

## **EFFECTUAL LITERATURE ANALYSIS ON EMPLOYABILITY IN INDIA**

*Ranbir Singh*

*Research Scholar*

*Department of Management*

*Shri Venkateshwara University*

*Uttar Pradesh, India*

*Dr. V. P. S. Arora*

*Professor*

*Department of Management*

*Shri Venkateshwara University*

*Uttar Pradesh, India*

### **ABSTRACT**

Employers look for a range of skills in graduate applicants, many of which are common to a number of different career areas. Those most frequently mentioned are communication, teamworking, leadership, initiative, problem-solving, flexibility and enthusiasm. Many skills overlap with one another. Leadership, for example, encompasses a number of other skills including cooperating with others, planning & organising, making decisions and verbal communication. Verbal communication itself involves various means of communication, some of which you may find easier than others - talking over the phone, making a presentation to a group or explaining something to a person with a more limited understanding of the topic. By improving one skill, you may also improve in a number of others.

Keywords – Literature Analysis, Employability, Employability India

During the 1960s the flow employability approach developed, mainly in France. During this time, the focus shifted to a collective initiative and more specifically on how swiftly certain groups could find employment. As a mainly demand-side approach, flow employability emphasised the ease of access of the jobless to employment within local and national economies (Grazier, 2001, McGrath,). Employability at this stage was defined as the objective expectation, or more or less high probability, that a person looking for a job can have of finding one (Gazier in McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Drawing on the research of others, Sanders and De Grip (2004) contend that from 1970 the focus shifted from a person's attitudes to the individual and his or her occupational knowledge and skills. Factors that played a role included understanding one's possibilities and basic occupational skills, knowledge about one's position in the labour market, and awareness of what the general employment situation looked like. Towards the end of the seventies it was understood that individuals needed more than occupational skills to remain marketable to employers. Becoming or remaining employable became very important to individuals since it was hard to find work in the economic recession of the time. During this time the concept of transferable skills or the importance of acquiring skills that can be transferred to many different work contexts was introduced (Hoyt in Sanders & De Grip, 2004).

### **LABOUR MARKET PERFORMANCE EMPLOYABILITY**

Towards the end of 1970, the notion of labour market performance employability developed internationally and focused on measurable labour market results founded on their human capital. Such measures generally included the probability of obtaining employment, probable duration of jobs in terms of hours worked, and probable wages (Grazier, 2001, McGrath, De Grip, Van Loo & Sanders, 2004).

### **INITIATIVE EMPLOYABILITY**

Initiative employability converged with human resource development literature in the 1980s, which focused on the end of the career job for life, discontinuities in careers, and rapid

changes in the career and job landscape. This approach accordingly underlined individual initiative and agency by advocating that successful career development necessitates the development of those attitudes and skills that are important for obtaining career success as well as being motivated to search for and obtain better jobs in other companies. With regard to the latter, individuals had to develop transferable skills in order to be flexible and mobile across job functions and even industries. Gazier (2001) views this employability version as the marketability of cumulative individual skills which is measured by human and social capital. Human capital refers to knowledge, skills and learning ability amongst others, while social capital relates to the size and quality of the support network that a person is able to organize and capitalize on. This approach therefore suggests that the most employable individual is someone who draws on the entrepreneurial model in being able to create employment by profiting from his or her own skills and connections. This individualistic employability concept subsequently developed into a meta-characteristic that mixes skills, attitudes and knowledge to establish the labour market value of individuals (Sanders & De Grip, 2004).

### **INTERACTIVE EMPLOYABILITY**

While initiative employability was more individually focused, interactive employability encompassed a broader perspective, thereby including policymakers and employers as shared stakeholders in employability. The interactive and collective dimensions of employability were therefore introduced to the employability debate in the nineties. It was claimed that an individual's employability is to some extent relative to the employability of other individuals in the labour market. The demand for labour locally and nationally is also taken into consideration over and above the rules or institutions that direct the labour market, thereby demonstrating the institutional nature of employability (McGrath, Gazier, 2001). In this sense, employability policies should not only target the interaction of individual attributes, but a host of other 'context' factors such as labour market conditions and demands, location of labour markets, employer preferences, and other barriers to employment (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005).

From the above it is clear that the employability concept has increasingly become more complex over time, evolving from a simple dichotomous notion to a concept that takes into account both internal individual and external market factors. There is however widespread contention in the literature with regard to the conceptual foundation of employability – whether the focus should be on narrow or more broad definitions, and whether it should be approached from a demand-side or supply-side perspective. In the next section, the debate around the conceptual foundation of employability will be considered.”

Unemployment Rate in India decreased to 4.90 percent in 2013 from 5.20 percent in 2012. Unemployment Rate in India averaged 7.32 percent from 1983 until 2013, reaching an all time high of 9.40 percent in 2009 and a record low of 4.90 percent in 2013.

<b>India Labour</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Previous</b>	<b>Highest</b>	<b>Lowest</b>
<b>Joblessness Rate</b>	4.90	5.20	9.40	4.90
<b>Employed Persons</b>	29650.00	28999.00	29650.00	17491.00
<b>Unemployed Persons</b>	44.79	40.17	44.79	5.10
<b>Labor Force Participation Rate</b>	52.50	50.90	52.90	50.90
<b>Population</b>	1254.02	1238.89	1254.02	359.00
<b>Retirement Age Women</b>	60.00	60.00	60.00	60.00
<b>Retirement Age Men</b>	60.00	60.00	60.00	60.00
<b>Living Wage Family</b>	32200.00	31100.00	32200.00	30100.00
<b>Living Wage Individual</b>	12500.00	12000.00	12500.00	11400.00
<b>Wages</b>	272.19	255.65	272.19	3.87
<b>Wages High Skilled</b>	50300.00	48700.00	50300.00	43000.00
<b>Wages In Manufacturing</b>	347.30	322.07	347.30	4.86
<b>Wages Low Skilled</b>	11900.00	10900.00	11900.00	9000.00
<b>Youth Joblessness Rate</b>	12.90	18.10	18.10	12.90

## **THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION OF EMPLOYABILITY**

“It is argued that the focus of employability as mainly a supply side or individual construct has dominated the literature and governments’ responses to employability (Hartshorn & Sear, 2005; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005; Sanders & De Grip, 2004). The point is stressed by (Peck and Theodore 2000). Who contend that even though attention to employability is relatively novel, the kind of supply-side fundamentalism that it signifies most certainly is not. Supply side conceptions of employability generally focus on narrow definitions which, according to (Bridgstock 2009), underline the skills and dispositions that individuals capitalize on to make themselves marketable to potential employers while mainly focusing on short-range employment outcomes. In this view, according to Nielsen (1999), employability conceptually expresses how well the individuals’ competencies and skills meet the requirements of the labour market, e.g., if it is possible to be employed with the present skills and competencies. This approach implies that individuals lack employability as a result of their own readiness and work motivation and not because of the lack of demand for work from employers in the labour market or as a result of limited job opportunities (Hartshorn & Sear, 2005). Other attempts, more in line with Gazier’s (2001) interactive version of employability, have indicated a more holistic perspective to employability by stressing contextual factors such as the effect of labour market conditions and employer behaviour over and above individual characteristics, in other words, both demand and supply side aspects of employability (Gore, 2005, McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). An example of such a broader definition of employability is offered by ( De Grip, Van Loo and Sanders 2004): Employability refers to the capacity and willingness of workers to remain attractive for the labour market (supply factors), by reacting to and anticipating changes in tasks and the work environment (demand factors) facilitated by the human resource development instruments available to them (institutions).(McQuaid, Green and Danson 2005), however, are of the opinion that both narrow supply-side standpoints and wider views have relevance. The authors nevertheless maintain that broader perspectives permit the added concern with critical demand, personal circumstances and other aspects that have an influence on the employability of individuals in a specific labour market or at a specific time and that are therefore essential to those individuals in obtaining or changing employment.

A relevant example of the importance of including broader aspects, especially in the South African context, relates to companies that discriminate against certain individuals in terms of race, gender or age. The consequence of discrimination to an individual that belongs to such a discriminated group is that he or she will not obtain employment even if the individual have all the required and desirable skills and attributes (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005:). Brown et al. (2003) similarly state that the employability of individuals will fluctuate according to the economic circumstances of the time – employability is, in fact, relative. When there are more jobs than applicants, the personal qualities and skills of candidates will be less important than when there are more applicants than jobs. The employability of individuals furthermore relates not only to meeting the job requirements of employers, but also to how an individual compare to other job applicants, or the ‘pecking order’ of the job applied for. The authors accordingly define employability as the relative chances of acquiring and maintaining different kinds of employment (Brown et al., 2003:). According to this definition, employability is therefore not static and relates to individual differences. Despite the demand and supply side debate in the literature, the concept remains ambiguous and both sides suffer from a lack of theoretically defined research (Brown et al., 2003; McQuaid & Lindsay,2005; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008). Even though focusing on both contextual and individual factors of employability adds to its conceptual clarification and is important in terms of policy development, the concept always relates back to the individual and the individual’s suitability for appropriate employment. This differs from actually obtaining an appropriate job, which depends on contextual factors (Yorke & Knight, 2007:158). To this effect (Tomlinson 2007) states that the subjective dimension of employability is persistently ignored, specifically how it is related to the manner in which people come to recognize and understand the labour market they are penetrating, but also the types of dispositions, attitudes and identities that individuals develop around their future work and employability. Aspects such as employers that discriminate and employer preferences or policies, the economy, governmental rules and other external factors are not under the control of the individual. Individuals can, however, to a greater or lesser extent develop their competencies and other attributes, obtain the necessary qualifications, and engage in other behaviours such as capitalizing on social networks which

will increase their chances of being more marketable to potential employers relative to other job seekers. Yorke (2006), in line with this view, asserts: It is, after all, the individual whose suitability for the post is appraised. The focus of this research is accordingly on individual-level employability, while still focusing on a broad definition that includes the relevant factors that makes a person to a greater or lesser extent employable in the context of the new world of work. Definitions of employability that are approached from an individual perspective include those of Sanders and De Grip (2004), who define employability as The capacity and the willingness to be and to remain attractive in the labour market, by anticipating changes in tasks and work environment and reacting to these changes in a proactive way, and Fugate et al. (2004), who defined employability as a form of work specific active adaptability that enables workers to identify and realize job opportunities. Employability will consequently be conceptualised in a manner analogous to what Gazier (2001) termed initiative employability. Employability is viewed as a meta-characteristic where individuals with specific skills, knowledge and attributes will best be able to adapt to the ever changing organizational and career environment. Such individuals are, amongst other attributes, entrepreneurial in that they can use their skills and connections to find employment, they are self-directed, have emotional intelligence, are confident in their abilities, are able to adapt to different social and cultural situations, are proactive, resilient and open to change. These individuals are expected to be highly desirable to employers and successful in their careers. The focus subsequently shifts to graduate employability as the emphasis of this research is on graduates and the aspects that make them employable in the new world of work. In the following section the nature of graduate employability will be discussed, followed by a discussion of different employability models which will lay the foundation for the conceptual discussion of the Graduate Employability Model.

## **GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY**

The employability of university graduates, and more particularly the supply of job-ready individuals to the labour market, has for the last decade been the main focus of employer and government policies (Brown et al., 2003 Tomlinson, 2007). Governments internationally are in fact emphasizing the contribution of higher education to the quality of human capital and

therefore also the competitiveness and well-being of a country (Yorke & Knight, 2007:158). This increased focus on student development coincided with a move towards the 'knowledge-driven' economy, which by all accounts expects individuals or 'knowledge workers' to have the appropriate knowledge, skills, dispositions and creativity in order to handle the complexities of a constantly changing worldwide economy (Brown et al., 2003; Tomlinson, 2007; Williams, 2005). The link between higher education and employability is widely discussed in the literature (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Cranmer, 2006; Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2009; Stubbs & Keeping, 2002; Prokou, 2008; Taylor, 1986; Wilton, 2007; Wilton, 2008). It is accepted that higher education has a responsibility for advancing graduate employability in developing the abilities and skills of students and promoting lifelong learning (Prokou, 2008). Awareness amongst academics of the need for skills development at degree level has increased which initiated a reassessment of curriculum priorities by academics (Stubbs & Keeping, 2002). Further developments in this area led to an emphasis on generic 'key' skills, which are viewed as increasingly critical for individuals to be successful in their jobs. Workers regarded as adaptable and flexible had to obtain generic skills that are transferable across different work tasks and occupations, in addition to developing specific skills (Williams, 2005). The literature used to describe desirable graduate attributes have become muddled, however, as terms such as 'generic', 'core', 'key', 'enabling', 'transferable', 'professional' and 'attributes', 'skills' or 'competencies' are used interchangeably, thereby adding to the conceptual confusion surrounding employability (Green, Hammer & Star, 2009). The generic skills concept is indeed a contentious topic (Gilbert et al., 2004; Green et al., 2009; Jones, 2009) and there is a lack of agreement regarding the nature of generic skills and attributes (Barrie, 2004) as well as semantic confusion with regards to its definition (Bennet, Dunne & Carre, 1999). Drawing on the work of others, Green et al. (2009) assert that skills and attributes are not the same thing, while generic does not automatically mean transferable. Recent evidence moreover suggest that generic skills or attributes are in fact very context specific and strongly influenced by the disciplinary epistemology in which they are formulated and taught (Jones, 2009), and therefore the assumption that they are universal may be flawed. In line with this, it has been shown that regardless of the assumption of shared understanding, the lists of generic skills



needed by graduates seems to mean different things to the various people that have the responsibility to develop such outcomes (Barrie, 2006). It may therefore be difficult to find an acceptable measure of generic skills acquired by individuals.

Evaluating whether a graduate is employable depends on whether the graduate displays the attributes that employers view as significant (Ya-hui & Li-yia, 2008). Graduate employability as a whole is viewed not only as a result of professional and discipline-specific knowledge, but also the ability to exhibit broader skills such as interactional skills (Clark, 2008). With regard to the latter, generic graduate attributes are viewed as the skills, knowledge and abilities that university graduates possess outside their disciplinary content knowledge and that are acquired as a consequence of completing any undergraduate degree. These capabilities are applicable in various contexts (HEC in Barrie, 2006). Bowden et al. (2000) similarly define graduate attributes as follows: Graduate attributes are the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students would desirably develop during their time at the institution and, consequently, shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and as a citizen. In the past, such attributes have sometimes been assumed to be the subject of an implicit understanding in the community about the qualities and characteristics of university graduates.

It is widely accepted that generic skills and discipline-specific skills increase graduates' employability and therefore their attractiveness to potential employers (for example De la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber, 2000; Maclean & Ordonez, 2007; Yeung, Ng & Liu, 2007). Graduate attributes should however not mainly be viewed as sets of skills and knowledge, but should be seen as specific kinds of human dispositions and qualities (Barnett, 2006:61). These qualities and dispositions help individuals to apply the knowledge and skills that they have learnt on a continuous basis (Costa & Kallick, 2000). Students view higher education as a necessary step in preparing themselves for obtaining a job (Aamodt & Havnes, 2008). Even though employability does not secure employment, it does boost an individual's prospects of obtaining employment relative to others in the labour market (Clarke, 2008). Obtaining a degree, however, is just the beginning. Current employers require a variety of attributes,

dispositions and additional achievements in students (Yorke & Harvey, 2005). Yorke and Knight (2007) suggest that personal qualities in actual fact permeate employability. Being able to interact with others (interpersonal skills) is valuable in any situation, but so are the qualities not immediately visible, such as taking initiative and a willingness to learn by persevering with a difficult task. Scott (1995) goes even further by stating that personal qualities are more significant than formal qualifications and credentials in order to succeed in the post-industrial adaptable organization.

The author emphasises that personal qualities are more important than professional discipline, possession of specific credentials, mastery of specialized knowledge or even of expert skills (Scott, 1995). This again highlights the fact that employability involves more than acquiring technical knowledge and skills. Without getting involved in lengthy discussions around semantics and the theoretical foundation of attributes (Green et al., 2009), this research will use the term attributes when referring to a combination of dispositions, values, attitudes and skills that are important to be employable and to adapt proactively to changing environments. The focus is on broad attributes that, even though they may have developed in a context-specific manner, are still important and also transferable to a wide range of contexts. These attributes moreover include but extend beyond disciplinary and technical knowledge (Bowden et al., 2000). The focus of this research is therefore on the attributes, rather than discipline-specific or generic skills, that are essential for graduates to be employable.

Attempts to measure employability outcomes have encountered greater problems than efforts to define the concept (Cranmer, 2006). In some circles the ability of higher education institutions to ensure employability has been likened to the rate of graduates securing employment using graduate first destination surveys (Bridgstock, 2009:33; Pool & Sewell, 2007). League tables rate universities on their success in helping graduates find full-time employment in the first six months after graduation (Taylor, 1986; Harvey, 2001:99). Harvey et al. (2002), however, condemn such measures since they only gauge graduate success in the short term and moreover because they measure employability as an institutional achievement rather than an individual achievement. Crude measures such as these (Taylor, 1986) define

the employability of students as immediate employment (Watts, 2006:6), that is, immediately after completing their studies. Two additional definitions of graduate employability in the literature are immediate employability and sustainable employability. Immediate employability circumvents some of the deficiencies in the 'immediate employment' definition by focusing on graduates' possession of the attributes necessary to attain a 'graduate job'. This definition emphasises graduates' 'work readiness' or ability to handle workplace demands with no supplementary training requirements (Watts, 2006:6). Mason et al. (2009:1), in line with this definition, view work readiness as the ...possession of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and commercial understanding that will enable new graduates to make productive contributions to organisational objectives soon after commencing employment.

Although this definition includes a wider range of characteristics that individuals have to possess in order to be employable, it is still very short-term orientated. The third definition, however, highlights sustainable employability, which focuses not merely on obtaining a first job, but also on remaining employable over the long term. In order to do this, individuals not only need a broader array of attributes in order to be successful in their work, but also need to possess the attributes necessary for career development management in a way that that will sustain their employability throughout their lives (Watts, 2006). Such a broader and non-static employability orientation is described by Hillage and Pollard (1998), who define employability as the capacity of individuals to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment, and Brown et al. (2003), who similarly define employability as the relative chances of acquiring and maintaining different kinds of employment. A broader approach is also underlined by Harvey et al. (2002), who emphasise the attributes that will allow graduates to manage their careers and the skills that will permit lifelong learning. This research accordingly focuses on sustainable employability in identifying the attributes required to be employable or suitable for employment in the long run. In order to further investigate the attributes required for employability, various models of employability will now be examined in order to determine the core features of individual employability.

## **EMPLOYABILITY MODELS**

The notion of employability and what it should encompass has broadened over the years. For the purposes of this study, employability will be approached from an individual-level perspective, while still including a broad definition of the concept. In support of this, it is widely accepted that employability is based on various individual attributes (Clarke, 2008; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Gow & McDonald, 2000; Kluymans & Ott, 1999; Knight & Yorke, 2002; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe & Hall, 2007; Scott, 1995; Yorke & Harvey, 2005). This section will consequently focus on discussing a number of employability models that approach the concept from a supply-side perspective. Bridgstock's (2009) conceptual model of employability will be used as a framework for the development of a model of graduate employability. The employability model of Fugate et al. (2004) will moreover provide significant input in the development of a graduate employability model and their model is therefore discussed in depth."

Steiner & Laws (2006) offer a critical analysis of both the Harvard case study and ETH (transdisciplinary) case study methods, arguing for the ETH method in teaching and learning approaches to sustainability, based on pedagogical reasoning rather than empirical evidence. Steiner & Posch (2006) present a case study for the use of ETH case studies as a pedagogic tool. Based on sound pedagogic reasoning, the authors state that this approach promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, self-regulated learning and other graduate attributes, as it embeds the students deeply within the teaching and learning process. Although they offer a very detailed account of the study's content and development over a course, it offers no empirical evidence or results, and is highly resource-intensive and time-consuming.

Stubbs & Cocklin (2008) describe a framework to help MBA students to understand and negotiate different sustainability perspectives; an approach strongly advocated for in the research literature. Although they offer an example of how it can be used in the classroom, the authors offer no results as to whether the course enhanced students' understanding and/or engagement with sustainability. Brown (2004) also takes up the call for the critical theorisation and engagement with sustainability, arguing that whole-systems learning is key.

However,, neither research or evidence is given to justify such a reasoning. Gumley (2006) describes the ‘structured’ internship approach at Monash University and the proposal of a new program to be offered for credit, focusing on innovative business sustainability strategies. However, the internship approach is not an equitable solution, as it can not be accessed by all students. Willard (2004) explores the implications of integrating sustainability into MBA programs, highlighting the financial benefits and suggesting the use of business case studies as a pedagogic tool.

Coulson & Thomson (2006) explore the integration of sustainability in accounting using a group collaborative project, in which students must create a shadow account, as assessment. To develop an understanding of accounting and sustainability, we felt it important to locate the intangible notions of sustainability in a specific setting. This would enable students to deconstruct sustainability into a set of ‘things’ that they could investigate. These included: waste levels, fair trade, ethical performance, social justice, treatment of developing world, profit levels, community involvements, discrimination policies, organic produce, equal opportunities, product pricing, product safety issues, energy use, corporate governance, impact on other businesses (for example, price pressures on suppliers— especially primary producers), traffic congestion, land use, corruption, genetic modification (p.265-6). A range of activities and assessments were organised around this main project. A portfolio of assessment was developed to include formative and summative elements, written and oral, lecturer and peer, individual and group. This course model created the potential to integrate individual students’ views, encourage participation, collective learning, praxis and critical reflection. These aspects are not only seen as desirable from a Freirian perspective, but also from a number of other educational strategies...and from the literature on sustainability education (p.267). By way of evidence, the authors did analyse the students’ reflective essays, and these essays explicitly recognized the way in which this course changed their perception of sustainability (p.268). However, the analysis of these essays focused on student feedback on the course itself, rather than on their understanding of sustainability.” The overall lack of empirical evidence illustrates the problematic of designing only activities that can effectively promote graduate skills development, but also assessments that can accurately

measure and provide opportunities for students to enhance their learning and demonstrate achievement of relevant learning outcomes.

## **CONCLUSION**

Employability is a management philosophy, developed Sumantra Goshal in 1997, which recognises that employment and market performance stem from the initiative, creativity and competencies of all employees, and not just from the wisdom of senior management. For employers, it involves creating a working environment that can provide opportunities for personal and professional growth, within a management environment where it is understood that talented, growing people mean talented, growing organisations. For many employees, the new contract would involve movement towards a greater commitment to continuous learning and development, and towards an acceptance that, in a climate of constant change and uncertainty, the will to develop is the only hedge against a changing job market

## **REFERENCES**

Blom, A. and Saeki, H., 2011. Employability and skill set of newly graduated engineers in India. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper Series*

Gasskov, V., Aggarwal, A., Grover, A. and Infocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability; International Labour Organisation. Subregional Office for South Asia (ILO), 2003. Industrial training institutes of India: the efficiency report.

Saravanan, V., 2009. Sustainable employability skills for engineering professionals. *The Indian Review of World Literature in English*, 5(2), pp.1-9.

Manwani, H., 2010. Building Human Capital in India.

Dhar, S.K., 2012. Employability of management students in India: Some concerns and considerations. *AIMA Journal for Management Research*, 6(4/4), pp.0974-497.