

*Developing Employability Through competency-based Approach for Creating Job ready
Individuals in the new norm: A Review-Based Analysis*

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Abstract

Purpose: The paper explores the most pertinent employment issues present in academia in the current era and how to bridge the gap of those glaring issues through competence-based approach learning. This paper examines and reviews the available literature on the current status of employability skills and job-ready individuals. Thus analysing, summarising, and categorizing the factors related to these issues were studied from 2012 to 2021. Furthermore, this paper presents a compilation of the available literature on employability and avenues for future research. The aim is to assess the impact of employability skills and the job market

Design/Methodology/Approach: This paper is based on a systematic review approach structure and examines the most relevant literature from online existing database sources available from 2012 to 2021 by using the keyword search method. Then studies are categorized and summarised, using previously developed theories and frameworks which have provided testimony of a relationship between employability skills and job-ready individuals that is based on the existing research.

Results/findings: The systematic literature ensuing 10 studies that focused on identifying a strong relationship between employability skills and job readiness factors. Systematic scrutiny was performed with the keywords like employability skills, Competence-based learning, and Job readiness using an electronic database like , Research Gate, and Academia. The findings identify that there is a connection between employability skills and the job

market. This paper is based on a systematic literature review and has a wide scope for future research implications.

Research Limitations/Implications: This review throws light on the importance of a competence-based approach to creating job-ready professionals. The importance of employability skills in the job market. The review is based only on 10 papers that have identified research gaps and thus this will help in paving the path for future research.

Originality Value: To the best of my knowledge there are no sufficient papers on a competence-based approach to building employability skills among the youth for the current job market in the new norm.

Type of paper: Systematic Literature Review

Keywords: Employability issues, Training, Interventions, Academia Industry Interface, Industry Preparedness Program, Post-Pandemic job market, Skill sets.

Introduction

The word EMPLOYABILITY is not a buzzword anymore in the contemporary era. The business world is a melting pot of retrenchment, layoff, downsizing, and rightsizing. There is a gamut of different skill sets needed to sustain in the long run and the current generation should be competent enough to run through the fire, The need for producing job-ready individuals is the most pertinent question here. In the fast-evolving world where knowledge is the watchword, and where the rate of change is unstoppable, the need for employability is considered very critical (Peters et al,2019) The significance of employability is gaining a lot of attention as there is a need for the young workforce to be ready for the changing perspectives of the job market

The research questions are:

- What problems are faced by the industry in terms of employability in the new norm?
- How do we mitigate the gap between academia and the industry?
- Why is a competence-based approach needed in today's education arena?

The purpose/aim:

- is to evaluate the impact of employability skills in the job market and assess business competencies needed to sustain in the VUCA world.
- The analysis of a competence-based approach in academia to build job-ready individuals in the new norm.

Material and Method

A systematic literature review was conducted using the keywords “Employability skills” “Competence-based approach” “job preparedness” and “Post-pandemic Job market” in the electronic databases , Research Gate, Scopus, and Web of Science. As Employability factors and education go hand in hand, an attempt was made to analyze about 10 papers to understand the existing skill gap. The inclusion criteria were to use the relevant articles primarily from 2012 onwards to conduct a systematic literature review. The interest was to identify the competencies needed in the current scenario and accordingly Implement the pedagogy in the existing set-up. This study found a significant association between employability skills and unemployment. The research also found that 5 core HABITS (thinking, solving, communicating, collaborating, and leading) is the requirement of a 21st-century workplace. These habits are the precursors for multiple skill sets required for the GIG workers in the VUCA world (Volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world. As there is a discussion of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0) emerging and the job market would need repositories of soft skills.

This research recommends that educational institutions consider these skills and update the curriculum and instructional designs in line with the vision of IR4.0.

Related work-based analysis

Employability is a very significant factor for all the stakeholders in society as the attention is primarily on getting the individuals ready for jobs that are not yet to be created, and the need

and ability to solve the challenges that can surface in the future Peters et al. (2019) and Römngens et al. (2019). The word “employability competency” in the new norm is just not getting employed but ensuring it is well retained during different scenarios. The two main aspects to build employability are a competence-based approach and skill-building methodologies. The educational and training institutes in the new norm have to revamp their systems to create job-fit manpower. The important aspect of an individual’s capacity to get a job and the ability to retain it, and also prepare for all challenging situations is mandatory. Levenson (2020)

Meister (2020) refers to the new norm and its consequences, there would be a flux of change that would be quick and agile. So, in such a fast-paced environment, most organizations would leverage the well-being of the employees, in return for high employability competency demand. Almost all leading organizations work on re-skilling their employees or recruiting according to the new norm.

The definition of employability is nothing but the individual’s ability to utilize and sustain in the job market throughout his/her career (Hillage and Pollard 1998; Harvey 2001; Fugate, 2589 Kinicki, and Ashforth 2004; Bridgstock 2009; Cole and Tibby 2013). The intent of any professional is to maintain the job in the long run as the complex world is highly demanding. Hence the education system should train youngsters to be job ready based on skill-building methodologies. The term competence-based approach strictly adheres to such a format of learning, so, the Western employability literature emphasizes competencies-based training which would prepare the youth for taking up all challenges. (Knight and Yorke 2004; Dacre Pool and Sewell 2007; Kumar 2007; Bridgstock 2009; Pegg et al. 2012; Cole and Tibby 2013).

Different research studies related to employable skills and competence-based learning have been connected to, the studies understanding employability and the job markets (Hennemann and Liefner 2010; Boahin and Hofman 2013)

The word employability is the point of discussion from the stream of literature. The most sought-after researchers are; Hillage and Pollard (1998), Harvey (2001), and Yorke (2006). Firstly, Hillage. Pollard defines explains employability as ‘the ability to be free and create a competitive labour market. This also helps in understanding the talent and the need requirement of various jobs in the market.

According to these researchers, the employability quotient of individuals is totally dependent on the individual attitude, behaviour, communication, and other characteristics pertaining to their personality. Also, the discussion revolves around the utility of skills and job demands. In other words, the connection between the skills and their respective tasks is always interdependent. This also depends on the ability of individuals to create a strong bond between career management skills and individuality which is very crucial for success. This gives an opportunity for individuals to understand the competitive and sustainable world and the need to upskill consistently.

Harvey (2001) refers to the understanding of Hillage and Pollard (1998). He mentions individual employable standards as the 'ability of a student to procure a job' (Harvey 2001, Hillage and Pollard 1998) there must be some demarcation between individual and organizational fitment factors – which is the key to productivity. In Yorke's words," the individual's employable quotient is nothing but a series of achievements like attitude, functional knowledge, behaviour quotient, and personal characteristics – that makes them more job-ready, which not only benefits them but also the workplace, the community, and the economy.

Competence-based approaches in building employability quotient have also been identified in literature focusing only on the worker's performance in the workplace (McQuaid and Lindsay 2005; Van der Heijden and Van der Heijden 2006; Clarke 2008; Furrier, Sels, and Stynen 2009; Furrier, Verbruggen, and De Cuyper 2015; Peters et al. 2019). These skill-based approaches keeping in mind the importance of employability quotient help in contributing to the betterment of the organization.

The most cited explanation of employability factors in literature is 'The effective performance of work through the usage of skill sets and competencies at the workplace (Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden 2006). By the way, in between these different studies, the usage of the word competence-based approach is shown from a different perspective. Furrier, Sels, and Stynen (2009) refer to something known as "movement capital." These inputs of movement capital refer to ASK (Attitude, Skills, and knowledge influencing a professional capacity to contribute the best. (2009).

Peters et al. (2019) have referred to the word employability capital as movement capital as in the competencies curated for employability which not only help professionals to be successful but also achieve sustainability in the long run. Though there is a paradigm shift in the usage of

such words interchangeably, they finally boil down to the competencies required for a job. This will help them to be successful in their respective careers. (Thijssen, Van der Heijden, and Rocco 2008).

Furthermore, every study has reflected on the importance of a competence-based approach which helps in building an employability quotient, thus being mobile helps in building better productivity and efficiency. (Furrier, Sels, and Stynen 2009). Words like hybrid and remote workplace, global village, and boundaryless zones have become the order of the day (DeFilippo and Arthur (1994) and protean (Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth 2004; Hall 2004) career 2590 I. RÖMGENS ET AL. has introduced, looking into the transitioning career dynamics. The need for off-shoring, onshoring, body-shopping, etc has become a reality and one needs to have a solid repository of skill sets to survive and sustain

Many frameworks on employability quotient pertaining to the existing work have been used in this context to analyze this paper, most importantly, some of the commonly cited frameworks on employability quotient are discussed. These are clusters of competencies. The older version explained by DeFilippo and Arthur (1994), is as follows:

1. know-why
2. know-how
3. know-whom characteristics.

Know-why characteristics are a professional's OKR (Objectives, Key Result) and also on the self-identity aligning to the organizational vision and mission. It is more or less the professionals connect with corporate Philosophy and culture.

Know-how characteristics refer to a professional's (ASK) attitude, skills and knowledge, and capabilities required to perform well in the corporate context.

The work time and again has emphasized 'industry-readiness and job preparedness.

Know-whom characteristics refer to the professional's social skills (ibid.). This falls into the category of job-relevant skills, professional networks of people skills, and corporate life. Interestingly, DeFilippo and Arthur (1994) no longer use the term employability quotient. Instead, they mention a flat corporate world. This is also a new way of referring to career mobility. This term, as well as their differences, are categorized into the know-why, -how, and -who which is widely referenced in later studies.

To move on, compiling on the existing stream of literature on the career (Hall 2004) Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004) introduce employability quotient as a kind of work-related strength. This particular skill set enables professionals to catch the career trajectory clearly'. Thus, building on personal attributes helps in the wider context.

Firstly, Career identity means "how an individual connects to a particular job or task in a particular context." It also describes the self-awareness part, which may include for example his or her short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals, personality traits, values, aspirations, and apprehensions.

The paper explains the ability to adapt to changing scenarios which is the result of personal characteristics which has a stronger connection to be engaged proactively at the workplace, some of the traits related to the personality might be the interest to adapt and be agile, to learn and grasp quickly, to work efficiently and to use internal locus of control and self-efficacy.

The next paper mentions some critical components called social and human capital. Here, McArdle et al. (2007) have drawn a connection to DeFilippo and Arthur (1994), which in turn also connects to social capital. Fugate et al. explain social capital as the 'goodwill nurtured with the other fellow-men present in social connections. (Zaharim et al., 2010)

Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004), and Furrier et al (2009) mention the phase known as movement capital. Purposefully, keeping at bay the term employability, they define it as Attitudes, skills, and knowledge which has a direct impact on an individual's career mobility opportunities'.

Furrier and colleagues have created a difference between Fugate's human and social capital into two different categories, which helps in meeting the performance expected in any organizations Archer and Davison's (2008), perspectives of employers on graduate employability quotient, refer to a major indifference between the needs of the universities and the industry. Employers were in synchronization about the most important skills that need while selecting the graduates. Archer and Davison (2008) had seen that irrespective of the size of the company, soft skills" were considered to have more power than technical or hard skills.

Indeed, Glass et al (2008) found that some employers were recruiting individuals from universities, particularly for technical skills in the hope of bringing some advancement to the

organization. Rather, most employers see a degree as a proxy for achieving a certain level of competence that represents the minimum standard that they are seeking in a new recruit.

Knight and Yorke state that students should be entitled to develop understanding, skills, self-awareness, and self-management and that good learning and education improves employability. There are innumerable definitions for graduate employability. These reflect differences in the underpinning beliefs about why what and for whom employability matters. Common definitions include “the competence to move independently within the job market to leverage the potential through sustainable employment” (Hillage & Pollard, 1998); “Skills required not only to gain employment but to progress within a system as utilize one’s potential” (ACCI & BCA, 2002)

The views of undergraduates, on employability quotient, are crystal clear (Tymon, 2013) and this can reveal significant information with respect to the self-leadership attributes and the outcome-based approach. The study clearly pointed out the disagreement between the views of students and other stakeholders with regard to competence-based approaches and skill development initiatives.

Indifferences were seen even between university students in different academic years which shows that they are not industry-ready. This mentions the lack of academic rigor and the job preparedness programs. The study makes practical suggestions that can be implemented within universities like competence-based approach, skill-building activities, simulation-based

learning, and experiential learning. Focus on improving soft skills helps in enhancing the employability quotient.

There is also discussion about the importance of interning which gives a hands-on- experience. Placement training is also considered to be the best way to understand the nuances of the corporate world. Finally, the study mentions the careless attitude displayed and lack of attention shown by the freshers towards specialization and non-participation which makes them unfit for the corporate world.

Research has always shown how the employability quotient is the most needed perspective by employers. The need for soft skills is the priority compared to academic credentials (Finch, et al., 2013). The employability quotient factors found in the literature were grouped into five

categories. The study done by Finch et al., (2013) showed that improvements to new graduates' employability must focus on competence-based approaches and innovative methodologies to capture learning outcomes that ultimately link to soft-skills development. Also, graduates were expected to display critical thinking and problem-solving skills during interviews. The employer perception is different in terms of skills rather than grades alone Finch et al., (2013) clearly.

The faculty perceptions of graduate employability have been subjected to in-depth studies referring to the degrees offered and the functional skills required for future employability. Students are encouraged to develop holistic personality make-over to be a future professional. At the end of the day, what matters is the employability quotient.

It is often seen that with increasing pressure on higher education systems faculty are compelled to deliver employability-focused curricula. More detailed research is needed to understand the perceptions of the staff members towards employability and their capacities in university education. The employability study by Smith et al. (2014) reflects to the challenges in employability noting the lack of clear understanding and t biases and perception control over employability since there is a constant flux in the current changing world. The changing business dynamics and the economy certainly asks for competent individuals.

Research Objectives:

- To Review the literature on employability issues and gain an understanding between the current state and the ideal state of job preparedness among the individuals
- To identify the research gaps and research agenda in the study conducted and recommend that educational institutions consider Skill development to produce employable youth.
- To evaluate the underlying constructs of EMPLOYABILITY ISSUES that decide the job fitment factors
- To analyse the developed model using SWOC FRAMEWORK.
- To suggest some suggestions also to redefine the objectives of both building employability skills through a competence-based approach for creating job-ready individuals

Methodology

This paper consists of developing a theoretical concept based on model building using the SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW method and analysis of the model using the SWOC framework.

Discussion

The review has identified the importance of employability skills or rather soft skills to thrive and sustain in the competitive and turbulent world. The need is to ensure that institutions bring the methodology of industry preparedness among individuals. The drive to integrate skill-building abilities and application-based learning among the faculty fraternity is highly important. The core competencies can be built if there is a competency-based approach in the new norm.

The remote learner should be equipped with cognitive skills like critical thinking, logical thinking, communicating, collaborating, and leading from within. The need to identify a conceptual framework looks ideal from this perspective.

The following framework was introduced in this paper:



Fig 1: BANI World

The Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, and Incomprehensible world (Jamais Casiao) has replaced the VUCA acronym (Volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity). The reality is quite disruptive in nature and there is a voluminous change in the economy, customer-centric approach, businesses, and sweeping changes have really created a chaotic world. In the fast flux

of changes all over is it important to work on the habit (think, solve, communicate, collaborate, lead) which leads to repositories of skill sets needed for today's professionals to sustain in the long run? Hence from the negative downward spiral of BANI a positive upward spiral conceptual framework is mentioned as new knowledge to this existing literature.

- BRITTLE-----BETTER
- ANXIOUS-----AGILE
- NON-LINEAR-----NOVEL
- INCOMPREHENSIBLE-----INQUISITIVE

As FIG 1 represents:

Brittle scenarios can build a better future, hence equipping oneself helps in building a better personality. Likewise, anxiety is writ large, however, it also creates room for becoming agile in the new norm. The non-linear environment can become novel approaches finally, incomprehensible systems can give an opportunity to be inquisitive. Hence competence-based learning would definitely be good for creating job-ready individuals.

Qualitative analysis of “bani” using swoc framework

The **STRENGTH** of the BANI framework is the positive upward spiral, it mentions that a better world is being built because it is progressive in nature. The ability to add new skill sets in the workplace and thus gear up the GenZ is a solid improvement.

The **WEAKNESS** factor relates to the challenges that come with it, be it the fast-paced processes or the new skill sets and technologies that would need a better bunch of workforces. The weakness refers to the unstoppable technology and cusps of changes that would just seep into the system. This might result in stress and negative psychological imbalances among many professionals.

Of course, the **OPPORTUNITIES** are many because the floodgates of novelty have created a whole lot of new roles, tasks, and designations which indeed is a blessing to all. Automation is

also an example of the opportunity; the new jobs might need new competencies which have to be built by the workforce.

The **CHALLENGES** of the models is the ability to bring about a paradigm shift in the thought processes of individuals without which it cannot be functional. People by and large might not accept the fast changes occurring in the organizations and systems. There could be room for an inability to cope with skill-building or managing the new workplace. This could lead to multiple challenges in the ecosystem.

Limitations

The study was based on a systematic literature review. Hence, there is a scope for future empirical research. The analysis has identified different research gaps which can help in taking it ahead for future study. As there is a paradigm shift in the blended mode of learning in today's times and there could be possibilities of different pedagogy and methodologies that will be used in educational institutions. Thus, this study is just a precursor for many new skills sets that can be implemented in the future. The NEP 2020 also has opened floodgates of research in the area of skill-building concepts. Hence it has a wider and better scope for further investigation and analysis.

Research gaps

In this paper, the following gaps were analysed: Most of the studies were generic and could not exactly take into account the POPULATION. For instance, the B-school students or the post-graduates. The focus of the study was primarily on the undergraduate and the youth.

Hence there could be more opportunities to connect with the right population and investigate the relationship between the skill gap and job factors.

Secondly, the gap which was evident in the review of the literature was the methodology. there could have been the prisma methodology used or meta-analysis used to procure accurate data.

the third research gap identified was the evidence, meaning most of the studies were not specific and related to any particular organization or university. it could have been better if a particular

educational institution or a corporate is chosen and a pre-test conducted to garner the data and identify the relationship between the skill, competence, and job in the new norm. also, the post covid scenario of hybrid and blended learning and its impact on the individuals who has a relationship with skill gap and employability is also missing in most of the studies.

finally, the theoretical gap is yet another striking factor that could have been addressed. As there are various conceptual frameworks and underpinning propounded by different subject matter experts on the concept of employability and competence-based approach learning in the new norm. There could be scope for future research and analysis.

Current state and desired state: Concept Mapping

The current state of employability and job fitment factors have been analysed through the systematic literature review, there have been a lot of studies reflecting on the following aspects. However, the desired state is to achieve the placement preparatory phase through a competence-based approach in the educational institution.

The theoretical concept of c.p. snow's two culture (1959) might help to understand the mitigation of the gap between academia and industry. the bridging of the wall between the two is primarily the research agenda based on the gap identified. An effective partnership helps in breaching the wall between academia and industry. There is a strong need to collaborate and produce industry-ready individuals in the research agenda.

Conclusion

In conclusion the research objective of reviewing the literature pertaining to the employability skills and job preparedness of the youth. There were a lot of studies previously which are mentioned in the review of literature column. The need for creating employable youth has been a challenging task as per the studies mentioned. And There is a humongous scope for further research in this area. The theoretical underpinning mentioned shows that the 21st century requires a repository of skill sets to drive in the sustainability model. Hence this study is

considered to be a prelude of many new approaches which as to be integrated in creating employable youth. The pedagogy of competency-based approaches can be one such strategy that can produce more employability in the country

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