

Opinion on Employability Skill Set: Perspective in Oman Job Market

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Abstract

Currently, employers finding suitable candidates with the right skills and competencies for their organizations is a complicated process. Employers want graduates with a variety of well-honed life skills. Just getting the job done is not enough employees will need to be able to work unsupervised and be team players, demonstrate creativity and develop innovative ideas. However, in the job market, stakeholders have a different opinion on the skill set required in the job market; hence, this study aimed to know the idea on graduate employability skills amongst top management, HEIs, students, and employees in Oman. This study will help higher education institutions (HEIs) in Oman to assess academic program performance and restructure course outcomes for the expectation of the labor market in the Arab region. This study result will help develop higher education institutions' strategies to fill the gap of graduate skill deficiencies and to suit the required skills in the industry.

This paper has reviewed and synthesized various theoretical aspects from various sources and applied the Henry Garrett ranking technique to know the opinion of prioritized skills for employability by different stakeholders in the study area. This study will support identifying various stakeholders' perceptions and finding resolution techniques to meet the requirements in the labor market. The significant finding from the survey analysis is that top management required skills sets are enthusiasm, motivation, and independent study skill, and faculty understanding of necessary skills for the graduated in the labor market is enthusiasm, motivation, commitment, planning and organizing skill, students opinion that required skills in the global market are independent study skills, commitment, planning, and organizing skills but employees in the organization feel that enthusiasm, motivation, self-management and time management required in the job market. This research motivates students to understand the skills deficiencies from the employers' perspectives and enhance their competency skill gap. This study will provide the future path for HEIs and the government to enrich the quality of teaching and learning aspects as per the modern digital world.

Keywords— Opinion, Employability Skill, Job market

I. INTRODUCTION

Employability Skills might be described as the transferable skills required to make them "employable" Employers frequently describe a set of abilities that they expect from an employee, in addition to solid technical understanding and subject knowledge. These are the talents they believe will best prepare the employee to perform their job to the best of their abilities. Graduates' employability is determined by their knowledge, skills, and attitudes and how they use and convey those

assets to employers (Ali Sharaf Al Musawi, 2010).

Top management is the ultimate source of authority, and it establishes the company's goals, rules, and plans. They spend more time on functions such as planning and coordination. They were responsible to the business owners and the overall management. It's also known as the policy-making body in charge of the general direction and performance of the company's operations (Louis A. Allen, 1998). Higher-educational institutions include universities and colleges and professional

schools that prepare students for careers in law, theology, medicine, business, music, and the arts. Employers in industries and linked business groups, professional bodies, higher education institutions, curriculum experts, and others believe that highly trained workers must be developed to meet the difficulties of raising competitiveness. They require professionals who can work flexibly and intelligently across corporate contexts and who are responsive to economic, social, cultural, and technological environment change now more than ever.

In 1995 the Ministry of Education, Oman prepared a report on implementing new education reforms focusing on human resource development. In 1997, at the "consultation council," the Minister of Education emphasized the importance of the reform and shared with members the new changes, which include changing the Ministry's structure, revising education's goals, and abolishing telecommunications. The Sultanate's higher education institutions are governed by the Accreditation Council, established in 2001 to manage accreditation, evaluation, and quality control. Several plans and programs have been developed to ensure the sector's standards. To foster the expansion of private higher education institutions, the government provides considerable infrastructure and funding (Ali Sharaf Al Musawi, 2010).

II. EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Employability abilities are skills that can be applied to almost any employment. They entail acquiring abilities, information, or a mindset that makes employees more appealing to employers. Employment skills, soft skills, work-readiness skills, and foundational skills are used to describe employability abilities. Employees' performance is often improved, errors are reduced, and collaboration with co-workers encourages them to accomplish their jobs more effectively. Although employability skills are not specified in a job description, they are crucial qualities that can help applicants stand out to potential employers. The key advantage of possessing these characteristics is that it can help them stand out from other job

seekers fighting for the same employment. In some businesses, specific employability skills are more in demand. They can research which employment skills are vital in their field to prepare for an interview or build a resume for a specific role to prepare for an interview or write a resume for a particular position.

The Expert Panel on Skills classified skills into five categories in its March 2000 study, 'Skills and Opportunities in the Knowledge Economy. They include those as mentioned above technical or hard talents and several 'soft skill' categories. There are four types of skills: essential, management, leadership, and contextual. However, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (previously Department of Education, Science and Training) performed a significant study. It categorized employability skills (source: The University of Sydney Careers Centre, January 2010) as follows:

Communication Skills

- Effective listening, comprehension, and speaking Writing that is effective
- Negotiation and persuasion
- Empathy, assertiveness, and strategic planning Excellent customer service
- Networking and building relationships Information dissemination
- Language proficiency
- Logical summarization and data interpretation Planning and presiding over a meeting

Team – working Skills

- Ability to work well with a varied set of people
- Developing team members' strengths Recognizing one's own strengths and weaknesses
- Clarification of roles and job execution
- Demonstrating effective management abilities
- Mentoring, coaching, and motivating others
- Providing and receiving constructive criticism Conflict avoidance

- Contribution with a goal in mind Problem Solving Skills
- Facts evaluation
- A clear definition of the problem Innovation & Creativity
- Initiative
- Problem-solving skills Coming up with strategies Creating contingency plans
- Creating and assessing a variety of choices Making sound decisions and plans of action
- Solving difficulties with mathematics, particularly budget- ing and financial management.
- Addressing consumer complaints about difficult situations Putting solutions in place and keeping track of them Analyzing and evaluating procedures and outcomes
- Skills in initiative and entrepreneurship Recognizing chances that aren't readily apparent Evaluating an idea's competitive advantage Identifying the needs of the consumer or client Creating strategic objectives
- Being creative, coming up with new ideas, and providing novel solutions
- Analyzing the commercial viability of concepts
- Putting thoughts into action
- Demonstrating sensitivity to political, commercial, envi- ronmental, cultural, and other factors
- sor's Maintaining communication with stakeholders and spon- Employing a variety of corporate communication techniques
- Selling and marketing a product or service. Skills in Planning and Organizing
- Setting clear and measurable project objectives and deliv- erables
- Specifying requirements and quality standards
- Time, people, money, and materials are all resources that must be planned for.
- Contingency planning and risk management
- Time management and prioritisation - defining goals ing•) Task management (delegating, coordinating, and monitor-
- People management - training, development, motivation, feedback, and supervision

- Gathering, evaluating, and arranging data
- Taking initiative, being resourceful, and making decisions Developing evaluation criteria and taking part in ongoing improvement
- Keeping track of progress and outcomes.
- Recognizing the fundamental business systems and their interrelationships.

Learning Skills

- Self-management – learning
- Knowledge and experience sharing in the workplace Participating in the workplace learning community Learning through a variety of methods, including mentoring, peer support, networking, information technology (IT), and courses.
- Using knowledge to solve 'technical' problems, such as learning about products, and 'people' problems, such as interpersonal and cultural elements of work.
- Having a desire to learn new things on a regular basis Willingness to learn in every situation - both on and off the job
- Being receptive to new ideas and methods
- Being willing to put in the time and effort to master new skills
- Recognizing the importance of learning in order to adapt to change

Technology Skills

- Possessing a basic set of IT abilities Using technology as a management tool Using technology to arrange data Willingness to learn new computer skills
- Having the knowledge of occupational health and safety to use technology
- Possessing the necessary physical capabilities Self- Management Skills
- Having a personal vision and set of objectives
- Self-evaluation and self-monitoring
- Knowing and believing in one's own thoughts and vision.
- Defining and articulating one's own ideas and vision
- Assuming accountability

- Working in an ethical manner Performing under duress Demonstrating resilience

The researchers noticed no significant difference among health, banking, commercial, and education sectors in all employability skills (Omenyi and Christy, 2008). Employers necessitate recruiting fresh candidates of engineering graduates to use for their workforce: the individual abilities required such, teamwork, problem-solving, and communication. Further, a study indicated that the employers badly needed that the graduates have the power to work individually as a team member, with good communication skills and problem-solving skills (Md Yusoff et al. 2009).

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Employers want graduates with various well-honed life skills; just getting the job done is not enough. Employees will need to work unsupervised, be team players, demonstrate creativity, and develop innovative ideas. Hence, this study aimed to analyze Omani graduate employability skill gaps amongst top management, HEIs, students, and employees in the study area.

To explore the personal details of selected top management, HEIs, students, and employees in Oman.

To examine the employers' expectations on graduates' learning and development skills.

This study is descriptive. A survey was conducted with the respondents of Top Management of the companies, faculties of higher educational institutions, students studying in college, and employees. This paper has reviewed and synthesized various theoretical aspects from multiple sources and applied the Henry Garrett ranking technique to know the opinion of prioritized skills for employability by different stakeholders in the study area.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. PERCEPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS (HENRY GARRETT RANKING TECHNIQUE)

The following analysis has been discussed about the perception of the faculties. For the study purpose, it has been classified into twelve categories viz., independent study skill, commitment, planning, and organizing skill, enthusiasm and motivation, teamwork & cooperation, communication (oral, written and body language), self-management & time management, logical, analytical and problem-solving ability, initiative, creativity and innovation, flexibility and adaptability, numeracy & research skill, self-confidence & diligence, and ICT knowledge. To identify the essential perception, Henry Garrett Ranking Technique has been employed, and the details of ranking the perception of the faculties are shown in the following table.

It is revealed from the above table that the primary perception of the faculties is 'enthusiasm and motivation,' which is ranked first with the Garrett score of 23558 points. The second and third ranks are assigned to 'commitment, planning and organizing skill' and 'teamwork & cooperation' with the Garrett scores of 19939 and 19615 points, respectively. The fourth and fifth ranks are assigned to 'self-management & time management and 'communication (oral, written, and body language)' with the Garrett scores of 18907 and 18553 points, respectively. The sixth and seventh ranks are assigned to 'logical, analytical and problem-solving ability and 'independent study skill' with the Garrett scores of 17635 and 17643 points, respectively. The eighth and ninth ranks are assigned to 'initiative, creativity and innovation' and 'ICT knowledge' with the Garrett scores of 17596 and 17340 points, respectively. The tenth and eleventh ranks are assigned to 'self-confidence & diligence' and 'flexibility and adaptability' with the Garrett scores of 16617 and 16176 points, respectively. The last rank is assigned to 'numeracy & research skill' with the Garrett scores of 15621 points. It is found from the

analysis that most perceptions of the faculties as 'enthusiasm and motivation' and 'commitment, planning and organizing skill.'

B. PERCEPTION OF THE TOP MANAGEMENT (HENRY GARRETT RANKING TECHNIQUE)

An attempt has been made to know the top management's perception that looks from graduates in the current situations. For the study purpose, it has been classified into twelve categories viz., independent study skill, commitment, planning, and organizing skill, enthusiasm and motivation, teamwork & cooperation, communication (oral, written and body language), self-management & time management, logical, analytical and problem-solving ability, initiative, creativity and innovation, flexibility and adaptability, numeracy & research skill, self-confidence & diligence, and ICT knowledge. To identify an essential perception, Henry Garrett Ranking Technique has been employed, and the details of ranking the perception of the top management are shown in the following table.

The above analysis shows that the top management's significant perception is 'enthusiasm and motivation,' which is ranked

first with the Garrett score of 22655 points. The second and third ranks are assigned to 'Independent study skill' and 'ICT knowledge' with the Garrett scores of 21790 and 19908 points, respectively. The fourth and fifth ranks are assigned to 'team work & cooperation' and 'self-management & time management' with the Garrett scores of 19873 and 19573 points, respectively. The sixth and seventh ranks are assigned to 'logical, analytical and problem-solving ability' and 'flexibility and adaptability' with the Garrett scores of 19055 and 18931 points, respectively. The eighth and ninth ranks are assigned to 'initiative, creativity and innovation' and 'self-confidence & diligence' with the Garrett scores of 18597 and 18387 points. The tenth and eleventh ranks are assigned to 'communication (oral, written, and body language)' and 'numeracy & research skill' with the Garrett scores of 17305 and 16720 points, respectively. The last rank is assigned to 'Commitment, Planning and organizing skill' with the Garrett scores of 16311 points. It is found from the analysis that most perceptions of the top management as 'enthusiasm and motivation' and 'independent study skill.'

TABLE I: PERCEPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS (HENRY GARRETT RANKING TECHNIQUE)

| No. | Factors | Total score | Mean score | Rank |
|-----|---|-------------|------------|------|
| 1 | Independent study skill | 17643 | 48.3 | VII |
| 2 | Commitment, Planning and organizing skill | 19939 | 54.6 | II |
| 3 | Enthusiasm and motivation | 23558 | 64.5 | I |
| 4 | Team work & Cooperation | 19615 | 53.7 | III |
| 5 | Communication (Oral, Written and Body language) | 18353 | 50.3 | V |
| 6 | Self-Management & Time Management | 18907 | 51.8 | IV |
| 7 | Logical, analytical and problem-solving ability | 17635 | 48.3 | VI |
| 8 | Initiative, creativity and innovation | 17596 | 48.2 | VIII |
| 9 | Flexibility and adaptability | 16176 | 44.3 | XI |
| 10 | Numeracy & Research skill | 15621 | 42.8 | XII |
| 11 | Self-confidence & Diligence | 16617 | 45.5 | X |
| 12 | ICT knowledge | 17340 | 47.5 | IX |

TABLE II: PERCEPTION OF THE TOP MANAGEMENT (HENRY GARRETT RANKING TECHNIQUE)

| No. | Statements | Total score | Mean score | Rank |
|-----|---|-------------|------------|------|
| 1 | Independent study skill | 21790 | 57.0 | II |
| 2 | Commitment, Planning and organizing skill | 16311 | 42.7 | XII |
| 3 | Enthusiasm and motivation | 22655 | 59.3 | I |
| 4 | Team work & Cooperation | 19873 | 52.0 | IV |
| 5 | Communication (Oral, Written and Body language) | 17305 | 45.3 | X |
| 6 | Self-Management & Time Management | 19573 | 51.2 | V |
| 7 | Logical, analytical and problem solving ability | 19055 | 49.9 | VI |
| 8 | Initiative, creativity and innovation | 18597 | 48.7 | VIII |
| 9 | Flexibility and adaptability | 18931 | 49.6 | VII |
| 10 | Numeracy & Research skill | 16720 | 43.8 | XI |
| 11 | Self-confidence & Diligence | 18387 | 48.1 | IX |
| 12 | ICT knowledge | 19908 | 52.1 | III |

C. PERCEPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS (HENRY GARRETT RANKING TECHNIQUE)

The following analysis has been assessed about the perception of the students who observe from graduates in the current situations. For the study purpose, it has been classified into twelve categories viz., independent study skill, commitment, planning, and organizing skill, enthusiasm and motivation, teamwork & cooperation, communication (oral, written and body language), self-management & time management, logical, analytical and problem-solving ability, initiative, creativity and innovation, flexibility and adaptability, numeracy & research skill, self-confidence & diligence, and ICT knowledge. To identify an essential perception, Henry Garrett Ranking Technique has been employed, and the details of ranking the students' perception are shown in the following table.

The above table shows that the primary perception of the students as 'independent study skill' is ranked first with the Garrett score of 22497 points. The second and third ranks are assigned to 'Commitment, Planning and organizing skill' and 'Enthusiasm and motivation' with the Garrett scores of 21376 and 21119 points, respectively. The fourth and fifth ranks are assigned to 'numeracy & research skill' and 'initiative, creativity and innovation' with the Garrett scores of 20938

and 20892, respectively. The sixth and seventh ranks are assigned to 'self-management & time management' and 'logical, analytical and problem-solving ability' with the Garrett scores of 20678 and 20429 points, respectively. The eighth and ninth ranks are assigned to 'self-confidence & diligence' and 'ICT knowledge' with the Garrett scores of 20276 and 20167, respectively. The tenth and eleventh ranks are assigned to 'teamwork & cooperation' and 'flexibility and adaptability' with the Garrett scores of 19972 and 19806 points, respectively. The last rank is 'communication (oral, written, and body language)' with the Garrett scores of 19542 points. It is found from the analysis that maximum perception of the students as 'independent study skill' and 'commitment, planning and organizing skill.'

D. PERCEPTION OF THE EMPLOYEES (HENRY GARRETT RANKING TECHNIQUE)

The following analysis has been viewed about the perception of the selected employees in the study area. For this study, it has been divided into twelve categories viz., independent study skill, commitment, planning and organizing skill, enthusiasm and motivation, teamwork & cooperation, communication (oral, written, and body language), self-management & time management, logical, analytical, and problem-solving ability, initiative, creativity and

innovation, flexibility and adaptability, numeracy & research skill, self- confidence & diligence, and ICT knowledge. To identify the essential perception, Henry Garrett Ranking Technique has been employed, and the details of ranking the employees' perception are shown in the following table.

The above table shows that the primary perception of the employees as 'Enthusiasm and

motivation' is ranked first with the Garrett score of 21809 points. The second and third ranks are assigned to 'self-management & time management and 'flexibility and adaptability with the Garrett scores of 21326 and 20834 points, respectively. The fourth and fifth ranks are assigned to 'logical, analytical and problem-solving ability

| No. | Factors | Total score | Mean score | Rank |
|-----|---|-------------|------------|------|
| 1 | Independent study skill | 22497 | 59.5 | I |
| 2 | Commitment, Planning and organizing skill | 21376 | 56.6 | II |
| 3 | Enthusiasm and motivation | 21119 | 55.9 | III |
| 4 | Team work & Cooperation | 19972 | 52.8 | X |
| 5 | Communication (Oral, Written and Body language) | 19542 | 51.7 | XII |
| 6 | Self-Management & Time Management | 20678 | 54.7 | VI |
| 7 | Logical, analytical and problem-solving ability | 20429 | 54.0 | VII |
| 8 | Initiative, creativity and innovation | 20892 | 55.3 | V |
| 9 | Flexibility and adaptability | 19806 | 52.4 | XI |
| 10 | Numeracy & Research skill | 20938 | 55.4 | IV |
| 11 | Self-confidence & Diligence | 20276 | 53.6 | VIII |
| 12 | ICT knowledge | 20167 | 53.4 | IX |

TABLE IV: PERCEPTION OF THE EMPLOYEES (HENRY GARRETT RANKING TECHNIQUE)

| No. | Statements | Total score | Mean score | Rank |
|-----|---|-------------|------------|------|
| 1 | Independent study skill | 19713 | 51.3 | VI |
| 2 | Commitment, Planning and organizing skill | 15817 | 41.2 | XII |
| 3 | Enthusiasm and motivation | 21809 | 56.8 | I |
| 4 | Team work & Cooperation | 19232 | 50.1 | VIII |
| 5 | Communication (Oral, Written and Body language) | 18622 | 48.5 | X |
| 6 | Self-Management & Time Management | 21326 | 55.5 | II |
| 7 | Logical, analytical and problem solving ability | 20576 | 53.6 | IV |
| 8 | Initiative, creativity and innovation | 18919 | 49.3 | IX |
| 9 | Flexibility and adaptability | 20834 | 54.3 | III |
| 10 | Numeracy & Research skill | 17768 | 46.3 | XI |
| 11 | Self-confidence & Diligence | 19507 | 50.8 | VII |
| 12 | ICT knowledge | 20248 | 52.7 | V |

and 'ICT knowledge' with the Garrett scores of 20576 and 20248, respectively. The sixth and seventh ranks are assigned to 'independent study skill' and 'self-confidence & diligence' with the Garrett scores of 19713 and 19507 points. The eighth and ninth ranks are assigned to 'teamwork & cooperation' and 'initiative, creativity and innovation' with the Garrett

scores of 19232 and 18919 points, respectively. The tenth and eleventh ranks are assigned to 'communication (oral, written, and body language)' and 'numeracy & research skill' with the Garrett scores of 18322 and 17768. The last rank is 'commitment, planning and organizing skill' with the Garrett scores of 15817 points. It is found from the analysis that

most perception of the employees as 'enthusiasm and motivation' and 'self-management & time management.

V. CONCLUSION

From the analysis, it is clear that most top management has 'enthusiasm and motivation' and 'independent study skill' but the perception of the faculties as 'enthusiasm and motivation' and 'commitment, planning and organizing skill.' The analysis explored the maximum perception of the students as 'independent study skill' and 'commitment, planning and organizing skill' but the most perception of the employees as 'enthusiasm and motivation' and 'self-management & time management.

It is observed that there is a significant difference in employers' expectations on employees' learning and development skills about selected variables except for educational qualification of personal details of employees. Subsequently, employability skills help potential employees attract and secure good employability skills in the institution, organization, and industry. Employers should encourage all graduates to improve their employability skills through effective practical training, workshops, seminars, and other relevant programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The research leading to these results has received Project Funding from the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Sultanate of Oman under the TRC-Research Agreement number MUS/004/2019(BFP/RGP/EHR/18/173).

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