



EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS



GURPRETH SINGH

1817039

Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction	3
Meaning and definition.....	3
Importance.....	4
Categories of employability skills.....	5
Conclusion.....	7
Recommendations	7
Bibliography	8

Executive Summary

This paper provides a synthesis of research on the theme of employability skills.

Terms of reference

This report has been requested by Mr. Christian Felices. The purpose of the report is to critically analyse “Employability Skills” which will be achieved by discussing the following:

- Employability skills and their importance
- Changes in employability skills
- Important employability skills

This report has been compiled by Gurpreth Singh 1817039 and it is submitted on 1st December at 3 pm.

Procedure

The procedures used to complete the report will be secondary sources only:

- Websites
- Books
- Journals

Research will be conducted to gather findings in order to draw a conclusion.

Introduction

The two biggest problems that an employer has to deal with in today's competitive environment are finding good workers and being able to train them. There always exist skills-gap which is the difference between what skills are required for a job and what are actually possessed by an applicant. It is a major concern that keeps bothering the human resource managers who look to employ capable employees. The business owners and employers look for employees who possess the skills and capabilities that can solve problems and have an attitude to work in harmony with the other workers (Robinson, 2000).

Skills and capabilities are not just restricted to the technical skills and knowledge but it also includes the general aspect. As a matter of fact, in the recent times the generic skills have been an international agenda while forming the education policies (Smith, 2010). In the wake of the last decade, various reports and papers are being published trying to persuade the universities and schools to make employability skills as essential part of the learning experience of students. This persuasion and urge have been largely supported by the Government, industrial sectors and the universities themselves (Atkins, 1999).

Meaning and definition

Employability skills can be defined as, "The skills required to gain employment or establish an enterprise, (and) also to progress within an enterprise or expand employment capability, so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions." (Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), 2002)

In this era of cut-throat competition, it is imperative that university graduates should not only focus on the skills that would help that get a job but their focus should also be on the skills that would help them in the long term growth and development of their career. Employability does not mean that a student is able to get a job because he has done a vocational course but it is more about evolving the attributes and skills that will help them in prospering in their careers. More emphasis is being placed on 'ability' than 'employ'. The main essence is the development of critical and reflective abilities along with the empowerment and enhancement of a learner (Lee, 2013). The main purpose served by the employability skills is the development of the skills and knowledge of any person who wants to focus of self-development and growth and thereby being able to get a better job (Ali, 2016).

Importance

Employability skills have a great role to play in the economy of the UK. They have reportedly a worth of more than £88 billion in Gross Added Value of the country's economy. Absence of employability skills negatively impacts both an individual who is struggling to find a job and an employer looking to recruit people. Employability skills are equally important for staff recruitment and staff retention. The organisations look forward to retaining only that staff that possess transferable skills important to cope up with shifting priorities and organisational changes (Baumbach, 2018)

The labour market is highly competitive and employers look for flexible workforce who are willing to take initiative and adapt to the changing conditions. A person possessing employability skills will be easily able to adapt itself to any environment or any working condition (Mattis, 2019). Various industrial employers are of the view that an employee must acquire employability skills to outstand in their field. Even Ramlee (2002) has a similar viewpoint where he found that graduates may have excelled in the technical field but the employers are highly dissatisfied with the employees due to lack of interpersonal skills, problem solving ability and entrepreneurial excellence. All of them form a major part of employability skills (Rasul and Puvanasvaran, 2009).

The competition prevailing in the economy forces a company to be effective and efficient. It acts as a driving force for a company to make improvements their production, quality and services. So, in order to succeed in this competitive environment, a company looks for employees who have excellent problem solving and decision-making skills. Not only this, they prefer to hire employees who are flexible, adaptive, can work in teams and possess a wide range of inter-personal skills. Companies believe that a worker who possess all these qualities will lay a strong foundation in their growth and prosperity. Workers at all levels are expected to possess these employability skills where they can be well equipped to find solutions and communicate effectively with their co-workers. The perfect blend of knowledge, thinking skills and personal skills is the competitive edge for any employer (Bennett, 2006).

Various authors and researchers have explored and documented the importance of employability skills for an employer. However, very few have looked into the perception of the graduates and students (Jackson, 2013). There is no denying the fact that technical competence is irreplaceable in the job sector but the employees who work on improving their soft skills are more likely to be preferred by an employer as they will have a higher chance of becoming effective leaders, drivers of change and problem solvers. A person can improve his soft skills through formal training, apprenticeship, coaching or teamwork activities (Baumbach, 2018).

According to Bransford & Schwartz, 1999, students who focus on employability skills are likely to have an ability to transfer these acquired skills across different places, that is, from classroom to workplace. The detailed understanding of employability skills will help students to articulate to employers their own capabilities. Keeping in mind the need of the hour and economic uncertainty, it is important that graduates are able to differentiate themselves from others in the soft labour market (Jackson, 2013).

Various educators understand the importance of making their teaching more relatable to the real-life situations. Students learn to implement employability skills in their workplace and they are able to use them in various other settings. However, it is a real challenge to find the ways that can help create this kind of educational setup. In this era, technical education is in a phase of transition. Earlier, the purpose of technical education was only to make students equipped enough to get entry level jobs. The job market, in recent times, demands more able, efficient, dynamic and competitive workforce. When this technical education is blended with employability skills, all the educational programs are able to prepare a workforce which will prepare students for lifetime growth and development. So, employability skills have a huge impact in the long-term prosperity of students, graduates and employees (Bennett, 2006).

Categories of employability skills

According to (Robinson, 2000), various researchers and authors categorize employability skills in different manners. However, it is usually divided in three skill sets which is academic skills (reading, writing), thinking skills (reasoning, decision making) and personal attributes/qualities (interpersonal communication, time management). Currently there is considerable attention being paid to academic and thinking skills in schools but most schools and universities are failing to give the same kind of attention to personal attributes and qualities (Hill and Petty, 1995). Some of the employability skills that hold utmost importance are discussed below in detail:

1) Time management

Time is considered to be the most valuable resource in life. Therefore, it is essential to manage time in one's career. ability to manage time effectively will determine if one will succeed in their career or not. Hence, it is of utmost importance to make the best use of this time to effectively accomplish career goals. Time management is indispensable growth, evolution and personal effectiveness (Tracy, 2014). Crutsinger, 1997 states that time management is a process that focusses on setting goals, prioritizing them, deciding on time allocation to different tasks, adjusting plans, revising goals regularly and finally observing the results.

McCay (1959) devised a concept relating to time management training programme which is still being used extensively by various organisations. The key elements of this concept focused on time consuming activities, handling unexpected tasks, prioritising tasks, increasing daily efficiency by imparting training and changing time expenditure (Claessens et al., 2007). Proper implementation of time management plans can enhance productivity, efficiency and overall quality of life. Time management has a direct relation with job satisfaction, efficiency and effectiveness and an inverse relation with stress. Time management training is therefore essential so as to enhance the time management skills of an individual. The fact that the time is being used and managed properly can let an individual relax and perform better in professional and personal lives (Jackson, 2009).

2) Networking

In this collaborative environment, organisations have shifted their focus from command and control technique to transparent and open working system. Therefore, networking has become very essential as a professional skill across all levels of organisation. Networking is a deliberate and discretionary process to create, cultivate and capitalise on mutually beneficial relationships for the success of an individual as well as an organisation. Networking involves committing to a positive networking mindset, aligning individual networking activities with the organisational activities, leveraging the contacts by putting them in strategic groups. Not only this, a person should also earn and build trust which is primary for collaboration. The ultimate aim is to master the networking skill so that it can deliver maximum value to the organisation (Baber et al., 2015).

Networking helps in developing mutual respect and affluent business practices (Kay, 2006). As stated by (Igwebuike, 1998), trust and mutual respect are significant in business world. He also stated that employees who form strong networks and have good networking skills have enhanced job satisfaction. It is a well-known fact that networking is an important skill that all businesspeople should possess. However, very little training or education is provided by educational institutes to master these skills. It is a precious skill requiring incessant patience and practice leading to the overall community building. Thus, it is essential to incorporate networking skills in management, business and educational training. It will act as a life-enriching skill creating new opportunities of growth for employer and employees (De Klerk, 2010).

3) Negotiation

Negotiation skills are a subset of knowledge and behaviours influencing the bargaining performance of an individual. The goal of negotiation as a skill is teaching students how to create something unique which the parties would not have achieved alone and thereby helping to resolve complex problems through bargaining (Greene and Burleson, 2003).

Negotiation is a means to reach mutual agreement through communication. Negotiation involves mastering the skills of planning, questioning, brainstorming, evaluating needs etc. it acts as a way of handling differences and opposing views of different people. Negotiation is a five-step process that involves analysing, preparing, communicating, proposing and finally committing (Downs, 2009). A good negotiator should be self-aware, cherish the trade, quickly assess situations, be honest and courageous. By mastering the negotiating skills, an employee can act as a great asset for the company (Nyerges, 1987).

4) Interpersonal communication

Communication is the process used to convey a piece of information from one person to another within an organisation (Vandenberg et al., 1999). However, the success of this process is determined by the medium, content and quality of information that has been sent (Dainton and Zelley, 2005). Interpersonal communication focuses on how the managerial activities like planning, organising, staffing directing and controlling are to be performed. It is very essential for managers to communicate with subordinates on a daily basis and give them feedback on their performance. This help in their development and enhances organisational commitment (Bambacas and Patrickson, 2008).

When the communication is effective within the organisation, the overall efficiency of the employees is increased. This is because of smooth and timely flow of information which in turn helps in understanding and accomplishment of organisational goals. (15)

Conclusion

In the wake of 21st century, employability is not just restricted to the technical and vocational skills. Infact it has extended to soft skills and personal attributes. So, the educational institutions need to realise that the need of the hour is not just imparting technical knowledge to the students but also developing their thinking abilities and personal qualities. The employers find candidates with good employability skills more desirable and the candidates with good employability skills are able to get a good job. So, it is a win-win situation for everyone.

Recommendations

Employability skills should be an essential part of the curriculum right from the beginning. In this way, students will be trained to have better soft skills helping them to excel in their careers. The employers should also voice their strong opinion about the relevance of employability skills in today's job market. The government can also play in crucial role in making the people understand the importance of employability skills. Thus, by focussing on various aspects of employability skills, both the company and an individual can pave a way of growth for themselves.

Bibliography

- Ali, F. (2016). Employability Skills among Students and Employers' Perceptions: An Assessment of Levels of Employability Skills Acquired by Business Students at Ishik University. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 3(2).
- Atkins, M. (1999). Oven-ready and Self-basting: taking stock of employability skills. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 4(2), pp.267-280.
- Baber, A., Waymon, L., Alphonso, A. and Wylde, J. (2015). *Strategic Connections*. New York: AMACOM.
- Baumback, J. (2018). *The Value of Employability Skills to the UK Economy*. [online] Seetec. Available at: <https://www.seetec.co.uk/employability/insights/value-of-employability-skills-to-uk-economy> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2019].
- Bennett, T. (2006). *DEFINING THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN CAREER/TECHNICAL EDUCATION*. Ph.D. Auburn University.
- Bransford, J. and Schwartz, D. (1999). Rethinking transfer: A simple proposal with multiple implications. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, pp.61–100.
- Claessens, B., van Eerde, W., Rutte, C. and Roe, R. (2007). A review of the time management literature. *Personnel Review*, 36(2), pp.255-276.
- Crutsinger, C. (1997). *Thinking smarter: Skills for academic success*. [Place of publication not identified]: Skylight Professional Dev.
- Dainton, M. and Zelle, E.D. (2005). *Applying Communication Theory for Professional Life*. London: Sage Publications.
- De Klerk, S. (2010). The importance of networking as a management skill. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 41(1), pp.37-49.
- DEST (Department of Education, Science and Training) (2002). *Employability Skills for the Future*. Canberra
- Downs, L. (2009). *Negotiation skills training*. Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press.
- Greene, J. and Burleson, B. (2003). *Handbook of Communication and Social Interaction Skills*. London.
- Hill, R. and Petty, G. (1995). A new look at selected employability skills: a factor analysis of the occupational work ethic. *Journal of vocational education research*, 20(4).

Igwebuike, J.G. (1998). Networking strategies and degree of job satisfaction of Greater Columbus, Ohio managers. The Ohio State University.

Jackson, D. (2013). Student Perceptions of the Importance of Employability Skill Provision in Business Undergraduate Programs. *Journal of Education for Business*, 88(5), pp.271-279.

Jackson, V. (2009). Time Management: A Realistic Approach. *Journal of the American College of Radiology*, 6(6), pp.434-436.

Kay, F. 2004. *Brilliant business connections: How powerful networking can transform you and your company's performance*. Oxford: How to Books.

Lee Harvey. (2013). Transitions from higher education to Work. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/oeCgqW>

Lindenfield, G. and Lindenfield, S. (2005). *Confident networking for career success and satisfaction*. London: Piatkus.

Mattis, G. (2019). *Why is Employability Important in Higher Education*. [online] QS. Available at: <https://www.qs.com/employability-important-higher-education/> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2019].

McCay, J. (1959), *The Management of Time*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Nyerges, J. (1987). Ten commandments for a Negotiator. *Negotiation journal*, 21.

Ramlee, (2002). The role of vocational and technical education in the industrialization of Malaysia as perceived by educators and employers. Ph.D. Purdue University.

Rasul, M. and Puvanasvaran, A. (2009). IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AS PERCEIVED BY EMPLOYERS OF MALAYSIAN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY. *Journal of Human Capital Development*, 2(2).

Robinson, J. (2000). What are employability skills? *The Workplace*, 1(3).

Smith, E. (2010). *VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING – TEACHING AND LEARNING*. Elsevier Ltd, pp.368-375.

Tracy, B. (2014). *Time Management*. New York, NY: AMACOM.

Vandenberg, R.J., Richardson, H. and Eastman, L. (1999). High involvement organizations: their antecedents and consequences. *Groups and Organization Management*, 24, pp. 300-39.