Analysis of Employability Skill Gap in Information Technology Professionals

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into exploring and listing the skills required to get employment and for enhancing the employability of information technology professionals in India. The present article focuses on the perception of employers and students (engineering graduates) in order to identify the need and importance of employability skills in Indian IT companies. A checklist had been prepared after reviewing the relevant literature on employability skills. The result highlights that the respondents differ in perception on various skills. These skills are learnability, reasoning, reliability, adaptability, flexibility, loyalty, resourceful, proactive, gratitude, interpersonal skills, creative thinking, persuasiveness, networking, job-seeking, business fundamental, and willingness to work. While on some skills there seems to be no significant difference. However, the skills where there are differences in perception need immediate attention so that remedial measures are initiated. The implications of this article will be helpful in guiding both industry and academia in incorporating and enhancing the employability skills among professionals.

KEYWORDS

Employability Skills, Employability, IT Professionals, Skill Gap

1. INTRODUCTION

The employment scenario globally has witnessed significant evolution during 1955–2015, with an increase in skilled manpower and types of skill requirements (The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 2016). The reports predict that unemployment rate is expected to rise modestly in 2017 to 5.8 percent from 5.7 percent in 2016 – representing 3.4 million more people unemployed globally (bringing total unemployment to just over 201 million in 2017) (International Labor Organization (ILO), 2017). Wall Street journal in 2015 expressed that only 5.5 million jobs will be created annually. India, which is considered as the fastest growing economy in the world and this, is going to raise the demand for manpower. Hereafter, India’s youth is going to face challenges related to skill development (WEF, 2017). The structural changes to enhance employability skills will help in accelerating the innovation and adoption of newer technology that will in turn broaden the employment opportunities (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, International Monetary Fund, The World Bank, & Organization, 2016). To turn structural change for imparting skills into an opportunity for all, there is a need to increase the employability of workforce.

The knowledge and skills are the significant foundations for the economic growth and social development for any country. Nevertheless, educational institutions, industries, and government are taking several initiatives in this direction yet there is a lot of scope for preparing students for future jobs. The emergence of the global economy has led to a major shift in recruiting process. Besides,

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looking for better employment, individuals’ need to work more upon enhancing their employability in order to sustain and grow for the longer term.

Of late, in India, there is no established national set of transferable skills within the qualification frameworks. There are few frameworks towards imparting employability skills like modular employability skills framework of the ministry of labour and employment, National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), National Occupational Standards (NOS) and Qualification Packs, which includes various competencies. Moreover, for enhancing employability there is a need to work more on embedding core skills into Technical and Vocational Education and Training curriculum (TVET) and skills system (Brewer & Comyn, 2015).

In this research study differences between employer’s perceptions of needed skill sets and students’ perceptions of possessed skill sets is determined.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

ILO (2008) observed that employability is an outcome of several factors for example core skills, access to education, availability of training opportunities, motivation, ability and facilitation to avail opportunities for acquiring skills that are important in gaining work, managing organizations to handle new technologies and evolving markets. Nevertheless, skill development is required not only for employability of individuals rather it is equally needed for improving the working conditions of workers, to increase organizations’ productivity and sustainability (ILO, 2008).

Furthermore, productivity of an individual is dependent on number of factors in any organization. In context of an IT professional, Hernández-López, Colomo-Palacios, Soto-Acosta, & Lumberas (2015) highlighted in their research work, where they described about productivity measurement. In IT industry the elements of productivity are classified into input, outputs and other factors, where inputs are time and work management, requirements, experience, education and training, and outputs includes documentation, product, quality, team management, project enhancement and maintenance, learning-by-doing, founded solutions, resolution of doubts and sales are measured. They further emphasized that besides inputs and outputs, some other factors are required to be measured in order to improve productivity of individual’s. Based on the above study, it can be subsumed that the other factor may include employability skills.

“Employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently into and within labour markets and to realize potential through sustainable and accessible employment. For the individual, employability depends on: the knowledge and skills they possess, and their attitudes; the way personal attributes are presented in the labour market; the environmental and social context within which work is sought; and the economic context within which work is sought” (Department of Higher and Further Education, 2002).

The knowledge, skills, and adaptability are keys to employability. Further employability plays a major role in balancing out labour market demand and supply gap (International Labour Office, 2006). Global skills reports, articles, and industry experts have consistently highlighted the need for demonstrating employability skills among IT professionals. In view of that, employers’ expectations have outstretched the bar of challenges in front of IT professionals and academics to develop skills for future uncertain jobs. The background work was done by the American Society for Training and Development and the Secretary’s Commission on achieving necessary skills in identifying employability skills.

Employability skills are those core proficiencies required in the 21st-century work environment that exemplifies knowledge, skills, and attitudes to achieve success at all the levels of employment as well as in education (Overtoom, 2000). SCANS (1991) highlights five workplace competencies which is defined as an ability to productively use, resources (identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources); interpersonal skills (works with others this further includes negotiating skills, leadership skills, dealing with clients, contribution to a group, work diversity); information (acquires and
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