

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Research Informed Literature	3
Knowledge and Understanding of Subject	4
Analysis.....	6
Practical Application and Deployment	6
Skills for Professional Practice	7
Conclusion	8
Reference List	9

Introduction

The report presented will provide a discussion and analysis on the importance of employability skills in the current industries operating in different markets. The report has been prepared to help graduates gain an understanding of employee opportunities and help them acquire creditability in the future while looking for employment opportunities. It has been prepared from the perspective of an employer who is involved in the activity of recruitment. The report consists of literature collected from scholarly articles, a description on the various concepts and principles of the topic along with a contrasting analysis of the information acquired. The learner has also provided a discussion on the practical application of the subject in real world situations. The report finally ends with mentioning of the various skills and attributes that are currently required in the professional field. The report will help the readers understand the significance of acquiring and possessing various employability skills like communication, problem solving, teamwork, planning and organising, technology, self-management, to name a few can help a professional individual in standing out in the crowd and getting selected for the job, thereby making an outstanding and successful career.

Research Informed Literature

In the words of Robles, (2012), “*employability skills*” have been referred to the set of skills, which can be transferred from one individual to another to help the other individual in acquiring employment. The employers have specified their requirements, which they are looking for in an individual employee, like in depth technical knowledge, knowledge of the subject, good communication and interpersonal skills, analytical reasoning, identification of problem and forming strategies to resolve the identified issues, motivation skills, and others. With reference to graduate attributes, Andrews and Russell, (2012) has defined employability as a group of skills, personal attributes and understandings and accomplishments, which help a graduate in getting employed and make a successful career for themselves in their chosen occupations. This group of skills is beneficial for the professional individual, the organisation where they operate, the society at large and the economy. Another important concept relating to the subject was introduced by Rasul *et al.*, (2012), namely the “*employability skills model*”, which classifies the skills as basic skills, traits, affective skills and higher order thinking skills. This model was developed on the conception that employability mainly relies on individual skill and did not take into consideration other factors like behaviour, attitude, experience, due to which it has been given a narrow perspective. It was one of the initial

models of employability and was criticised due to its overdependence on the skills. As mentioned by Robles (2012), employability skills have gained huge significance currently, due to high rate of competition and intensiveness of the labour market, the demand of the employers in public, private and third sector for flexible employees with the potential to perform various kinds of work in different types of work culture.

Knowledge and Understanding of Subject

Concept of employability

In the words of Confederation of British Industry (Jackson, 2013), the term “*employability*” has been defined as an individual’s possession of competencies and qualities needed for fulfilling the changing requirements of the employers and consumers, thereby assist them in realising their professional potential and aspirations. Apart from this, a holistic approach has also been used for explaining the concept of employability, which focused on the features of both individuals and conditions of the labour industry; to be precise the supply and demand factors were taken into consideration. Hence, The Canadian Labour Force Development Board has defined the term as the relative potential of a professional for acquiring a valuable employment after taking into consideration the relation between labour market and personal situation (McIntyre *et al.*, 2014).

Models of employability

Three models of employability have been discussed as under, namely the USEM model, which gives an academic view to the concept of employability, the Career edge model and the psychosocial model.

The **USEM model** takes into consideration the employability model from the perception of a student (Tymon, 2013). In other words, it discusses the knowledge gained by a graduate after pursuing the degree course and entering the world of employment. USEM stands for the following:

- **Understanding-** apprehending and applying the appropriate knowledge of the subject
- **Skills-** generic and specific abilities relating to the subject
- **Efficacy beliefs-** attentiveness and comprehension of an individual’s ability
- **Metacognition-** the capability to regulate and reflect on an individual’s learning behaviour

The approach offers a strong link to the attributes and framework of a graduate, which were formulated by UK universities with the assumption that the acquisition of these qualities would help an undergraduate in completing a degree successfully and make a successful career as well.

The ***CareerEDGE model*** has taken into consideration the concepts of USEM and DOTS model. It includes the following elements:

- **Career development learning** – comprises of the elements of DOTS
- **Experience** – As per this element, a graduate can gain knowledge about various skills, which are found attractive by prospective employers by undertaking some kind of work experience
- **Skills, understanding, knowledge and degree of the subject-** this element is similar to the first element of USEM, namely understanding
- **Generic skills** – this element is similar to the second element of USEM, namely skills
- **Emotional intelligence** – it can be referred to as the ability to identify an individual's own feelings and other's feeling with the purpose to motivate oneself, to manage one's relationships and one's emotions (Holmes, 2013)

The ***psychosocial model*** is an approach that takes into consideration social factors like age, ethnic background, gender, social class, fluctuations in the job market and so on. It includes the following elements:

- **Career identity** - It takes into consideration the elements of career decision making and self-awareness from DOTS, but in a more depth manner. It is the ability of the individual to reflect their individual experiences in the past for defining their identity and their aim. The integration of future, present and past identity formation includes few features of USEM's learning and development approach.
- **Personal adaptability-** it continues the theme of development in this element. In order to stay employed, an employee must agree and should have the potential to transform themselves with the environmental changes. This means they should adapt themselves to the job hunting approach in relation to the current conditions of the job market, always shows willingness towards learning of new skills and should review their goals during barriers (Hogan *et al.*, 2013).
- **Social and human capital-** this element includes the influence of the social background of an individual and their accessibility to supportive networks. It takes

into consideration the potential of an individual to successfully utilise and develop working relationships through emotional intelligence and other factors. It also takes into consideration the numerous useful skills, attributes and knowledge gained by an individual from their education and work experience.

In other words, this model mainly shows the relation between three elements. To give an example, social capital will affect the career identity of an individual, as it will help in designing and filtering of their career choices. Consequently, changing the career identity includes change in social network within which one operates.

Analysis

Based on the gathered review, it can be understood that there are two themes of employability have been recognised; one is the traditional approach whereas the other is the contemporary approach. On comparing both the approaches, it can be realised that the traditional concept of employability took into consideration the various skills and attributes possessed by an individual only, whereas the contemporary approach takes into consideration other factors as well. These factors have a direct impact on the skills and performance of an individual like behaviour of the employee, the experience of employees and other factors. The traditional concept of employability was a narrow approach whereas the modern concept had a broader perspective.

Practical Application and Deployment

The employability models can be put into use in an effective manner at the workplace by employees and help them in making a successful career for themselves. With proper guidance, the employees and graduate students can utilise their experiences and develop their employability skills, attributes and competencies. The employees who value their work experience can use it in their day to day work operations. The models also help in promotion of work-related learning experience and enhancing the quality of their work. A graduate possessing work experience holds higher chances of seeking employment in comparison to individuals without work experience.

Skills for Professional Practice

Employers have identified eight skills, which they feel every employee should possess, no matter which industry they are working in. These skills needed for professional practice have been mentioned below:

- **Communication-** Communication mainly relates to the art of talking and writing, depending on the job profile. Every individual should be confident while communicating with other individuals, whether on the phone or a face-to-face conversation. The writing should be easily comprehensible, written in memos and emails. These skills can be developed by using social media for blogging purposes, writing reports and assignments, making oral presentations, volunteering for community programs or working on customer service (Holmes, 2013).
- **Teamwork-** This includes the capability to work with different people, people working in the organisation and people who come in association with the organisation. In order to develop these skills, one can take part in-group assignments, volunteer for community association activity, take part in a local sporting team and make efforts to improve work relations with people of the organisation.
- **Problem solving-** The capability to find solutions for problems faced and difficulties refers to the skill of problem solving. Individuals should have the skill to develop a logical solution to the problem identified. By taking part in research work, handling the workplace complaints, undertaking a skills course, which takes into consideration problem solving and talking with other individuals about their way to deal with various problems, can help in development of this skill.
- **Enterprise and initiative-** The ability of an individual to think in a creative manner and bring necessary improvements in the processes by taking into consideration a bigger picture for the organisation is this art. In order to improve initiative and enterprise skills, one should approach companies and businesses for internships and work placements, set up a fundraiser in their community, propose changes in the way activities are performed by the groups and teams.
- **Planning and organising-** The capability to identify the things needed for getting a job done, analysing the time when the change is needed and the manner in which the necessary task will be performed is the skill of planning and organising. It also includes the skill to develop time span for a specific project and performing within the set deadlines. By formulating specific time table and adhering to it, organising an

independent travel, management of team work, family commitments and study, assisting a community event and doing regular household chores can help in developing and improving this skill (Abas-Mastura *et al.*, 2013).

- **Self-management-** This skill relates to execution of work without seeking help from someone and without others analysing the work. The individual should be able to execute the tasks within the given deadlines and ensure that other people are performing their tasks within the given deadline. In order to improve self-management skills, an individual should undertake an internship or a work placement, take initiative towards certain responsibilities, join a volunteer association, formulate a study schedule and adhere to it.
- **Learning-** The skill to comprehend new things and being able to select them quickly is the art of learning. It refers to the potential of an individual to adapt to new tasks and changes and the manner in which activities are performed at the workplace. An individual can undertake a short course, pursue a new hobby, join a volunteer or sport group or conduct some research in the field of learning skills for enhancing of this skill.
- **Technology-** The basic technological skills required by employers' include the employee's ability to use computers for functions like word processing, sending emails and manner of using photocopier. Additional skills required include knowledge regarding a particular software, use of social media, using a design or video editing software, knowledge of programming languages, knowledge relating to hardware, knowledge regarding a cash register, manner to use EFTPOS, photocopier, scanner, recording studio or camera (Lowden *et al.*, 2011). For enhancing technological skills, pursuing a short course, undertaking extra training at work, finding about the technology used at the workplace and recognising the technology used on regular basis can help in development of this skill.

Conclusion

In the given report, the learner has explained the significance of employability skills from the perception of an employer and also highlighted its benefits to the employees. The report has explained the concepts of employability; the various models related to it and also mentioned the different skills that are currently demanded by employers.

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