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ACADEMIC & EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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Introduction

Employability skills comprise the set of transferable skills and key personal attributes that are highly valued by employers and essential for effective performance in the workplace. Thus, developing employability skills through education, training, and practical applications can give an edge in the job market. Unlike professional or technical skills, these employability skills are generic, rather than job-specific, and are common to all work roles and workplaces across all industry types. The progressive advancement in technology and innovation, demographic advancements, changes in work organization globally has led to the depletion of traditional job and employment relationships while creating new job opportunities in emerging economic activities. To be able to compete in this dynamic work environment, Universities often encourage students to develop employability skills for instance- developing good interpersonal skills, being reliable and dependable, willing to learn new skills, and having a problem-solving attitude. These qualities can be harnessed by engaging in various group projects, presentations, student exchange programmes, public speaking, industrial internships, special interest groups, and community activities as well as mentoring programmes. Along with acquiring academic excellence and good marks, honing a bunch of employability skills is a great way to achieve high-earning professional roles with greater growth potential.

The skill gap is the gap between an employee's ability and the employer's expectations of an organization. To bridge this gap, various training and skill development programs and initiatives are taken across universities. Universities encourage students to participate in debates, group discussions, critical analysis, and problem-solving sessions. These sessions help validate students' interpersonal skills, confidence, teamwork, public speaking, planning capacities, and project management skills. The study conducted will analyze different approaches incorporated by universities within the curriculum in enabling and inspiring students to not only academically, but also inculcating the necessary soft skills required in excelling professionally.

Reflect your experience in the university

From this module, I have understood that having proper knowledge of the academic and employability skills is important for getting hired by eminent organizations of the world (Aggarwal, 2016). To get employed in a good organization and make the career flourish, having an immense practice of skills like decision-making, communication and teamwork are essential.

Having academic knowledge of these employability skills can help a person become a better employee in his or her organization altogether.

I have received a lot of guidance and assistance from the teachers and professors of my university in getting a proper understanding of these employability skills that has ultimately turned out to be helpful and effective for me. The teachers and professors at my university are talented and experienced to a great extent, with a teaching experience of many years. They disseminated education and knowledge in a way, which helped me get down deeper into the academic field and gain an understanding of the subjects and topics in detail. Whenever I have faced issues in understanding some of the topics, the teachers have helped me repeatedly until the whole thing got cleared and etched in my knowledge. The support I have received from the faculty of my university is worth appreciating and boasting about. The faculty pays individual attention to all students learning under their guidance and evaluates their extent of learning regularly (Sarkar *et al.*, 2020). This is helpful for us as when they point out our flaws, we get to work on the same and this helps us improve.

Whenever I have sought their guidance, they have come up with solutions that have certainly helped me improve my employability skills under their mentorship. Earlier, I lacked skills that would be needed for being employed as a worker in any prestigious organization. It is the guidance of my mentors and professors who have helped me polish my communication skills. To communicate properly with the other members of an organization is very necessary to carry out work that drives to the success of an organization (Aggarwal, 2016). Previously, I was an introvert personality and could not communicate properly with others. However, under the mentorship of my professors, my flaws and lack got rectified. Now, I can communicate with people in a flawless manner.

Another thing that I have learned from the university is being unbiased and impartial while working in an organization. Favoritism and bias lead to conflicts among employees and thus hampers the working in the organization. A discrimination-free, multicultural, and unbiased work environment is the best for a smooth functioning workforce. This has been taught to me at the university by the mentors. The students were quite free and easy-going with the professors thereby interacting freely (Nisha and Rajasekaran, 2018). This facilitated quite a lot of information among the students and teachers. It fostered healthy learning and in turn, helped us gain practical knowledge to acquire employability skills.

Apart from giving us academic knowledge, our university also gave us quite a lot of practical training where the students were made to conduct role-plays (Nisha and Rajasekaran, 2018). Through this, the skills of employability could be nurtured and made strong.

Reflect your experience regarding the chosen topic

I had the intention of adding to my skill set by learning more, not just about various subjects but also the execution and presentation of my skill set. Subject knowledge is important to select a specialization and also to book specific jobs. But getting the job rests upon how I show what I know and have learned all my life. This is where I require the most amount of guidance.

As stressed upon before, presentation of my skill set and the proper execution of it in the real world is of utmost significance and I have experienced a lot of setbacks in my life in this particular area. Public speaking is also an avenue with which I associate a lot of fear (Cotronei-Baird, 2020). I become easily flummoxed whenever I am asked to speak about myself. Here, in this university, I have learned much about being more organized about my speech. I have learned to make my conversations more focused and have learned how not to ramble on. The teachers and even my peers at times have helped me out to jot down the points I want to mention in a talk. This is a much-disciplined manner of going about the process, I have realized. The teachers have also taught me how to exude confidence in my speech and present myself more strongly and effectively. I have learned to be concise, articulate, organized, and focused on my public presentations. However, there's still a lot left to learn. I still find it difficult to formulate the exact points to mention in a certain speech, on a certain topic. The research behind it takes up a lot of my time. I hope to improve in this aspect.

Some people are naturally analytical in their thinking and can critically assess any situation effortlessly (Osmani *et al.*, 2019). This was not the case with me. I felt interested in certain topics but could not delve deep into it to find hidden meanings. This has significantly improved. Cultivating critical thinking and analytical skills has been a time-consuming process. But my teachers helped me to improve it step by step. My teachers taught me to observe more and look for details on everything. They also suggested that I read more books and train myself to be more imaginative and critically analyze the characters, the plot, and themes of the stories I read. Some

of my teachers and peers also suggested learning more about conspiracy theories. They happen to be a very potent way of brainstorming ideas. After applying all of their advice I have gained many ideas of where to start. I am yet to become an avid reader and an efficient critical thinker. I still have much to learn here. But I am off to a good start and have started practicing analytical thinking more diligently and have also started developing more awareness.

Another really important skill I have learned from my university is preparing attractive curriculum vitae (Bhagra and Sharma, 2018). To catch the eye of any recruiter, ¹⁰ it is extremely important to have a good resume. I have developed several skills throughout my academic life. I have achieved much in terms of academics and have been a part of extra and co-curricular activities enthusiastically. All this has made its way into my resume. However, I did not know much about how to write a CV properly before my teachers pointed out my mistakes. I was told that I made the CV too big and too scattered. Recruiters will not go through so much detailed information. My teachers gave me a few pointers and they also mentioned what I should or should not mention in my CV. My teachers taught me to filter the information I put into my CV. They also taught me that different jobs look for different skill sets and thereby they taught me how to make my CV more job-specific (Wolff and Booth, 2017). I still experience struggles in boiling my CV down to the important points but that would happen with time. My teachers in the university have been a constant support throughout my learning experience and their teachings have brought significant changes in my skill set and knowhow.

The current study experiences

At present, the entire teaching-learning process is being conducted via online mode. The Coronavirus pandemic has made it impossible to attend classes physically. Our university has already started virtual classes and here are my two cents about classes using the online mode during the pandemic situation.

I noticed several pros in conducting classes online. Firstly, it can be conducted anywhere and does not occupy much time (Griffiths *et al.*, 2018). I can do other work simultaneously and still not miss out on lectures. Secondly, the sharing of study materials has become easier and faster. It has also made the process more student-friendly and the classes feel less formal and more interactive now.

This has benefited me largely because I always had trouble speaking up in class. It is easier to be a part of discussions now because I do so from the comfort of my home.

However, there are just as many cons in this virtual teaching process as there are pros. I often experience some of the other technical issues while the classes are going on (Scott *et al.*, 2019). There's some problem with the network almost every day and it causes many interruptions. I also feel some of our older teachers are not very adept at handling technology very understandably. I believe they have a hard time making the best use of the resources they have at hand. In some cases, I believe the quality of teaching is also being compromised as the administration is trying to fit in the curriculum into a limited period.

Considering everything I have gathered that the virtual mode has assured that we continue our education while staying home and safe in the pandemic. It has made certain academic activities easier while some parts need improvement. In all fairness, this is a new process, and time is required for making adjustments (Nisha and Rajasekaran, 2018). Overall, it can be a promising teaching-learning method.

Conclusion

From the above study, it can be concluded that ² in an environment of rapid change – technologically, economically, socially – preparing learners for the working world has become a key priority and responsibility. Thus, academic and employability skills work hand-in-hand in the overall holistic development of any student, without which excelling in the current dynamic work environment becomes a challenge. Universities are constantly ² embedding ways of enhancing the ⁹ employability of their students to bridge the ⁹ ‘skills gap’ deplored by employers and industry. Several teaching modules ⁷ are implemented within the curriculum, which aids students to thrive, in addition to practicing the necessary marketable ⁷ work skills: positive attitude, communication, teamwork, self- management, willingness to learn, thinking ¹ skills, resilience, innovation, entrepreneurship, and cultural competence into their daily life. ¹ Regardless of the line of work anyone enters, ¹ professionalism, and integrity along with profound verbal and written communication are important skills to master in nearly every business or industry. Hence attending crucial knowledge sharing classes within universities are of prime importance. In this study, a detailed analysis of the skill set needed is performed, along with SWOT analysis to comprehend

strength and weakness patterns. Therefore the education universities should focus on assessing every student's capabilities and ways to expand the student's skill set by encouraging them over time.

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