their employability skills.
- Students should be encouraged to learn online to improve their employability skills and develop the skills that required but classroom is the best place to get sustainable employability skills where they spend more time.
- Students should develop networking with senior students and corporate people when they do their internships and projects. Networking is an important skill in the digital world.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research study on competency mapping was to study the skills set

of the students of arts & science colleges and also to study the opinion of the students on the skill set for employability. The study also found the relationship between the course content and employability skills of the students. Students participated in the study felt that they get enough support from the course content to improve their employability skills.

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