

"Cultivating Employability Skills in MBA Students: Navigating Towards a Renewed India"

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Abstract:

In the backdrop of India's historically robust educational framework dating back to the Vedic period, the proliferation of institutions offering diverse professional courses, particularly in management, is noteworthy. However, this surge in educational avenues is accompanied by escalating challenges for management graduates in the rapidly evolving professional landscape. Research and survey findings highlight a concerning trend: the growing quantity of MBA students is inversely proportional to the declining average quality of employability skills. This study aims to meticulously examine the requisite employability skills for management graduates and devise effective strategies to enhance and enrich these skills.

Keywords: -Educational system, professional courses, management program, challenges, management graduates, MBA students, average quality, employability skills,

(1) Introduction:

The triumph of any industry, be it in manufacturing, trade, or services, hinges on the adept and efficient management of the organization. Intense competition, both domestically and globally, necessitates firms to seek the services of adeptly trained management graduates. Over the past two decades, management education programs have gained remarkable prominence, witnessing a surge in institutions offering comprehensive education. These institutions boast distinguished faculty, rigorous courses, and promising employment prospects. Notably, Indian Institutes of Management stand prominently on the global stage. Despite this, a significant proportion of MBA graduates are observed to possess inadequate employability skills, creating a disparity between industry expectations and the actual skill set of graduates.

This research delves into the critical nexus between industry demands and the existing skill set of MBA graduates, emphasizing the imperative to augment employability skills. Recognizing the need to bridge this gap, the study aims to elucidate the concept of employability skills and advocate for their enrichment. In doing so, the research contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on enhancing the quality and readiness of management graduates for the dynamic professional landscape.

(1.1) Problem Statement:

In the current Indian landscape, the proliferation of institutes providing management education has surged, coinciding with a rapid escalation of challenges confronting management graduates. Research and survey findings underscore a concerning trend: the growing quantity of MBA students is inversely proportional to a declining average quality of employability skills. This study is strategically designed to investigate the specific employability skills imperative for management graduates and delineate effective strategies for their enhancement. Through a targeted exploration, the research endeavors to contribute valuable insights into mitigating the observed disparity between the rising demand for management education and the diminishing quality of associated employability skills.

(1.2) Objective of the Study:

- Comprehensive exploration of the employability skills concept
- In-depth study of employability skills essential for MBA students
- Formulation of recommendations for enriching employability skills among MBA students

- Acknowledgment of study limitations:
 - Sole reliance on secondary data
 - Descriptive research nature

(1.3) Research Methodology:

This paper constitutes a conceptual study derived from an extensive review of educational reports and articles. Utilizing secondary data extracted from diverse journals, educational reports, and research papers, this study synthesizes findings from both domestic and international research. The inclusion of studies conducted in India and other countries enhances the comprehensiveness of this paper, presenting a synthesized overview of relevant literature to contribute to the discourse on the subject.

(2) Review of Literature:

Nishad Nawaz and Krishna Reddy [1] emphasize the significance of enriching employability skills among management students, deeming it a crucial task for institutions offering management programs. Their insights highlight the imperative to bolster language competency and cognitive skills among MBA graduates.

Padmini [2] underscores the pivotal role of a proficient workforce in propelling sectoral growth, identifying inadequate skill sets as a primary impediment. Her work delves into the essential employability skills for young graduates and explores avenues for value creation through effective knowledge management, encompassing pedagogy, evaluation processes, and feedback mechanisms.

Padmakali and Kumar [3] provide an overview of contemporary trends in the employability skills of management students, aligning them with industry needs. Their conclusions advocate for a revision of management curricula at both graduate and postgraduate levels, emphasizing the integration of experimental and action learning. Additionally, they recommend opportunities for faculty members to enhance their knowledge in the realm of Sustainable Development.

Sanket and Ravan [4] assert that employability skills are indispensable for securing employment, emphasizing the development of interpersonal, communication, decision-making, and leadership skills among MBA students.

(3) Employability Skill:

Employability skills encompass the requisite skill set essential for executing assigned job responsibilities. Defined as the proficiency needed by an individual to attain employability, these competencies encompass both technical and non-technical abilities.

Numerous studies have identified a disparity between the demanded skill set and the skills actually possessed. A study carried out in South Nigeria specifically targeted 13 skills, aiming to assess and address this gap.

communication skill,	team work skill,	integrity skill
self-confidence skill	planning skill	writing skill
ICT skill	problem solving skill	analytical skill,
leadership skill,	critical thinking,	decision making skill
and initiative skill		

According findings from Ekpoh's 2015 study, a significant gap exists between the required employability skills and the actual skills possessed by students. Notably, students exhibited proficiency in only three key skills: communication, integrity, and self-confidence.

A longitudinal study conducted in 2010 by Staffan Nilsson in Sweden focused on the employability perception of engineering graduates. The findings revealed a shift in emphasis, with graduates expressing that interpersonal skills held greater significance compared to traditional hard vocational skills.

In a 2015 study in Punjab by Tejbir Kaur, Singh Jaskaran Dhillon, and Rubeena Bajwa, perceptions regarding employability were compared among three stakeholders: students, faculty members, and corporate executives. The study highlighted variations in perspectives among these groups.

Observations across various institutes providing professional education indicate the implementation of diverse strategies to enhance students' skill sets for corporate absorption. Despite student expectations of immediate job opportunities upon graduation, the reality involves intense competition where more than hard skills are required for employability.

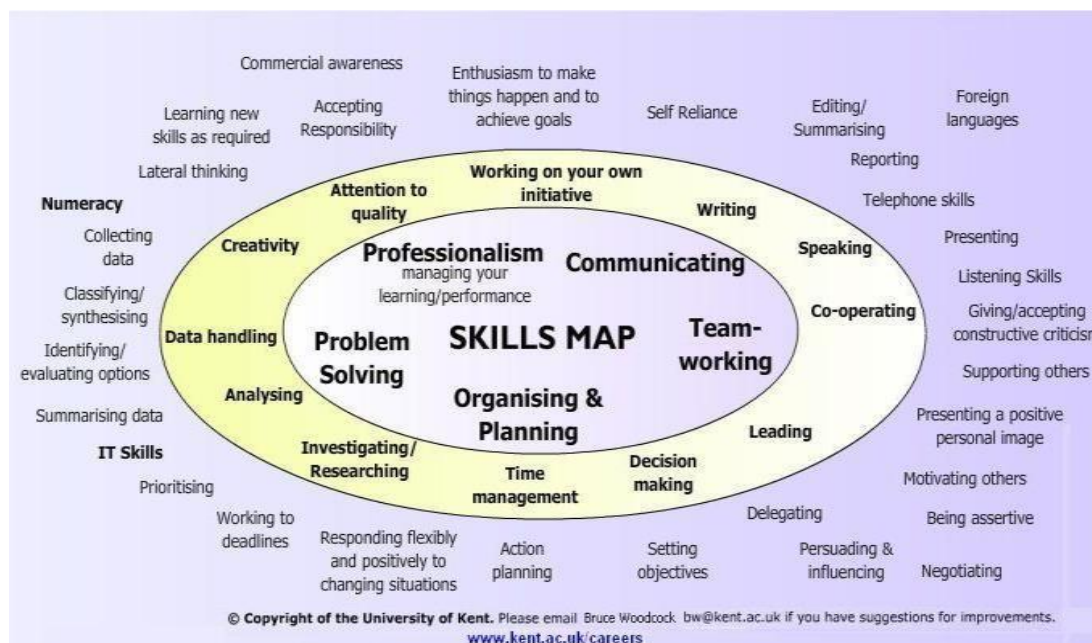
In the contemporary landscape, achieving employability poses a substantial challenge for students. Discrepancies in the understanding of employability skills among students, faculty members, and industry professionals contribute to varying viewpoints on skill weightage. Furthermore, differences in the perceived teaching methodologies compound the complexities surrounding employability.

In 2019, Mohd. Osmani and colleagues identified a significant gap between the demands of employers and the skills supplied by students. Their research emphasized that the focus should not solely be on the skills taught to students, but rather on the instillation of key employability skills within them (Osmani et al., 2019).

In a separate study, Ashish Kumar Awadhiya investigated essential employability skills, revealing that effective communication, problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, innovation, teamwork, professionalism, ethical behavior, self-management, and planning and managing skills are paramount (Awadhiya, 2020).

S.No.	Name of Researcher	Employability Skills
1	G.Gowsalya; and Kumar, 2015	Communication, Team Work, Planning, Analysis and Problem Solving
2	Kumar.K.R., 2016	Communication, Team Work, Planning
3	Awadhiya, 2020	Communication, Team Work, Planning, Leadership, Decision Making
4	Osmani <i>et al.</i> , 2019	Communication, Leadership, Decision Making
5	Riebe <i>et al.</i> , 2010	Team Work,
6	Blom and Saeki, 2011	Initiative, Flexibility, Networking
7	Nilsson, 2010	Initiative, Personal Impact & Confidence
8	Alamelu, Lakshminarayanan and Badrinath, 2017	Numerical Ability, Leadership
9	Ekpoh, 2015	Action Planning, Leadership, Decision Making

The skill profile mandated for MBA students as delineated by the University of Kent.



(4) Enhancing Employability Skills: A Necessity:

In the wake of a resurgence in the popularity of MBA programs after a period of stagnation, there is a pressing need to revitalize the management education system in India. A collaborative effort involving the government, industry, and academia is essential to enhance employability skills among students. Justification for the enrichment of personality and skills is underscored by several factors:

1. The global landscape is intensely competitive, necessitating a heightened emphasis on quality education for both students and institutions.
2. Companies now seek individuals who can navigate uncertainties, possess a broad perspective, and exhibit leadership qualities rather than mere managerial skills.
3. Beyond skills and knowledge, companies increasingly prioritize the right personality fit and emotional quotient in individuals.
4. The attainment of worldwide recognition for an MBA degree is contingent upon the enhancement of employability skills.
5. Leading management institutes are proactively reassessing their curriculum and innovating in course delivery to meet these evolving demands.

(5) Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills in MBA Students

Numerous industry experts and academicians have provided recommendations to enhance the employability of MBA students. Here are some of their valuable suggestions:

Curriculum Alignment:

Ensure the MBA curriculum aligns with industry requirements, integrating practical skills, case studies, and real-world scenarios to bridge the gap between academic learning and professional application.

Industry Collaboration:

Foster partnerships with industry leaders to provide students with exposure to real business challenges, internships, and collaborative projects, enhancing their practical understanding and skills.

Skill-Specific Workshops:

Conduct specialized workshops focusing on critical employability skills such as communication, leadership, problem-solving, and teamwork, providing students with hands-on training and opportunities for self-assessment.

Mentorship Programs:

Establish mentorship initiatives that connect MBA students with seasoned professionals, enabling them to gain insights, guidance, and industry-specific knowledge to enhance their overall employability.

Continuous Professional Development:

Encourage and facilitate ongoing professional development through seminars, webinars, and conferences, allowing students to stay updated on industry trends, emerging technologies, and evolving business practices.

Experiential Learning:

Incorporate experiential learning methods, such as simulations, case competitions, and business projects, to provide practical exposure and cultivate critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Soft Skills Training:

Offer comprehensive soft skills training programs covering communication, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and adaptability to enhance the holistic employability profile of MBA students.

Networking Opportunities:

Facilitate networking events, industry forums, and interactions with alumni, creating avenues for students to build professional connections, gain industry insights, and explore potential career opportunities.

Internship and Placement Support:

Strengthen internship and placement support services, ensuring effective industry placements, internships, and career guidance to enhance practical experience and employability prospects for MBA graduates.

Continuous Feedback Mechanism:

Establish a structured feedback mechanism involving industry professionals and academicians to continuously assess and refine the MBA program, ensuring it remains relevant and responsive to evolving industry needs.

(6) Conclusion:

The demand for individuals with the capacity to assume leadership roles in the global business landscape is robust both in India and worldwide. To meet this demand effectively, a significant transformation in the demand for MBA education is anticipated by implementing strategies aimed at narrowing the gap between MBA graduates and their employability skills. The reconfiguration of MBA pedagogy holds the potential to establish critical thinking and problem-solving skills as defining attributes of management students, paving the way for a progressive India. Collaboration between the government and the higher education sector is imperative to ensure the delivery of quality education, positioning India as a leader in talent management and knowledge management. Graduating industry-ready, competent MBAs emerges as a mutually beneficial solution for educational institutions, students, and the corporate sector.

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