# EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS:
# EDUCATIONAL PERCEPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

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## ABSTRACT

*A great challenge before the educator/academician is prepare a student to be successful at the work place. Engineers/Technicians/Management graduates, who are seeking jobs outside, complain about competition and the problem of unemployment. Industries complain about the lacking of academic and non-academic logic in the fresher. But it is not the problem of unemployment or academic knowledge but lack of employability skills.*

*The prime focus of this paper is to provide a strong theoretical foundation and a practical understanding of employability skills with a view to enhance students' ability for improved and effective pedagogies. It starts with need of employability skills in business, explaining further the academic perception of the same. It discusses skills like leadership, team building, time management and communication skills. The paper offers actual classroom implementations of teaching of the skills.*

*Keywords: employability, soft skills, workplace, success, industries, academicians, educational institutions etc.*

## Introduction

Employability skills are important for finding a job. According to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) survey, 82 percent of business considers these skills to be single most important consideration when recruiting graduates. However 70 percent of employers said that university students need to do to prepare themselves to be effective in the workplace. Despite realizing the importance of employability skills graduates are currently falling short of employers' expectations.

Business wants graduates who not only to add value but also to possess the skills that would transform their organizations in the face of continuous and rapid economic and technological changes. All graduates irrespective of their academic discipline need to be equipped with employability skills that cover a wide range of non-academic or softer skills and abilities which are of values at the workplaces. It includes the ability to communicate effectively in various professional contexts; work in a team; a willingness to demonstrate initiative and original thought; self-discipline in starting and completing tasks in time. In short, todays employers' expect the fresh graduates to possess the necessary skills to perform well in their organizations and here comes the role of universities and their teachers. It is crucial that universities and employers work with students to proper signposting to ensure they are in a position to make informed decisions and to develop and realize their goals.

Today, employers look for managers with the vital soft skills. These skills tend to be more generic in nature. In other words these are skills strategic to effective performance across all job categories. And these soft skills have come to play an even more central role in management positions in today's setting. As the world has changed and the nature of work has changed, the skills set required by managers has also undergone a change.

**What Does Effective Performance Need?**

Studies by Stanford Research Institute and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation among Fortune 500 CEOs found that 75% of long term job success depended on people skills and only 25% on technical skills. In fact, this stands true at other levels as well. For effective performance in the workplace, companies need their employees to not only have domain knowledge, technical and analytical skills, but also skills to deal with the external world of clients, customers, vendors, the government and the public, and to work in the collaborative manner with their colleagues.

Other surveys and studies also show that employers are often more concerned about soft skills or attitudes rather than technical knowledge or competencies. Empirical studies of work find that employers and workers also feel generic skills, such as problem solving, communications and ability to work in teams, are more significant for workplace success. Another study on developing soft skills in vocation high school graduates talks about the importance of developing soft skills in students for their betterment and future career growth. A 2007 study of recruiters found that communication skills are the most desired characteristics needed in a candidate for an ideal job. According to a survey by Harvard University, 80% achievements in career are determined by soft skills and only 20% by hard skills. Employers want graduates who are adaptable and flexible, who can communicate well and relate to a  wide range of people, who are aware of, but not indoctrinated into, the world

of work and the culture of organizations, and who, most importantly, have inquiring minds, are willing and quick to learn, are critical, can synthesize and are innovative.

Hence, educator or trainer must be able to deliver a healthy and well-balanced package of domain knowledge + skills + right attitude, a package that is to be delivered by faculty, trainers, administrators and on the whole, the B-schools, Engineering colleges and other professional institutions.

**The Indigenous Model**

Having discussed the above issues, let us now see how one should offer the courses by giving equal importance to domain knowledge and Skills. The following model can explain the demand of the Industry and responsibility of the educational institutions.

THE MODEL:
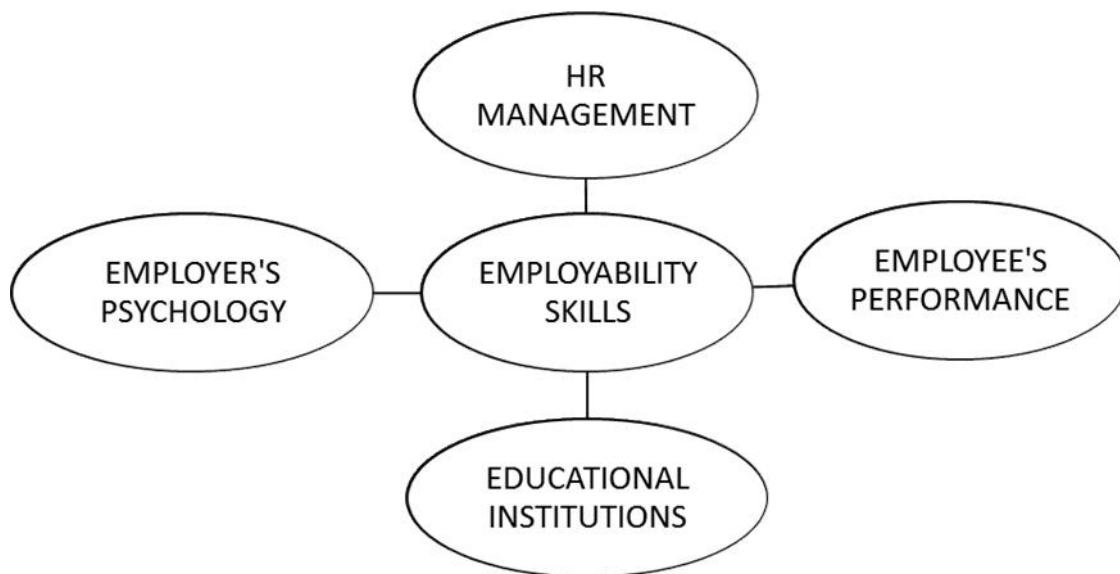


The central position of the employability skills explains the importance and demand of that in the Industry so academicians and trainers can implement and inculcate them in students.

The annual ranking of MBA colleges often place communication and interpersonal skills as the most decisive skills needed for success in the corporate world. While speaking on the importance of soft skills for MBAs distinguished academician Prof. Henry Mintzberg, referred to the crucial 'soft skills'—leadership, teamwork, communication, time management and the ability to think 'outside the box' of a discipline—that separate the rest in the management world.

Let's discuss these skills briefly. The section 'Inside the Classroom' suggests the implementation of theory among the groups.

**Leadership:**

Leadership is about raising the aspirations of followers and enthusing people with a desire to reach for the stars. It is about creating a worthy dream and helping people achieve it.

**Different Leadership Styles**

Before developing your leadership skills, you must analyze one as to, "Which leadership style works best for you and your organization?" To answer this question, its best to understand the different types of leadership styles present and can consider developing as many leadership style as possible.

**Three Classic Leadership Styles**

Our dimension of the leadership style talks about control and one's perception of how much control one should give to the people. The *Laissez Faire* style implies low control, the autocratic style high control and the participative lies somewhere in between.

**The Autocratic Leadership Style**

Authoritarian leaders provide clear instructions to employees as to what needs to be done, when it should, and how it should be done. There is also a clear distinction between the leader and the followers. Authoritarian leaders make decisions independently with little or no input from the rest of the group.

Researchers found that decision-making was less creative under authoritarian leadership. This style is best applied to situations where there is little time for the group for decision-making or where the leader is the most knowledgeable and well informed member of the group.

**Democratic/Participative Leadership Style**

The democratic leadership style is also called the participative style as it encourages employees to be a part of the decision making. A democratic leader keeps his or her employees informed about everything that affects their work and shares both decision-making and problem solving responsibilities with the team. Here the leader is a coach who has the final say, but gathers information from staff members before making a decision.

Democratic leadership can produce high quality and high quantity work for long periods of time. Many employees like the trust they receive and respond with cooperation, team spirit, and high morale.

**The Laissez Faire Leadership Style**

This style talks about largely little or no direction given to the employees which is also called a "hands off" view that tends to minimize the amount of direction and supervision. Here the decision-making is left to the team members. Works well if you have highly trained and highly motivated team members.

**Inside the classroom**

There can be question answer session about style of leadership, famous leaders like Dhirubhai Ambani, Narayan Murthy, Tata, Birla, socio-political leaders like Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Abraham Lincoln, Kennedy, spiritual leaders like, Swami Vivekanand, Shri Shri Ravishankar etc. their success and failure stories, decision making and other various aspects related to leadership as a skill. Small mock activities of leading a group will help trainees to interact on the topic and practically understand the context.

**Team Building:**

Team building is a process. This takes place when all the members in a team perform well together. It refers generally to the selection and motivation of result-oriented teams, or more specifically to group's self-assessment in the theory and practice of team development.

**Different Approaches to Team Building**

There are four fundamentally different approaches to improve the level of teamwork in an organization. These are:
1. Personality-based team building
2. Activity-based team building
3. Skills-based team building
4. Problem solving-based team building

**1. Personality-based Team building**

It is in personality-based team building that members of the team fill out a personality questionnaire and then learn about their own personalities and the personalities of

their fellow team members. Later the team uses the results as a basis for discussion, developing action steps and participating in various development experiences.

This helps team members better understand each other to better communicate and deal with each other, thus enhancing team effectiveness.

## 2. Activity-based Team building

Here teams carry out challenging tasks, usually in outdoor settings (e.g., an outdoor adventure such as water rafting, mountain climbing, a survival course, rope pulling or boot camp). These activities require groups to work together to achieve success. The exercises are built around specific needs of teams and include group problem solving, risk-taking, trust, or paradigm breaking.

If team members experience success working together in a challenging outdoor experience, it helps them transfer these lessons to the work setting and become a more effective team.

## 3. Skills-based Team building

In skills-based team building, team members participate in workshop sessions that require them to learn and practice specific teamwork skills (e.g., dealing with conflict, reaching group consensus, learning how to give criticism, or running effective team meetings). These workshops include skills that can be applied immediately in the workplace.

## 4. Problem Solving-based Team building

In problem solving-team building, team members jointly work together (usually in a retreat setting and led by an outside facilitator) to identify and then solve the barriers to effectiveness that the group is experiencing.

### Inside the classroom

The faculty can give original team work task by allotting stipulated time to perform into teams. The question answer sessions boost the background reasoning among students. Positive comments on their decision-making in terms of choosing the options and influencing factors can help in boosting confidence and interest.

**Time Management:**

Team building and leadership skills can't be taught without time management skills. In other words the faculty has to focus always upon managing time at the work place or in the projects and classroom activities. Time management refers to the techniques, tools, skills and the process used to manage one's time for completing tasks, projects and to achieve both short and long term goals. This involves a lot of activities like planning, sorting, delegating, analyzing, monitoring, organizing, scheduling and prioritizing the goals. Time management was initially referred to just business or work activities but eventually the term broadened to include personal activities as well.  When a given task is not completed in a stipulated time frame, the consequences are bad. Sometimes, a second chance is not given to us rectify the mistake committed and if given, then not enough scope from the opposite side for the second time. Managing time gives us confidence to complete many other assignments, prove integrity, trust by others & commitment to exhibit at work and outside work.

There are many Techniques that can be used for time Management but popular is POSEC Method.

POSEC- Prioritize by Organizing, Streamlining, Economizing and contributing.

The Method guides one to emphasize on their immediate sense of emotional and monetary security. It suggests that if one's personal responsibilities are first met with, he is better positioned to shoulder team work or collaborative responsibilities. This is in sync with the needs hierarchy theories which focus on self-realization.

PRIORITIZE- To make time to define your life by goals.
ORAGNIZING-Then accomplish the regular daily chores related to family to be successful.
STREAMLINING- Sort out other jobs that you must perform.
ECONOMIZING- Then focus on jobs that aren't urgent. (Pleasures and Socializing).
CONTRIBUTING- Paying attention to the few remaining obligatory things that make a difference.

**Inside the classroom**

The trainer/faculty should put probing questions to the trainees /students about various occasions or incidents relating to time management. Allow the trainees to talk about their experiences where they felt the lapse from their end and then ask them to substantiate it with reasons.

**Communication Skills:**

**"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said."**

**-Peter F. Drucker**

People generally assume that communication means 'speaking some language such as English, Hindi, French, Telugu, etc'. Very few really understand that 'language' is just a small but integral part of the giant gamut of communication. By definition, communication is a process of transferring information from one source to another. This is the foremost skill that can land individuals in whatever career they aspire for, may it be in the academics media or corporate. Communication skills have to be developed, honed and added to, on an on-going basic. Most people in the corporate think that they communicate pretty well and call themselves good communicators, which is generally true.

However, even the best communicators are shaken when they get wrong-footed, they face potential humiliation, misunderstanding or get really surprised by someone else's unexpected behavior. That's when it all seems to fall apart for these assumed best communicators and they lose ground to all kinds of inappropriate and helpless behavior. Being a good communicator is often about feeling confident in those situations where you don't always feel comfortable. Being an effective communicator means that other people take you seriously, listen to what you have to say and engage meaningful dialogue with your receiver. Communication and the style of communication are influenced by the culture across the globe. Culture refers to the norms, beliefs, customs, ethics, codes, mores, values, sentiments, behavior and attitudes of individuals in a society. Culture is a way of life.

As a global learner, executive or a global manager, one has to come out of one's cultural paradigm and try to know others and their culture. Today's managers have to work in cross cultural teams or virtual teams having members from various countries and backgrounds. Sometimes, one has to lead and receive a delegation to or from countries. It could be that one can pay a visit to a country as a tourist. Someone has rightly said, "If Mind is the hardware, Culture is the software". Hence, a perfect knowledge of cross-cultural communication (CCC) ensures that one can live in multilingual, multiethnic and a multidisciplinary society.

**Inside the classroom**

Trainers have to give some academic and corporate examples of many practical incidents that show how communication can make or break relationships, business and transactions, in day-to-day life.

Use funny anecdotes, occasional PPTS with pictures and videos of famous speeches of, for example , NR Narayan Murthy, Gandhi ,Nehru , Dr Kalam, Steve Jobs, Martin Luther King, etc., which motivate the trainees to understand and implement the power of communication and some thematic Role Plays on 'barriers to communication', 'interview', 'listening skills' etc.

Use Extempore, pair work and group discussions now and then to brush up the students/trainees communication skills.

**Conclusion**

Recruitment managers respect and expect technical expertise. Results show that they do prefer people with experience, but at the same time, they also look for certain other qualities in them. However, technical or the so-called hard skills soon become outdated when there is no motivation to keep learning new ones.so they also look for people who are flexible and have the passion to appreciate and learn new technologies as part of their growth process. Furthermore, the interpersonal skills, alignment with the corporate culture, the ability to work as an effective and contributing team member and the political savvy to know how to get things done in the organization also determine the long term success of an employee in the organization.

The right perception of these skills and the proper implementation of the theory are quite necessary to academicians, trainers, business educators. It is also crucial to recognize the most important workforce skills. In addition, this information may allow educators to more effectively include and implement employability skills in their courses.

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