

Mentoring Employability Skills: An Empirical Study of B-Schools in Dakshina Kannada District, Karnataka State

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Abstract

With the growing need for Employable Talent in the field of Management, there arises a need for a stringent Mentoring System in B-Schools contributing to the enhancement of Employability skills in students pursuing Higher Education. It is imperative that these skills are reviewed from time to time in order to ensure competent Management Professionals are fed to the recruiting firms. With the increase in opportunities, the challenges in getting hired have also doubled as the recruiting firms are highly demanding on their skill requirement. They accept No compromise on the pre-determined skills for the success of their organization. On the other hand, in order to keep pace with the ever-changing technology; organizations are constrained to maintain high level of skills for their prospective employees. Due to this, the onus of making students industry ready has shifted to the shoulders of B-Schools unlike the earlier situation where organizations spent time, money and effort in providing training to the new recruits. In this context, the present study endeavors to examine the skill gaps with the view to enhance the employability skills of the students. This study explored the demographic factor influencers through Questionnaire method and discovered that the Mentor and Mentee evaluation had strong and moderate relationship on the selected employability skills of the respondents. This study also revealed that the students pursuing Higher education took self-interest in enhancing their employability skills and welcomed mentoring support overwhelmingly for their development.

Keywords: Employability, skills, higher education, B-school, mentoring

INTRODUCTION

With the increased population, arise the unemployment and other issues related to the economic

health of the nation. While the country is seeing growth in terms of 'Make in India' initiative and foreign investors keen on investing in India for manufacturing as well as service sectors, the employment opportunities have definitely improved, however what the nation lacks is the suitable skill-set and attitude of the workforce. Corporate houses, these days, are investing certain percentage of their revenue on corporate social responsibility to enhance the employability skills of the youth. With these opportunities in the external environment of the society, the internal factors contributing to the employability skills need focus. Every corporate professional addressing the MBA students refer to a list of skill-sets that they expect from an MBA Graduate. They are highly demanding

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on the skill-sets and expect the institutions to depute talents to their organizations on internship followed by quality hires.

As referred by (Hodge & Lear, 2011) [1], according to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2006) survey, many employers believe that higher education is failing in its role to adequately develop needed skills in students. (Shah & Srivastava, 2014) [2] in their article stated that “Employability has been one of the main issues haunting management institutes” with only 1 in 5 MBA's being employable, according to the Merit Trac MBA employability Study 2011–2012.

(Nawaz & Reddy, 2013) [3], in their article have defined Employability Skills as “generic skills, capabilities, enabling skills or key competencies”. They have also referred to it as non-technical skills, however it is contradicting as one of the key skills mentioned by them is Application of ICT. With the growing demand in skills, employability skills are not only non-technical skills but also technical skills and as the study is specific to the MBAs, these students should gear up for the high demanding skill-sets.

The NACE Research Report as mentioned by (Hodge & Lear, 2011) [1] in the article, noted that the top five skills sought by employers are communications skills, analytical skills, teamwork skills, technical skills and a strong work ethic. These inputs substantiate the skill sets chosen for the current study. In the elaborative literature review paper on Employability Skills, (Weligamage, 2014) [4] highlighted that the “main skills requirement mentioned in studies are communication, teamwork, problem solving, planning and organizing, technology, self management and initiative and enterprise skills”. This gave an insight to the researcher on the skill sets like Communication, Technology and Self Management as key skills to be considered for the study.

In the concluding remarks of (Hodge & Lear, 2011) [1] in the article, “the results of the research indicated that faculty members and employers did not necessarily agree that the same skills were important. The differences between instructors’ perceptions and the results of the employers’ surveys highlight a skills gap that may exist in the types of skills that are emphasized by professors but needed and sought by employers”. As per this, it is imperative that the faculty members belonging to institutes imparting higher education are abreast with the current situation on skill requirements. Hence exercises where the faculty is evaluating the skills of students become a great initiative to enhance their involvement in driving the key skills during the course curriculum.

In their article, (Gowsalya & Kumar, 2016) [5], concluded that “the educators need to integrate the employability skills into courses” highlighting that the mentors and affiliating institutions have a huge role to play in enhancing the employability skills of students.

Research question 1: Are the Mentor Evaluation Scores and Self Evaluation Scores significantly related to each other? If yes, what is the extent to which they are related?

Research Question 2: What is the Skill Gap ascertained from the Student Self Evaluation on selected 7 employability skills?

Research Question 3: Is there is any difference in mean scores among the Demographic groups?

METHODS

After reviewing published articles, the researcher identified a list of 7 key skills that were considered crucial for this study. These skills included-Communication Skills, Leadership Skills, Technology Skills, Analytical Skills, Academics, Networking Skills and Self Management Skills. These skills were rated in a 5-point likert scale of competencies namely Expert, Advanced, Intermediate, Basic and Being developed from 5–1 respectively. The participants were asked for demographic information that

included the state of origin, admission type, religion, gender, stream of undergraduate studies, marks obtained in undergraduate studies and their area of specialization. PSPP Open software was used to analyze the data [6].

Participants of the survey were the students and faculty of selected four B-Schools in Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka State from the areas of MBA in Finance, Marketing and HR during the year 2020–21. A total of 124 students in their final year MBA were the respondents and 14 faculty members who are the mentors of these respondents also shared their inputs on the skill level of their respective mentees.

Firstly, the Questionnaire was administered with the students collecting Demographic information and Self Evaluation on the 7 key skills. As the next step to Data Collection, the mentors of the same students evaluated the same 7 key skills of their respective mentees who formed the student respondents in the first phase of Data Collection. This way, the data collected has Mentor evaluation and Mentee Self evaluation on the 7 key skills for each respondent.

Pearson's Correlation statistical tool is used to identify the relation between the Mentor evaluation and student self evaluation of the 7 key employability skills. Next, the Radar Chart is incorporated to visualize the gap in these 7 skills. Finally, One Way ANOVA and Independent Sample T-tests have been used to illustrate the difference in Mean Scores of skill evaluation between demographic groups.

RESULTS

As a response to the first research question, in order to determine the relation between the Mentor Evaluation and the Student Self-Evaluation on the 7 Key employability skills, the researcher has adopted Pearson's Correlation statistical tool and has derived the following outcome as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Pearson's correlation test between mentor evaluation and mentee self-evaluation.

Key employability skills	Pearson correlation value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Communication Skills	0.82	0.000
Leadership Skills	0.86	0.000
Technical Skills	0.70	0.000
Analytical Skills	0.74	0.000
Academics	0.73	0.000
Networking Skills	0.63	0.000
Self-Management Skills	0.58	0.000

Firstly, in all 7 cases, the value is significant (p value = 0.000). Hence there is a significant relationship between the Mentor Evaluation Scores and the Student Self-Evaluation Scores [7].

Now that the researcher has established relationship between the evaluation of skills by the Mentor and the Mentee, it is essential to understand the extent to which they are correlated. It is observed that the first 5 skills-Communication Skills, Leadership Skills, Technology Skills, Analytical Skills and Academics have Strong Positive Relationship as their values are more than 0.70 and the rest two-Networking Skills and Self-Management Skills have Moderate Positive relationship as their values are more than 0.50 but less than 0.70.

Further analysis was conducted on the self evaluation scores of the students as it was confirmed that mentor and mentee evaluation scores were significant. Moving on to the next research question on the skill gap analysis, it is detected through the inputs on the survey filled by the students that the highest skill gap is observed in Communication Skills, Leadership Skills and Analytical Skills with a gap of 43% each. Next in line are Technology Skills with 32% gap, followed by Networking Skills and Self-

Management with 30% gap each and lastly Academics at a gap of 28%. This has been ascertained by firstly figuring out the expected scores for each Skill. For instance, with 124 respondents evaluating themselves in a 5-point likert scale for Communication Skills would yield a total score of 620 which is 124 respondents multiplied with 5. Similarly the other skills have a potential of being scored at 620 if students consider them as experts in that skill. Now that the expected score has been determined, the achieved score under each skill has been compared and presented in the form of a Radar Chart as shown in Figure 1.

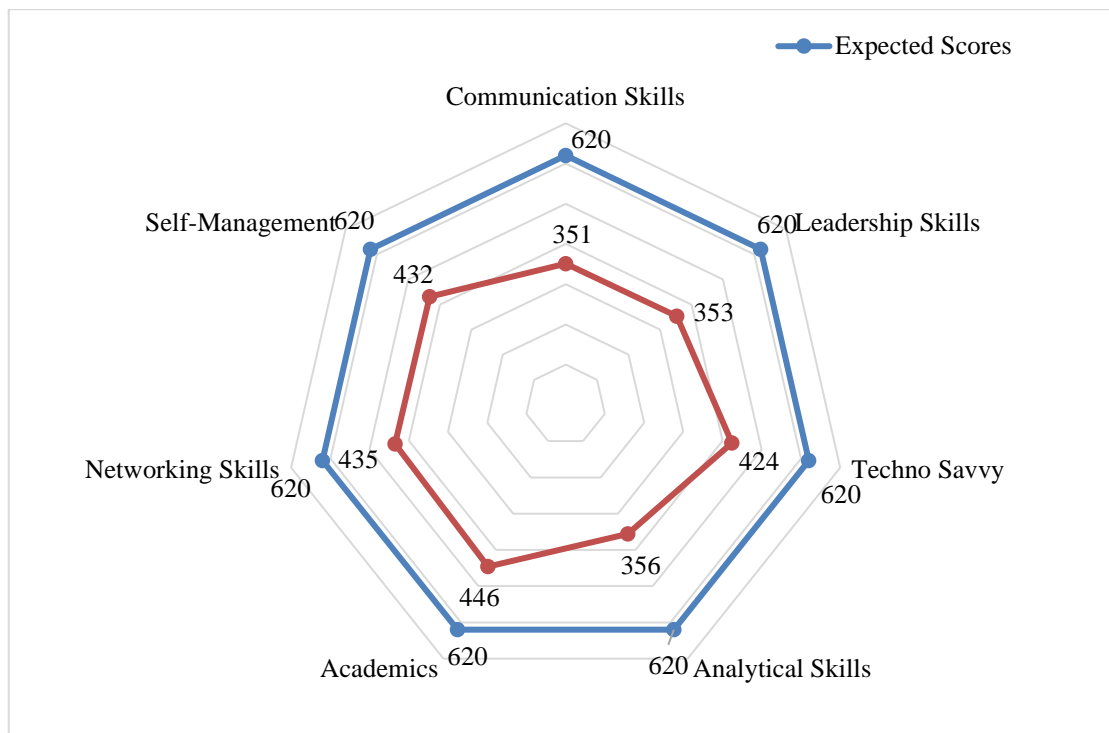


Figure 1. Skill gap analysis.

Lastly, the third research question on Demographic group-wise standing on the Skills has been answered using Independent T-Test and One Way ANOVA based on the number of groups in demographic information considered for the study.

In order to know if the mean score of students self evaluation is different between Admission Type of Management quota and Government quota, Independent T-Test has been used. The significance value of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances showed that there is No significant difference between the mean scores of students admitted to MBA through Management quota as well as Government quota for all the 7 skills [8].

Table 2. Independent sample T-test (levene's test for equality of variances) on gender Vs. 7 key employability skills.

Key Skills	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances
Communication Skills	0.429
Leadership Skills	0.009
Technical Skills	0.768
Analytical Skills	0.176
Academics	0.343
Networking Skills	0.118
Self-management Skills	0.101

However in terms of Gender as shown in the Table 2, with 54 Male and 70 Female students, there was No significant difference between the mean scores of Male and Female Students for all the skills except, Leadership Skills which showed the significant value as 0.009 which means that the mean scores of Female students is different from that of Male students in Leadership Skills [9].

When it comes to Religion as demographics, since the variable contains more than 2 groups, the researcher has used One Way ANOVA in order to find out if there are differences in Mean scores among the 4 religions. The mentioned ANOVA Table 3 shows that Communication Skills, Technical Skills and Academics are significant, which means that there is a significant difference in the Mean Scores of students belonging to different Religions only in these 3 skills. There is No significant difference in mean scores of Leadership, Analytical, Networking and Self-Management Skills.

Table 3. One way ANOVA on religion Vs. 7 key employability skills.

Key Skills	Sig. Value
Communication Skills	0.000
Leadership Skills	0.279
Technical Skills	0.007
Analytical Skills	0.059
Academics	0.039
Networking Skills	0.511
Self Management Skills	0.544

Now, having known that significant difference in mean scores exists, it is further important to analyze where the difference exists. As per the Table 4, it is very clear that the Mean scores of students from Hinduism when compared to Christianity and Muslim is significant which means that there is significant difference between the self-evaluation scores among students belonging to these 3 religions–Hinduism, Christianity and Muslim in Communication Skills. However in terms of students belonging to Jainism, the mean scores are insignificant which means that there is No significant difference between the self evaluation mean scores of Hindu-Jainism, Muslim-Jainism and Christian-Jainism students.

Table 4. One way ANOVA (tukey table) on religion Vs. communication skills.

Religion Vs Communication skills		Sig. value
Hinduism	Christianity	0.000
	Muslim	0.000
	Jainism	0.719
Christianity	Hinduism	0.000
	Muslim	0.000
	Jainism	0.065
Muslim	Hinduism	0.000
	Christianity	0.000
	Jainism	0.999
Jainism	Hinduism	0.719
	Christianity	0.065
	Muslim	0.999

When it comes to Technical Skills, one can note that the mean scores are different only when compared between Hindus and Muslims. In other cases they are insignificant and there are No differences in their mean scores of self evaluation on Technical Skills as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. One way ANOVA (Tukey Table) on religion Vs. technical skills.

Religion Vs technical skills		Sig. value
Hinduism	Christianity	0.743
	Muslim	0.004
	Jainism	0.903
Christianity	Hinduism	0.743
	Muslim	0.608
	Jainism	0.991
Muslim	Hinduism	0.004
	Christianity	0.608
	Jainism	0.997
Jainism	Hinduism	0.903
	Christianity	0.991
	Muslim	0.997

Lastly, when it comes to the self evaluation rating given to Academics, they are different again when compared between Hindus and Muslims. In rest of the cases they are insignificant and there is No significant difference with their mean scores in terms of Academics. The same can be observed in the Table 6:

Table 6. One way ANOVA (Tukey Table) on religion Vs. academics.

Religion Vs academics		Sig. value
Hinduism	Christianity	0.923
	Muslim	0.024
	Jainism	0.986
Christianity	Hinduism	0.923
	Muslim	0.628
	Jainism	0.949
Muslim	Hinduism	0.024
	Christianity	0.628
	Jainism	0.718
Jainism	Hinduism	0.986
	Christianity	0.949
	Muslim	0.718

On similar grounds, One Way ANOVA Test was also conducted for the 7 selected employability Skills on Demographics like State–Karnataka, Kerala, Delhi; Stream of undergraduate studies–BCOM, BA, BBM, BE, BA, BBA and BHRD and Specialization–Finance, HR and Marketing. The result for this study showed that there is NO significant difference between the self evaluation scores of students belonging to different states, different stream of undergraduate studies and the specialization for all the 7 employability skills.

DISCUSSION

The study indicated that the Mentor Evaluation Scores and Self Evaluation Scores related to each other significantly in all the seven selected key employability skills. Communication Skills, Leadership Skills, Technical Skills, Analytical Skills and Academics had a Strong positive correlation [10]. Networking Skills and Self-Management Skills had a Moderate positive correlation which pointed out that Mentors are keen on the students overall development and employability. More importantly, students are taking keen interest in their growth. This is a constructive approach and signaling a conducive learning environment in the institution with one common objective of both mentors and the mentees.

When it comes to the Skill Gap Analysis, Communication Skills, Leadership Skills and Analytical Skills had a gap of 43% each. Technology Skills stood at 32% gap, followed by Networking Skills and Self-Management with 30% gap each. Lastly, Academic was at a gap of 28%. This becomes a focus point for the institutions to design training modules to impart these skills. Emphasis needs to be on the skills that have maximum gap and hands-on experiences are the need of the hour. Workshops and One2One Mentoring and feedback can do wonders to the students.

When the demographics were studied, it was interesting to know that the mean scores for Leadership Skills were significantly different for Male and Female students. Globally, the proportion of women leaders is comparatively less and the same finding has been observed here too. With regards to Leadership Skills, institutions should drive leadership activities through Women Cell of the institution and make opportunities available to them to come in the forefront. Mainly, female students need counseling and mentoring on overcoming rejections and hurdles in life as they have potential but need directions to explore.

Another interesting finding was that the Admission Type—Management quota and Government quota saw No difference in the mean scores of self evaluation on the seven employability skills.

When it came to Religion as the demographic factor, the mean scores of self evaluation on Communication Skills, Technical Skills and Academics were significant which displayed that these skills were different in some or all the religions considered in the study. Communication Skills scores were significant in 3 religions—Hinduism, Christianity and Muslim. Technical Skills mean scores are different only when compared between Hindus and Muslims. Academics are different again when compared between Hindus and Muslims. Out of 4 religions considered in the study if the differences of mean scores of self evaluation are seen in these 3 skills, then the institution can further look at it as a scope for improvement.

Finally, State—Karnataka, Kerala, Delhi; Stream of undergraduate studies—BCOM, BA, BBM, BE, BA, BBA and BHRD and Specialization—Finance, HR and Marketing did not show any significant difference in the mean scores of self evaluation in all the seven skills.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

While working on this paper, the researcher felt the need to add more skills and also demographic information for a detailed study. The paper can be further fleshed out as a comparative study between universities and institutions yielding interesting findings at a larger scale.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed about the gap in Employability Skills among students pursuing MBA, relation between the Skill Evaluation of students by themselves and by their Mentors as well as the Demographic influencers on employability skills. These seven employability skills can be driven through the curriculum as a Model of Employability Skills just like Competency Model practiced in organizations which should be divided in each semester and as the semester increases, students should be mastering and adding each skill in their profile by the end of the MBA program.

By mentoring on Employability Skills, performing Skill assessment and Skill gap analysis, institutions can add great value to the curriculum, prove outcome based education, enhance the performance of the institution as placements and employability is one of the performance indicators of institutions. It will help the students in procuring placements and also get return on their investment for a highly demanding MBA Program. Nation at large will be positively impacted as it aids to build the talent pool.

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