

Employability Skills Through Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

All of us know that we go to school to learn technical or work-related skills. To succeed at school and also for self development employability skills like personal management, communication, teamwork and other similar skills are needed. Practising these skills at school will prepare you to use them at work.

Employers often give high value to your employability skills, especially your ability to get along well with others. They often ask instructors and student advisors for references because they know your conduct in school can predict your success in work place. From class room we can develop skills like interacting to instructors in a professional way, dressing properly, scheduling, avoiding inappropriate humour, etc. At school, you'll have the opportunity to develop skills that will help you get along with people with diverse backgrounds and social values—skills you'll also need in the workplace.

Moreover if developing employability skills are made part of the curriculum, students as well as teachers will realize its importance and will work on it. Here universities can play a better role by revising their syllabus and incorporating employability as part of core courses and also providing assistance and fund in this regard. There by we can develop productive rather employable graduates.

This paper will attempt 1) to introduce and define the term employability 2) briefly discuss the employability skills 3) developing employability skills through classroom and 4) measures to be taken to develop employability skills through class room.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To introduce and define the term employability.
- To define hard skills and soft or employability skills.
- To discuss in brief various employability skills.
- To examine the advantages of developing employability skills through classroom.
- To discuss the various measures to be taken in developing employability skills through classroom.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In an increasingly competitive employment market, employers are looking beyond simple academic achievement when considering applicants for a job or internship. Many now expect to see evidence of other skills and achievements that boost someone's attractiveness as a potential employee.

Businesses want graduates who not only add value but who have the skills to help to transform their organisation in the face of continuous and rapid economic and technological change. All graduates - whatever their degree discipline - need to be equipped with employability skills.

So in this paper an attempt has been made to study the various employability skills and developing them at school and what measures should be taken in doing it.

Employability covers a broad range of non-academic or softer skills and abilities which are of value in the workplace. It includes the ability to work in a team; a willingness to demonstrate initiative and original thought; self-discipline in starting and completing tasks to deadline.

4. EMPLOYABILITY

Employability refers to a person's capability for gaining and maintaining employment. For individuals, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities they possess, in addition to the way they present those assets to employers. As such, employability is affected by both supply-side and demand-side factors which are often outside of an individual's control.

Several employability definitions have been developed based on, or including input from business and industry. In the United States, an Employability Skills Framework was developed through a collaboration of employers, educators, human resources associations, and labour market associations. This framework states, "Employability skills are general skills that are necessary for success in the labour market at all employment levels and in all sectors". After conducting research with employers across Canada, the Conference Board of Canada defined employability as "the skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work". Saunders & Zuzel (2010) found that employers valued personal qualities such as dependability and enthusiasm over subject knowledge and ability to negotiate. Research of employers in Australia revealed that the most valued skills were self-management, communication and teamwork.

Employability is not the same as gaining a graduate job, rather it implies something about the capacity of the graduate to function in a job and be able to move between jobs, thus remaining employable throughout their life.

5. HARD SKILLS, SOFT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

What are hard skills?

Hard skills or technical skills can be defined teachable and tangible skills to get and keep a job in the labour market. Simply saying, if you know how to do your job in your profession it means you have valuable hard skills. For example, ability to use software programs, measuring and calculating, analyzing data, operating specific tools and certified in professional field can be considered as hard skills.

What are soft skills?

In contrast, soft skills are not tangible and sometime called employability skills. It includes skills of communication, problem solving, positive attitudes and behaviours, adaptability, working with others, creative thinking, leadership, negotiation skills etc.

What are Employability skills?

Employability skills are those skills necessary for getting, keeping and being successful in a job.

They are the skills and attitudes that enable employees to get along with their colleagues, to make critical decisions, solve problems, develop respect and ultimately become strong ambassadors for the organisation.

Employability or soft skills are the foundation of your career building blocks and they are frequently referenced in the media as lacking in school-leavers, graduates and those already in employment. Organisations spend a lot of time and money training staff, not in job specific areas but in general and basic skills.

In times of high unemployment, employers have more choice of applicants and will favour those with well rounded employability skills. Following are some of the employability skills.

1) **Interpersonal Skills**

Interpersonal skills are the skills we use to interact with other people. Good interpersonal skills allow you to participate effectively as a member of a team, satisfy customers and clients' expectations, negotiate, make decisions, manage your time efficiently, take responsibility, and work effectively with other employees. Well-honed interpersonal skills allow us to empathise and build rapport with colleagues and clients, leading to a better working environment which can be less stressful.

2) **Communication Skills**

Employers look for people who communicate well both verbally and in writing. The ability to communicate both verbally and in writing with a wide variety of people, maintain good eye contact, write clearly and succinctly, demonstrate a varied vocabulary and tailor your language to your audience are all essential skills that employers seek out. Good verbal and written communication means you can get your messages across with less chance of misunderstanding.

Similarly, active listening skills involve not only hearing but gaining and understanding information. Listening is a basic requirement leading to fewer mistakes and a greater understanding of the needs of employer and client.

3) **Critical Thinking Skills**

The ability to solve problems and make decisions can be a huge asset to your employer and these are therefore desirable skills to develop. Decision making and problem solving require gathering reliable information, evaluating the information for a variety of solutions and selecting the most appropriate option based on the criteria and situation. Although the ability to solve problems and make appropriate decisions is critical in any job, people with these skills are especially helpful in customer service positions.

The ability to be able to effectively plan and organise means that you, or your team, are more likely to get the job done correctly the first time. These skills are beneficial to employers as they save time and money. Planning and organisation also require the recording of information (maybe in a report) which can be referred to when planning future projects.

4) **Personal Development**

Personal development is all about having the right attitude towards work and the organisation you work for. Employers look for people who are keen to develop and learn.

Lifelong learners are always valued in organisations. In order to stay ahead of the competition, organisations need to continually learn and develop better ways of doing things. The employee who is open to learning and embraces change will be more successful than the person who is afraid of learning and resistant to changes in the organisation. Most jobs involve change, some more frequently than others, and employers want people who are adaptable, flexible, and patient, and respond well to change.

Self-management skills, also known as 'self-control', are the skills we use to manage our personal feelings and how we react to challenges and problems both at work and in our private lives. Personal development includes learning to avoid potentially negative emotions such as anger and stress while developing assertiveness and effective negotiation skills.

5) Presentation Skills

Presenting information clearly and effectively is a key skill in the work place and presentation skills are required in almost every modern employment area.

Whether you are an administrator, manager or executive, you should expect to present your ideas and findings to your work colleagues and external stakeholders. Presenting information does not just include making formal presentations - information could be presented in the form of notes, reports, research findings, business plans, scenario planning, risk assessments and strategic documents.

6) Leadership

Leadership is the ability to influence others toward the achievement of a goal.

Leaders either have, or are perceived to have, strong self-confidence. Leaders are team players, allowing them to work in a group to achieve the best results for their employer. Leaders show social skills by respecting the thoughts, opinions and ideas of others - they gain the respect of others and aim for credibility. Developing leadership skills not only helps to find a senior position, but also helps to gain promotion with your current employer

7) Numeracy (number skills)

Numeracy involves an understanding of numerical data, statistics and graphs, and is also part of making decisions and reasoning.

Having competence and being confident in working with numbers is a skill that can be used to make advantage in a wide range of employment settings: for example, knowing how profitable a company is, understanding value for money when purchasing and ordering supplies, following a budget or just calculating your holiday time. Being able to understand and analyse data in different formats is considered an essential skill in many organisation.

8) IT Skills

Most people need some IT skills to find work today. Acquiring basic IT skills and being familiar with using a computer may open up a wide range of employment opportunities and increase your marketability in the workplace.

It is likely that a modern job will require you to be familiar with at least some computer applications. Computer literacy means understanding what computers can and cannot do. Even if you know that you will not be using a computer in your job, it is well worth your while learning some of the basics of information technology, for example how to send and receive emails, use the internet effectively, and use word processor and spreadsheet software.

6. EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS THROUGH CLASSROOM

All of us know that we go to school to learn technical or work-related skills. To succeed at school and also for self development employability skills are also needed. Personal management, communication,

teamwork and other similar skills are often referred to as employability skills. Practising these skills at school will prepare you to use them at work.

The classroom is a lot like the workplace—you're expected to work effectively in the same place, with the same people, every day. Developing good personal management, teamwork and communication skills can make your time in the classroom more enjoyable.

Let's see some of the employability skills and the attitudes that will help you succeed at school and at work. Look over the statements in the following sections and ask yourself which areas you want to improve.

7. PERSONAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS

The following statements describe personal conduct appropriate in a school setting. These statements can be counter checked to see which one suits you or describe you?

- I interact with other students, instructors and visitors in a professional way. I use every opportunity to develop acceptance, open-mindedness and respect for individual differences.
- I dress appropriately for school. Because I know that employers often visit our school, I dress as if I could be called out of class for an interview or a work placement opportunity at any time. If my school has a dress code, I follow it.
- I try my best to leave my family and personal issues at home when I come to school. I've arranged for child care as well as back-up child care.
- I try to arrange my schedule so I can arrive at school well rested and ready to learn.
- I know swearing, vulgar language and inappropriate humour don't belong in the classroom, workplace or any other public setting.
- I'm aware that if I come to school under the influence of drugs or alcohol, I'll be asked to leave and may be expelled from the program.
- I realize using school computers to access inappropriate websites usually results in disciplinary action.

8. RESPECTING DIVERSITY

At school, you'll have the opportunity to develop skills that will help you get along with people with diverse backgrounds and social values—skills you'll also need in the workplace. Which of the following statements describes you?

- I'm aware that it's important to treat everyone with respect, regardless of age, gender, status or position.
- I accept that everyone has different life experiences. The other adults in my classes may live, think, talk and act in ways very different from mine.
- I can let other people express opinions I don't share without debating or arguing with them. This doesn't mean that I agree with their opinions. It just means that I respect their right to have them.
- I know I don't have to like someone to learn from them or work with them.

9. EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM

The classroom is a lot like the workplace—you're expected to work effectively in the same place, with the same people, every day. Developing good personal management, teamwork and communication skills can make your time in the classroom more enjoyable. Which of the following statements apply to you?

- I know I need to attend class. If I have a valid reason for being absent, I let my instructor know. I take responsibility for catching up on work I've missed.
- I get to class on time, I have my work completed and I'm ready to contribute.
- I don't interrupt other students or the instructor or talk while someone else is speaking.
- I don't take more than my share of the instructor's time or attention. If I need more help and the rest of the class is ready to move on, I make an appointment to meet with the instructor outside of class.
- Paying attention, focusing on my work, talking with my classmates after, rather than during, class—my behaviour in class shows respect for my instructor, guest speakers and other students.
- Unless the instructor assigns a group project, I know most work is done individually. I'm aware that if I'm found helping other classmates during exams and tests, I will be disciplined and may even be expelled.
- I realize the instructor decides whether food or drink is allowed in class. If I bring food or drink to class, I try to eat and drink quietly and clean up after myself. I know food and drink aren't usually allowed in computer labs.
- I turn off my cell phone in class. If I need to keep my cell phone on during class because of an emergency, such as a sick child, I let my instructor know. Then I put my phone on silent or vibrate and take any calls or texts outside of the classroom.
- I'm aware teamwork is part of almost every workplace. Group work with other students gives me an opportunity to practise teamwork skills. I learn to be open to other people's style of working, to depend on others and to contribute my share.
- I realize rudeness and gossiping have no place in the classroom or the workplace.

10. GETTING ALONG WITH INSTRUCTORS

Interacting with your instructors lets you practise skills you'll need to work effectively with supervisors or managers. Consider the following statements:

- I know instructors and students often addressed well.
- I choose to learn from my instructors, regardless of their age, gender, personality, background or appearance.
- I find out whether my instructors prefer to be contacted after class, in their office, by phone or by email. When I do call or meet with an instructor, I'm organized and prepared to ask questions or discuss assignments.
- I'm professional. I submit my best work, complete and on time. I know it's the instructor's job to give me feedback and mark me fairly. I accept constructive criticism and learn how to improve.

- I take responsibility for my own learning. For example, if a class bores me, I can ask my instructor outside of class time to help me understand why the content is important and how it's relevant to the course and to my goals.
- I take responsibility for my attitude. I realize how I sit, what I say and how I look says a lot about my attitude. I know my positive attitude can have a positive effect on other students.
- I don't expect my instructors to help me with my personal problems. When I need help with a personal issue, I find out about the services available at my school and in the community.

Good personal management, communication, teamwork and other employability skills will help you stay focused, keep a positive attitude and get along well with other students and instructors.

After you've finished school, you'll take these skills with you into workplaces, where they'll increase your effectiveness and help you succeed.

11. FINDINGS

- 1) Practising employability skills at school can help in developing one's own personal management skills.
- 2) It provides an opportunity to develop skills that will help you get along with people with diverse backgrounds and social values i.e. respecting diversity.
- 3) It helps in developing a positive attitude and getting along well with our colleagues and superiors.
- 4) It helps to work in a team and express our own views as well as to accept others.
- 5) Practising employability skills at school can help in implementing them at work place whereby increasing efficiency and helps in succeeding at work.

12. SUGGESTIONS

- 1) **Raising awareness of soft/employability skills:** Soft skills such as time management, active listening, and assertiveness are key to success in the 21st century work place. Put these into practice to develop your own career, and bring them into the classroom using these lesson plans.
- 2) **Employability through English:** There is no doubt that teachers are under pressure to cover the curriculum and to deliver results in the classroom. But finding time for business English in the classroom is crucial.
- 3) **Building Confidence:** The biggest challenge we face as we train adults in the workplace on English language skills is that they are afraid to speak, and more importantly, afraid to make mistakes. Often, this stems from their experience at school, and their fear of being corrected by their teacher. Learners must be confident to take risks, and feel secure and safe in their learning environment. Teachers can help here by avoiding high-pressure situations like speaking in front of the class (using group work instead), by encouraging and giving sufficient praise, and by regularly reminding classes of Einstein's dictum "anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new".
- 4) Developing employability skills should be made part of the curriculum so that both teachers and students know its importance.
- 5) Universities can play a better role by revising their syllabus and incorporating employability skills as part of core courses.

13. CONCLUSION

In an increasingly competitive employment market, employers are looking beyond simple academic achievement when considering applicants for a job or internship. Many now expect to see evidence of other skills and achievements that boost someone's attractiveness as a potential employee. What is needed is awareness amongst school teachers of the skill set that industry demand, so they can begin to build competence in the classroom and produce learners who even before leaving school have some of the skill sets they will need in employment.

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