

Revisiting Soft Skills for New Work Force of Millenials in the Digital Era

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Abstract

India with its biggest asset of a majority of young population in its demographic divide faces an obstacle of human development with a skill deficit. With an increasing economic growth there exists a need to develop and impart trainings on skill development for increasing employability.

The Research Objectives constituted a General **Objective** 'To study and evaluate the growing importance of essential soft skills in enhancing employability ratio by professional B-Schools in Delhi/NCR'.

From an Employers perspective the objective was 'To examine the relationship between management students' skills and their employability.'

Primary and Secondary Research have both been applied for the research study. Primary research is done through Descriptive Research using statistical method and Primary research is done through Interviews. The participants include samples from the population of Employers. There was a total of 50 Employers. The Research Technique was a questionnaire as a tool and the multiple regression test was used in the study. The results were significant and there was a positive significant impact of various skills classified as theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, technical skills, soft skills and other skills on employability. Employers have shown that there is a growing importance of soft skills in today's environment. The study has important implications: Corporates and organizations can adopt many of these experiential digital platform techniques to provide a more real life working scenario to integrate learning with skills required on the job. Employers can use the same approach for educating employees for soft skills.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Employability Skills, Digital Era.

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1. Introduction

Soft Skills and Employability

India has its majority of the population working in the young demographic age segment and with these adding up to more than half of the population in the age category below 25 years, people in India need to be 'skilled' so that they can contribute to the growth of the economy. This is increasingly felt by the employers who find a huge gap between the type of skills taught by institutions and the ones needed by the industry. Education, can meet the need of the skill training for increasing the productive capacity of manpower. Skilled manpower as we call them as

capital formation for any country can bridge this gap of education and employability through imbibing the soft skills required for the same. As we have been unable to do this in the past to bridge the gap between education and employability, a movement towards the same by the Government of India with its inclusive growth strategy under Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is already working towards having its various initiatives to enhancing skills of the graduates to become skilled and identify the employability skills and make them industry ready.

India with its biggest asset of a majority of young population in its demographic divide faces an obstacle of human development with a skill deficit. With an increasing economic growth there exists a need to develop and impart trainings on skill development for increasing employability. Education and skill development is required for training to foster youth and contribute to the asset formation for the country. Education is considered as the most important attribute to contribute to a country's economic growth and for a complete transformation. India as a country where there is a huge population also has the capacity to use the human capital to the advantage of the country. Adam Smith (1776) had also mentioned once "man educated at the expense of much labor and time ...may be compared to one of those expensive machines". Thus education imparted at higher learning institutions needs to incorporate the sections for skill development and specifically target skills required for employability, also mentioned as soft skills and impart requisite trainings for the same. The public and private institutions including the government have also realized the importance of increasing the initiatives and are taken up under the skill development policies.

2. Literature Review

Digital Learning

- Ganzel, R. In the year 2001 researched on the topic "Hard Training for Soft Skills. Training". The digital age has witnessed the educational system preparing students for employability with 21st century skills which comprise of skills and abilities for success in the society and workplace. This study focuses on a methodical step by step approach to training in soft skills for they are required regardless of the job.
- Lee, M. J., & McLoughlin, C. In the year 2010 researched on the topic "Social Software as Tools for Pedagogical Transformation: Enabling

Personalization, Creative Production, and Part. In *Educational social software for context-aware learning: Collaborative methods and human interaction*". An innovative learning paradigm is proposed on the elements of personalization, participation, and productivity for a new Pedagogy 2.0. The author in the study concludes on the web based learning program personalization participation, and productivity personalization participation, and productivity and initiatives that supports the development and sharing of best practices across academic disciplines, institutions, and countries.

- Irvin, R. In the year 2007 researched on the topic "Information and communication technology (ICT) literacy: Integration and assessment in higher education". Despite the Internet age and other technology sweeping in the 21st century, many college students lack the basic and advanced information and communication technology (ICT) literacy skill - necessary to navigate and use the overabundance of information available today. This paper presents and concludes on a study of the validity of a simulations-based environment of ICT literacy skills. The overall goals for the assessment are to support ICT literacy instructional initiatives at colleges and universities for web based learning environment.
- Lorenzo, G., & Dziuban, C. in the year 2006 researched on the topic "Ensuring the net generation is net savvy". Research reveals that the current generations are not 'net savvy' as they are exposed to huge quantities of information on the Web various formats—getting the right information from misinformation are a constant challenge. Beyond the quantum and variety of information, students are now creating information, not just consuming it. This research paper explores the challenges of functioning in an environment full of information and where students are able to blend skills in finding the

right information, using technology, and thinking critically thereby developing critical soft skills in the internet age.

- Morgan, G., & Adams, J. in the year 2009 researched on soft skill development using pedagogy of web technologies. The study contributes to the realm of internet where without a doubt Internet has come to rule the space of online education. The question stays if it has been able to prove itself effective or not is debatable. The research studies both the sides of internet in terms of advantages and disadvantages. Research reveals that the time and energy spent in designing and implementing web-based courses, this can be particularly disappointing for everyone involved. This study focuses on this area particularly where the study has revealed that developing soft skills through web technologies is very different from developing technical skills. Technical skills may be easier to learn and imbibe than soft skills. The findings also reported the same that not all mediums of online and internet learning can be beneficial for learning soft skills. A different pedagogy may be required for each soft skill development.

3. Research Methodology

General Objectives

1. To study and evaluate the growing importance of essential soft skills in enhancing employability ratio by professional B-Schools in Delhi/NCR

Research Hypothesis

Employers

Objective 1: To examine the relationship between management students' skills and their employability.

H₀1a: There is no impact of theoretical knowledge and employability of management students in Delhi-NCR.

H₀1b: There is no impact of practical knowledge and employability of management students in Delhi-NCR.

H₀1c: There is no impact of the technical skills and employability of management students in Delhi-NCR.

H₀1d: There is no impact of the soft skills and employability of management students in Delhi-NCR.

H₀1e: There is no impact of other skills on employability of management students in Delhi-NCR.

Research Design

Primary and Secondary Research have both been applied for the research study. Primary research is done through Descriptive Research using statistical method and Primary research is done through Interviews.

Descriptive Research design has been used as the research design for the study. Descriptive research is defined as a research method that describes the characteristics of the population or phenomenon that is being studied. This methodology focuses more on the "what" of the research subject rather than the "why" of the research subject.

Secondary research was researched from books, journals, articles and online medium.

Sampling Design

Participants/Population

The participants include samples from the population of Employers

Employers who provide work experience opportunities to the final year students.

Sample Size

A sample is a sub group representing the population in the study .

The technique of 'Convenience Sampling' was adopted for selecting samples of employers.

There was a total of 50 Employers.

Data Collection

A cover note briefing the purpose of the survey, details of the researcher and instructions for filling the questionnaire have been provided.

The overall theme of the research questions that guided the investigation was:

1. What is the importance of soft skills in employability at the current mix of soft/technical skills?

Data were collected during the period of April 2018 to September, 2018.

Research Tools and Techniques

Research Tools

Employers

Table 1: Variable and Constructs for employer's questionnaire

Construct	Variable
Skills, Importance	Theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, technical skills, soft skills, other skills

Research Techniques

The following test was used in the study:

Multiple Regression

When two variables have a high correlation coefficient, researchers have evidence indicating the presence of a strong relationship between the variables.

Regression analysis is a technique whereby a mathematical equation is fitted to a set of data points.

Since this study has multiple independent variables in the regression equation, it is called a multiple regression equation. Every value of the independent variable x is associated with a value of the dependent variable y . The linear equation commonly used for such a regression analysis is $Y=a+bX_1+cX_2+dX_3+....$

Here, Y is the dependent variable, and X_1 , X_2 , X_3 ,... are independent variables. The additional coefficients (c, d) are similar to the b coefficient,

except that they are associated with independent variables X_2 and X_3 .

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation for Employers survey recruiting from B-schools in Delhi

Descriptive and Inferential Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 2 given below documents the various sources of recruitment that are resorted by the employers in different industries for hiring employees for managerial positions. Campus selection (34%) emerged out to be the most widely used source of HR recruitment followed by references (18%), then, job portals (14%), recruitment of project trainees/apprentice (12%) and through consultants (12%) being at the same level of acceptance and the least via off-campus sources or self-sourced medium (10%).

Table 2: Frequency (%) for sources of recruitment

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Campus selection	17	34.0
	Apprentice	6	12.0
	Consultants	6	12.0
	Job portal	7	14.0
	References	9	18.0
	Off campus/self-sourced	5	10.0
	Total	50	100.0

Relationship between Skills of Management Recruits and their Employability

Table 3 given below represents the descriptive statistics of the dependent variable; students' employability in the form of its mean score being 22.52 (S.D.=5.14). It should be noted that the students' employability score has been obtained by the summation of the scores of all the variables responsible for the student's employability.

Thereon, the mean scores of various independent variables on Likert's 5-point scale have also been depicted along with the standard deviations. Hence, the means of all the variables (skills) considered for testing hypothesis concerned with Objective 1 have been documented in tabular form in the given table.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for skills and employability

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Employability	22.52	5.14	50
Theoretical knowledge	3.14	1.03	50
Practical knowledge	3.94	1.13	50
Technical skills	3.76	1.12	50
Soft skills	4.02	1.06	50
Others	3.52	0.86	50

Multiple regression has been applied using SPSS 22 to examine the relationship between the various skills and students' employability in the opinion of employers. Table 1.5 given below documents the correlation between the various variables and the students' employability. There exists a positive correlation between Students' Employability (SE) and theoretical knowledge (TK) with $r=.788$ and $p<.05$. There exists a positive correlation between Students' Employability (SE) and practical knowledge (PK)

with $r=.778$, $p<.05$. There is a positive correlation between SE and technical skills (TS) with $r=.809$ and $p<.05$. There is a positive correlation between SE and soft skills (SS) with $r=.876$ and $p<.05$. Similarly, there is a positive correlation between Students' Employability (SE) and other skills (O) with $r=.550$ and $p<.05$. Hence, it can be interpreted that there exists a significant association or a positive correlation between all the stipulated independent variables and the students' employability in Delhi-NCR in the opinion of the employers (respondents).

Using the enter method (table 5), a significant model emerged (table 6 and table 7) with $F_{5,44}=912.04$, $p<.05$, adjusted R-square= .989. Significant variables are shown below (table 8):

Predictor variable	Beta
p	
Theoretical knowledge	.214
$p<.05$	
Practical knowledge	.231
$p<.05$	
Technical skills	.247
$p<.05$	
Soft skills	.366
$p<.05$	
Other skills	.222
$p<.05$	

Considering that all the p values are significant at 5% level of significance, hence the hypothesis formulated in this situation would not be accepted.

Correlations

	Students' Employability (SE)	Theoretical knowledge (TK)	Practical knowledge (PK)	Technical Skills (TS)	Soft Skills (SS)	Others (O)
Pearson Correlation	1.000	.788	.778	.809	.876	.550
(r)	TK	.788	1.000	.532	.615	.399

Sig. (1-tailed) (p)	PK	.778	.532	1.000	.650	.648	.158
	TS	.809	.615	.650	1.000	.608	.259
	SS	.876	.577	.648	.608	1.000	.390
	O	.550	.399	.158	.259	.390	1.000
	SE	.	.001	.001	.001	.001	.001
	TK	.001	.	.001	.001	.001	.002
	PK	.001	.001	.	.001	.001	.137
	TS	.001	.001	.001	.	.001	.035
	SS	.001	.001	.001	.001	.	.003
	O	.001	.002	.137	.035	.003	.
N	SE	50	50	50	50	50	50
	TK	50	50	50	50	50	50
	PK	50	50	50	50	50	50
	TS	50	50	50	50	50	50
	SS	50	50	50	50	50	50
	O	50	50	50	50	50	50

Table 4: Correlation matrix between skills of management recruits and their employability

Also, the standardized beta values obtained are all positive, thus the change in the students' employability (dependent variable) would also be positive. From the above findings, the following regression equation is obtained:

Students'

$$\text{Employability} = .214(\text{TK}) + .231(\text{PK}) + .247(\text{TS}) + .366(\text{SS}) + .222(\text{O})$$

From the above equation, it can be interpreted that if there is 1 unit increase (enhancement) in theoretical knowledge, then, the students'

employability will increase by .214 units ($p < .05$). Thus, H_{01a} is rejected as theoretical knowledge impact the students' employability positively.

With a unit increase in the practical knowledge, the students' employability increases by .231 units ($p < .05$). Thus, H_{01b} is rejected as practical knowledge impact the students' employability positively. With a unit increase in the technical skills, the students' employability increases by .247 units ($p < .05$). Thus, H_{01c} is also rejected as technical skills impact the students' employability positively. With a unit increase in the soft skills, the students' employability increases by .366 units ($p < .05$). Thus, H_{01d} is rejected as soft skills impact the students' employability positively. With a unit increase in the other skills, the students' employability increases by .222 units ($p < .05$). Thus, H_{01e} is rejected as other skills impact the students' employability positively.

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	O, PK, TK, TS, SS ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Employability

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 5: Enter method
Summary^b Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.995 ^a	.990	.989	.52983	1.898

a. Predictors: (Constant), O, PK, TK, TS, SS

b. Dependent Variable: SE

Table 6: Model summary for skills of management recruits and SE

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	1280.128	5	256.026	912.04	.001 ^b
Residual	12.352	44	.281		
Total	1292.480	49			

a. Dependent Variable: SE

b. Predictors: (Constant), O, PK, TK, TS, SS

Table 7: Anova for skills of management recruits and SE.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	-1.006	.392		-2.569	.014		
TK	1.065	.103	.214	10.390	.001	.514	1.947
PK	1.049	.099	.231	10.576	.001	.454	2.203
TS	1.134	.100	.247	11.306	.001	.457	2.189
SS	1.776	.107	.366	16.609	.001	.446	2.240
O	1.319	.100	.222	13.186	.001	.769	1.301

a. Dependent Variable: SE

Table 8: Coefficient matrix for skills of management recruits and SE.

5. Research Findings and conclusion

Employers

The results obtained after the analysis are summarized below:

1. Importance of essential soft skills in enhancing employability ratio

The study investigated the relationship and impact between various skills and their effect on employability. The results were significant and there was a positive significant impact of various

skills classified as theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, technical skills, soft skills and other skills on employability. The positive impact thereby has a significant share in enhancing skills

for employability as per the employers. The results are indicated in table 9.

Table 9: Essential Soft skills

Summary of findings		
Hypothesis	Results	Inference
H ₀ 1a: There is no impact of theoretical knowledge on the employability of management students in Delhi-NCR.	H ₀ 1a is rejected	Theoretical knowledge impacts the students' employability positively.
H ₀ 1b: There is no impact of practical knowledge on the employability of management students in Delhi-NCR.	H ₀ 1b is rejected	Practical knowledge impact the students' employability positively
H ₀ 1c: There is no impact of the technical skills and employability of management students in Delhi-NCR.	H ₀ 1c is rejected	Technical skills impact the students' employability positively
H ₀ 1d: There is no impact of the soft skills and employability of management students in Delhi-NCR.	H ₀ 1d is rejected	Soft skills impact the students' employability positively
H ₀ 1e: There is no impact of other skills on employability of management students in Delhi-NCR.	H ₀ 1e is rejected	Other skills impact the students' employability positively

Conclusion

Importance of Soft Skills in Today's Workplace

Soft skills namely also known as employability skills have shown importance from the perspective of employers. Students have shown that colleges and institutions give a lot of importance to soft skills as these are the skills demanded by the employers. There is an increased importance of skills such as communication skills, presentation skills, decision making, critical

thinking, problem solving, team spirit, leadership, time management, stress management among other essential soft skills. Employers have shown that there is a growing importance of soft skills in today's environment. Soft skills have gained an importance today in the field of employability training.

6. Recommendations and Future Scope

As a suggestion from employers as well a recommendation is to stress on the skills of the fresh management recruits and more practical knowledge to be imparted so that the students are able to handle the circumstances with ease.

Employers seek a variety of soft skills and it recommended to have specialized training for imparting the understanding for industry related soft skills.

A continuous assessment on employability skills from employers to be adopted.

7. Managerial Implications

The study has important implications:

- Corporates and organizations can adopt many of these experiential digital platform techniques to provide a more real life working scenario to integrate learning with skills required on the job. The change in the techniques and pedagogy can stimulate employees to achieve better results by causing a shift in their behavioral skills for dealing with stress, deadlines, project completion, critical thinking, social behaviors, dealing with team pressure and achieving the desired results.
- Employers can use the same approach for educating employees for soft skills.
- Organizations of environmental protection could use the methodology for educating their employees and motivating them to achieve better results.

8. Limitations

The survey has been conducted in Delhi NCR. The study cannot be generalized. It can be further extended to wider locations.

The sample size of employers has been kept as limited and can further be done on a bigger sample size.

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