

Employers' perception regarding employability skills of management students undergoing internship

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This paper investigates the perception of corporate managers regarding employability skills of management students undertaking summer internship with them. The study is divided into two parts wherein the first part consists of literature review and in-depth interviews of senior managers, and it is devoted to identifying critical parameters that affect employability of management students. The second part of research consists of a survey of 195 company supervisors who rated 405 intern students on the 22 items identified in the first part. The results indicate that intern students lacked in communication skills, problem solving ability, analytical skills and business understanding but fared well in the other parameters like self-management, using ICT efficiently, people relations and team spirit, innovative approach and critical thinking, self-confidence and assertiveness and drive to learn.

Keywords: Employer perception, employability skills, management students, internships, skill development

Management education in India is perceived as a valuable career. Participation in management education has grown dramatically as more than 200,000 students enrolled in over 3000 management schools spread across India. The curriculum is highly challenging and contributes towards work related skill development in an individual. Management education is facing difficulties due to gap between employer requirements and existing management curriculum making it challenging for management education to survive (Rao, 2015). The main attractiveness for pursuing this course is the salary expectation (Mintzberg, 2004). The salary of management graduates has dropped significantly. Most of the management graduates receive a compensation package of Rs. 8000 to 10000 per month (US\$110-140) from their final placements at Tier 2 and 3 colleges. According to the report of All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), many management graduates in 2016-17 could not get employment. The figures showed that only 46% of graduates found employment; this was 4% lower than previous year's data (Economic Times, 2017).

Presently, the MBA program in India is facing problems related to employment which is alarming as The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) puts forward a disturbing picture indicating that only 7% MBA graduates in India are employable. It has been greatly attributed to the gap between theories and practice (ASSOCHAM, 2016). Due to low quality of management education, there were fewer or no employers offering jobs at several management institutes which forced many institutes to close. Campus placement at management institutes went down by 45% (ASSOCHAM, 2016). According to a 2016 report of ASSOCHAM, a student's average spending on fees of a two-year management program was nearly 3 - 5 lakh rupees (US\$4300-7200). The problem faced by management institutions is placements of its graduates. Key reasons of placement options drying up is excessive supply, lack of basic skills, low work experience, inexperienced faculties teaching students and most importantly lack of practical and problem-solving abilities (Economic Times, 2017). Most students who enroll in the management education in India do not have prior experience which is

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a bottleneck in Indian education system. In the western countries, students are required to have work experience before joining a management school. Since, Indian management graduates do not have any work experience before joining the program, many experts believe that internships are the best method of applying theories to practice gaining real experiential learning. It also develops practical skills and hence, graduates would gain work experience through internship which is one of the ways to be job ready.

ABOUT INTERNSHIPS

Internships are the means through which a student gains pre-professional work experience opportunity in their career field (Rahman, Khatun, & Mezbah-ul-Islam, 2008). Internships not only provide practical knowledge to the graduates but also helps in the areas like soft skills, networking and overall communication. Internships develop a graduate's management related competencies (Tas, 1988; LeBruto & Murray, 1994). Students can develop competencies in the area of leadership, communication, problem-solving, teamwork, decision making (Bell & Schmidt, 1996; McMullin, 1998). It also helps employers to get employees who are dedicated, enthusiastic and have skills and potential to work in a certain workplace in a particular profile. For management institutes, internships are a great platform to understand the skills demanded by employers in their graduates. Through internships, institutes can develop their students according to the industry requirement and strengthen industry linkages.

There are several studies on financial attractiveness of pursuing MBA in terms of time, cost, investment, and salary (Connolly, 2003). However, there are few studies on management education with focus on skills imparted through internships and employer perception regarding it. Hence, it is important to investigate employer perception regarding skills existing and required in management graduates.

This research paper is the outcome of the student employability initiative taken by the faculty of L J Institute of Management Studies, a management institute in India. This two-part study initially focuses on identifying the critical parameters affecting employability of students through a literature review and in-depth interviews of senior corporate managers. This was followed by a survey on company supervisors' perceptions of the identified parameters for management students undertaking internships.

STUDY OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study was to identify the critical parameters that affect student employability. The study further seeks to explore employer perception regarding the identified parameters for the students. The study also seeks to identify the parameters in which the students are lacking and suggest remedial action.

The research was conducted in two parts: Part 1 & Part 2.

Part 1 involved in-depth literature review which included studying published literature concerned with employability of management graduates and employer expectations of them. This study was followed by in-depth interviews of 20 employers to understand the parameters of employability and techniques to inculcate it among management graduates.

Part 2 involved a survey of 190 employers who offered summer internship to 418 students of the institute where the study was conducted. A structured questionnaire consisting of Likert scale-based

questions was used. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of inputs from Phase 1. The survey was conducted by the institute faculty who visited the company supervisors guiding the students during the internship. Mean, cross tabulation and a Kruskal Wallis test were used for data analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Employability

Employability can be defined as a set of skills, understandings and personal attributes that will make any graduate stand a chance to gain employment and become successful in an occupation of their choice which in turn will benefit themselves, the community and the economy (Yorke, 2006). Published research indicates that companies value employability skills over discipline-based understanding and skills, (Harvey, 2000, 2005; Yorke, 2006). A report published in 2011 by the Education Development Initiatives (EDI) organization, with support of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), a British Industry lobby group, showed survey results gathered from employers of a wide range of industries. It indicated the lack of employability skills as a major recruitment concern of graduate employers. Interestingly, employers of management graduates viewed the lack of employability skills as the highest concern in recruiting graduates (67%), while the lack of industry experience came a distant second (44%). According to Harvey, Locke, & Morey (2002), employers looked out for graduates who were proactive and possessed skills that include analysis, critique, synthesis, and communication. Literature further indicated that employers preferred graduates who could adapt to the workplace culture and use their abilities and skills to add value to the organization. Employers also valued critical thinking which is important for innovation and anticipating and leading change (Harvey, Locke & Morey, 2002; Little, 2001). In the report 'How much does higher education enhance the employability of graduates?' (Mason, Williams, & Cranmer 2006), the concept of employability is indicated to be factors like communication, numeracy, information technology, and learning how to learn. A study by (Kubler & Forbes, 2005) suggested that employability comprised of cognitive skills, generic competencies, personal capabilities, technical ability, business/organisation awareness, critical evaluation, reflection, and review abilities.

Findings from Different Countries

The Confederation of British Industry contributed to the discussion on employability in their report, *Time well spent: Embedding employability in work experience*, (Confederation of British Industry, 2007). According to their report, employability skills stood for positive attitude, self-management, team working, business and customer awareness, problem solving, communication and literacy, application of numeracy and application of information technology. The report also indicated that employers valued graduates demonstrating an entrepreneurial and innovative approach and creative thinking which brought fresh perspectives and challenged current assumptions regardless of the size, soft skills (e.g., communication skills and team working) were given more importance than technical or hard skills' (e.g., a good degree qualification, IT skills) (Archer & Davison, 2008). Glass, Landsburgh, Quashie, and McGregor, 2008, found that a lesser number of employers in their case studies recruited individuals from universities specifically for the technical skills. Rather, most employers looked at the degree as a proxy for achieving a certain level of competence that represented the minimum standard that they were seeking in a new recruit. These findings suggested that universities needed to equip graduates with not only deep intellectual capabilities but also a set of employability skills which make them more work-ready (Archer & Davison, 2008). In case of preparing students for being work-ready, few researchers also use the term profession-ready (Zegwaard, Campbell, & Pretti, 2017).

The United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) report in 2009 titled *The Employability Challenge* described employability skills to be the skills needed by everyone who needs to do any job. These skills were described as:

A foundation of positive approach which indicates as being ready to participate, make suggestions, accept new ideas and constructive criticism, and take responsibility for outcomes
This foundation supports three Functional Skills:

1. Using numbers effectively – measuring, recording measurements, calculating, estimating quantities, relating numbers to the job.
2. Using language effectively – writing clearly and in a way appropriate to the context, ordering facts and concepts logically
3. Using IT effectively – operating a computer, both using basic systems and learning other applications as necessary and using telephones and other technology to communicate.

The report also discussed four personal skills:

1. Self-management – punctuality and time management, dressing and behaving to context, overcoming challenges and asking for help when necessary.
2. Thinking and solving problems – creativity, reflecting on and learning from own actions, prioritizing, analyzing situations, and developing solutions.
3. Working together and communicating – co-operating, being assertive, persuading, being responsible to others, speaking clearly to individuals and groups and listening for a response.
4. Understanding the business – understanding how the individual job fits into the organisation as a whole; understanding the needs of stakeholders (customers and employers); judging risks, innovating, and contributing to the whole organization. (UKCES, 2009, pp 10-11)

Issues of employability skills were also discovered in the Australian commercial and higher education environment. There was a focus on how to integrate employability and work skills into the curriculum. (Australian Education International 2010; Barrie, 2006; Barrie, Hughes, & Smith, 2009; Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008; Vu, Rigby, Wood, & Daly, 2011; Zanko et al., 2010). Freudenberg, Brimble, and Cameron (2010) discovered general concern amongst government, industry associations and employers regarding the lack of work-readiness" and employability of commerce, accounting and management graduates. Published research in many countries highlighted a mismatch between graduate skills and employers' expectation with respect to problem solving, communication, team skills and management skills. Such research includes examples from New Zealand (Hodges & Burchell, 2003), Sri Lanka (Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2010), South Africa (Pop & Barkhuizen, 2010), Japan (Sugahara & Coman, 2010), China (Rose, 2013) and Malaysia (Chang, 2004; Daud, Abidin, Sapuan, & Rajadurai, 2011). Published research from Vietnam suggested that employers perceived the levels of problem solving, decision making and learning skills of graduates to be low (Duoc & Metzger, 2007; Kamoche, 2001; Nguyen, 2011; Trung & Swierczek, 2009; World Bank, 2008). Trung and Swierczek, 2009 surveyed department managers on their needs, as well as one group of final year students and two groups of students from other years in four Vietnamese universities. Several findings concurred with Duoc and Metzger, 2007.

Their factor analysis resulted in the emergence of four skill factors of importance:

1. Information processing skills to solve problems.
2. Interpersonal skills to effectively teamwork incorporating cooperation-related skills.
3. Learning skills incorporating active learning, self-esteem, career development planning, and self-confidence.
4. Decision making, comprising identifying key causes, critical thinking, decision making, prioritizing, and goal setting. (Duoc & Metzger, 2007, pp. 629-643)

Shortage of Skilled Workforce in India

In India, the scenario in terms of skilled work force is no different than other countries. Employers are experiencing labor shortage of graduates with enough skills. According to the Confederation of Indian Industry, (2017) 40% of India's population is under 25, yet only 5% of total Indian workforce is skilled, compared to 85% in South East Asian countries. Of the 500 million (approx.) workforces in India, only 9% is engaged in the organized sector and only 5% have marketable skills. The largest share of new jobs comes from the unorganized sector, which accounts for most of the national workforce. The *National Sample Survey* reports that only about 2% have received formal vocational training and another 8% have received non-formal vocational training.

Lack of Employment Skills in Indian Management Education

Management education in India is more theory based. It lacks practical knowledge which impacts the employability of the graduates. It was also found that universities do not change curriculum often (Chakrabarty, 2016). Hence, the theories taught are not contemporary and are not changed according to need of the hour. With global companies entering the country and rapid change in the business environment, the syllabus of management institutes needs to be regularly updated which does not happen. One of the employability reports also mentioned that the lack of certain skill sets like business consulting, analyst functions, exceptional English communication and cognitive skills requirement was again one of the reasons of lower employability (Confederation of Indian Industry, 2017). Employers in India are dissatisfied with management graduates regarding lack of communication and interpersonal skills, critical thinking and intolerance for ambiguity and diversity (Chonko & Roberts, 1996).

Developing Skill Based Management Education in India

Experts and different top management institutes suggest skill-based education for management graduates to improve employability. The Government of India is focusing of skilling Indian youth for a better future. The Government has come up with skill development programs and initiatives. Across India, only two fifth of the students entering the job market fit in the criteria of the employers for employability (wheebox.com, 2017). Employability reports suggest that critical thinking backed by strong communication skills is the need of the hour for boosting employability in India Also, domain specific skill development and basic skill development should be priority with management institutes and universities revising their syllabus to stay relevant in current times. ASSOCHAM (2016) advised updating and re-training management faculties in lines with current and global perspectives.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Faculties of L. J. Institute of Management Studies conducted in-depth interviews with 20 employers to identify the most critical parameters that affect employability of a management graduate. In-depth interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis for 20 senior corporate managers. These 20 senior managers were selected on the basis of regularity of offering internships to students every year. All the employers participating in the in-depth interviews were offering internships to students for the last five years. Parameters were identified through the literature review and were validated through questions. The questions posed to the respondents were:

1. What are the skills a company looks for in a candidate to be employed?
2. Which are the critical areas where students need to develop in order to be industry ready?

These open-ended questions generated inputs which helped in cross validation of parameters generated through the literature review during the in-depth interview (Table 1). These skills were validated by employers based on which the questionnaire was developed.

The corporate managers gave their inputs which were recorded and run through NVIVO software, a qualitative data analysis tool. A word cloud analysis chart was generated where font size indicated how frequently terms occurred and it was used to finalize critical parameters which were: communication, analytical skill, teamwork, assertive, problem solving, innovative, willingness to learn and IT savvy.

Thus, based on the literature review, its subsequent validation by collection of data through in-depth interviews and analysis using NVIVO software, the critical parameters for employment of management graduates as perceived by employers are stated in Table 1.

Phase 2: Survey of Company Supervisors

The institute faculty members surveyed 190 company supervisors who were assisting around 418 students in their summer internship. The entire primary study was conducted during the summer internship program. The compulsory summer internship program is a 6-8 weeks training program where a student had to work for a company under the supervision of a company supervisor and faculty guide. Its process is mentioned below.

Stage 1:

All first-year students of the institute were screened through preliminary interviews to check their aptitude and area of interest. Based on their interest, they were each sent to one of the 190 companies involved in the summer internship for an interview.

Stage 2:

Once the students were selected in a summer internship of their choice, faculty members of the institute were allocated to them as internal guides. These faculty members interacted with the companies to understand the requirements from the students. The faculty members discussed the same with the students so that the work profile was clear before they joined the internship.

TABLE 1: Literature review of skills important for student employability according to employers

| No. | Skills | References |
|-----|--|---|
| 1 | Communication skills Speaking and writing clearly; able to convey messages effectively | Mason et al, (2006), Confederation of British Industry, (2007), Archer & Davison, (2008), UK Commission of Employment and Skills, (2009), Trung & Swinczek, (2009), Bilsland, Nagy & Smith, (2014). |
| 2 | Self-confidence & assertiveness Being pro-active, reliable and committed; taking on responsibility | Confederation of British Industry, (2007), UK Commission of Employment and Skills, (2009), Trung & Swinczek, (2009), Bilsland, Nagy & Smith, (2014). |
| 3 | Self-management Good time management in terms of managing tasks and time for self and others; meeting deadlines and targets, Dresses well as per corporate requirement and conducts himself/herself well, Well-mannered and polite in dealings | Confederation of British Industry, (2007), UK Commission of Employment and Skills, (2009). |
| 4 | Problem solving Identifying problems and developing creative and practical solutions | Confederation of British Industry, (2007), UK Commission of Employment and Skills, (2009), Trung & Swinczek, (2009), Bilsland, et al, (2014) |
| 5 | Analytical skills Collecting, analyzing and organizing information | Confederation of British Industry, (2007), UK Commission of Employment and Skills, (2009), Trung & Swinczek, (2009), Bilsland, et al., (2014) |
| 6 | Using IT effectively Operating the computer, well versed with office applications and other technology | Mason et al, (2006), Confederation of British Industry, (2007), UK Commission of Employment and Skills, (2009) |
| 7 | Drive to learn Being enthusiastic & open to new ideas; eager to learn new skills | Mason et al., (2006), UK Commission of Employment and Skills, (2009), Trung & Swinczek, (2009), Bilsland, et al., (2014). |
| 8 | Business Understanding Understanding of business processes, recognizing needs of stakeholders, understanding how an individual job fits into the organisation as a whole | Confederation of British Industry, (2007), UK Commission of Employment and Skills, (2009) |
| 9 | People Relations and Team spirit Co-operating and working well with team members, being responsible to others, communicating well in groups, able to relate with different people in different settings | Confederation of British Industry, (2007), UK Commission of Employment and Skills, (2009), Trung & Swinczek, (2009), Bilsland, et al., (2014). |
| 10 | Innovative Approach and Creative Thinking Coming up with out of the box ideas and suggestion for problems | Confederation of British Industry, (2007), UK Commission of Employment and Skills, (2009). |

Stage 3:

Once the students joined the companies, the faculty guides met the company supervisors of the intern students to monitor the students' progress and take corrective action if required. The students were also required to regularly report to the faculty guides and take advice and inputs. At the end of the internship, the students were required to submit an internship report to the company supervisor and the faculty guide. A feedback regarding the students' performance was received from the company supervisors. The intern students were also to fill in a feedback form about his/her experiences' and learning at the company. The faculty members surveyed the 190 employers and asked them to rate the 418 students on the identified parameters evaluating them on the work done during the internship program. Thirteen responses were omitted from the scope of the study as they were either incomplete or outliers, and so the analysis was done for 405 students. The faculty conducted face to face interviews with the employers. The questionnaire (Table 2) was designed on the basis of inputs generated from in-depth interviews of corporate managers and the literature review. The responses were taken on a five-point Likert scale where 1 was highly disagree and 5 was highly agree. The company supervisor filled as many questionnaires as the number of students she/he was guiding.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS. The reliability check was positive giving a Cronbach Alpha of 0.874 for all 22 items included in the survey. The Cronbach alpha for the 22 individual items is shown in Table 2 that shows that all the items studied for skill development are reliable. In order to analyze the parameters where the management students lacked the most in the corporate perception, mean values of the data were generated as indicated in Appendix A. Means for all items ranged between 2.5 to 4.2. The highest mean score was found of the item "being pro-active" (4.2) and lowest score for "able to convey messages effectively" (2.5).

Table 2 suggests that mean values are low for the items "speaking and writing clearly" (mean value = 2.6) and "able to convey messages effectively" (mean value = 2.5), "understanding the business processes" (mean value = 3.1), "recognizing needs of stakeholders" (Mean value = 3.2), "identifying problems and developing creative and practical solutions" (mean value= 3.2) and "collecting, analyzing and organizing information" (mean value = 3.1) compared to other factors which means the intern students lack in these areas. Before proceeding to further analysis, one needs to critically analyze the ratings given by the internship supervisor. The intern is a part time and short-term employee and the possibility that the internship supervisor may not be totally objective cannot be ruled out. Supervisor bias is also probable keeping in view different supervisors who may be harsher in their ratings compared to others who may be more lenient and less objective in their ratings. It is further pointed that the rating is also the outcome of discussion between the internship supervisor and the faculty guide and this discussion may also affect the subsequent ratings. Also, the intern's performance is to be evaluated by the University through viva and not by the company supervisor which they are aware of. Further, evaluating performance of interns is not the official job of a company supervisor and is not considered as their performance indicator. Thus, all factors may lead to less objective rating by the internship supervisor.

Critically evaluating the value of each item, insights for action and further research are generated, "being pro-active" (mean value = 4.2) and "reliable and committed" (mean value = 4) indicate that the student interns were proactive and committed towards work. Alternatively, as discussed earlier, it can also be looked upon that the intern feedback is an institutional mechanism and not an employee

feedback mechanism and the internship supervisor may rate interns highly to motivate them further. If the finding is to be taken on face value that it does indicate positive traits in the interns. The items of "speaking and writing clearly" (mean value = 2.6) and "able to convey messages effectively" (mean value = 2.5) is rated the lowest which indicate a gap where the institute needs to actively work in developing the communication skills of the interns. It may also indicate that the intern is perceived low on the communication parameters deemed important by the internship supervisor and it becomes important to understand those parameters. This insight has action-based implications. Action in terms of institute and company working jointly to create workshops, immersion or skill-based courses where students are trained by the company personnel and the gaps are pragmatically plugged through training and interaction. At the institute end, an arrangement can be worked out where all the above discussed items can be assessed separately as part of the subject or the curriculum. Variables like communication skills, problem solving, analytical skills, using IT, business understanding, people relation, innovative approach and creative thinking can be addressed and evaluated as learning outcomes of certain subjects that are taught in business schools (Confederation of British Industry, 2007; Holden & Jameson, 2002).

TABLE 2: Cronbach Alpha and mean score results of interns performance evaluation

| Sr. No. | Items | Cronbach Alpha | |
|---------|---|----------------|------|
| | | Values | Mean |
| 1 | Speaking and writing clearly | 0.925 | 2.6 |
| 2 | Able to convey messages effectively | 0.899 | 2.5 |
| 3 | Being pro-active | 0.857 | 4.2 |
| 4 | Reliable and committed | 0.856 | 4 |
| 5 | Effective time management in terms of managing tasks and time for self and others | 0.865 | 3.9 |
| 6 | Meeting deadlines and targets | 0.855 | 3.9 |
| 7 | Identifying problems and developing creative and practical solutions | 0.855 | 3.2 |
| 8 | Collecting, analyzing and organizing information | 0.857 | 3.1 |
| 9 | Operating the computer | 0.862 | 3.7 |
| 10 | Well versed with office applications and other technology | 0.855 | 3.8 |
| 11 | Being enthusiastic & open to new ideas | 0.858 | 3.8 |
| 12 | Eager to learn new skills | 0.855 | 3.7 |
| 13 | Understanding of business processes | 0.857 | 3.1 |
| 14 | Recognizing needs of stakeholders | 0.855 | 3.2 |
| 15 | Understanding how an individual job fits into the organization as a whole | 0.862 | 3.9 |
| 16 | Co-operating and working well with team members | 0.857 | 4 |
| 17 | Being responsible to others | 0.856 | 3.9 |
| 18 | Communicating well in groups | 0.872 | 3.8 |
| 19 | Able to relate with different people in different settings | 0.857 | 3.9 |
| 20 | Coming up with out of the box ideas and suggestion for problems | 0.855 | 3.45 |
| 21 | Dresses well as per corporate requirement and conducts himself/herself well | 0.921 | 3.9 |
| 22 | Well-mannered and polite in dealings | 0.872 | 3.8 |

Analysis separating for each of the sectors (Appendix A) shows mean values of the items across different sectors indicates that "communication skills" have a low value in all sectors, "recognizing needs of stakeholders" had the low mean values in the sectors of media (mean value = 2.9), FMCG and consumer durables (mean value = 3) and finance and stock (mean value = 3.1). In the items of "reliable and committed", "being pro-active", "meeting deadlines and targets", "cooperating and working well with team members", "dresses well as per corporate requirement and conducts herself/himself well", "well-mannered and polite in dealings", "able to relate with people in different settings" and "being responsible to others", the intern students were rated highly (mean value = 4) in almost all sectors. The Kruskal-Wallis test was run and the results indicated that except for "well versed with office application and other technology" (p value = 0.001), "recognizing needs of stakeholders" (p value= 0.001) and "understanding how an individual's job fits into the organisation as a whole" (p value=0.002), where the p value was less than 0.05 (showing significant difference in rating of items across sectors), the p value was more than 0.05 for other items indicating no significant difference in ratings of items across rest of the items.

Though it can be inferred that there is no huge difference in mean values of internship supervisors across sectors on the all the items with the exception of "well versed with office application and other technology", "recognizing needs of stakeholders" and "understanding how an individual's job fits into the organisation as a whole".

Analysis separating for each degree type (Appendix B) was generated to critically assess student skill and capability and map it against their under-graduation in order to figure out its role in ascertaining the presence or absence of skills. Certain items were rated highly across all undergraduate degrees like "being pro-active", "reliable and committed", "being enthusiastic and open to new ideas", "understanding how an individual job fits into the organisation as a whole", "cooperating and working well with team members", "able to relate to different people in different settings", "dresses well as per corporate requirement and conducts herself/himself well" and "well-mannered and polite in meetings" where the mean value was almost 4. Similarly, across undergraduate degrees, certain items were rated poorly. The mean value was less in "speaking and writing clearly", "able to convey messages effectively" and "identifying problems and developing creative and practical solutions" across all undergraduate degrees, indicating that the intern students were not up to the mark in these items according to their internship supervisors. Kruskal-Wallis test values indicated that there was significant difference in rating of items like "identifying problems and developing creative and solutions" (p value = 0.002), "operating the computer" (p value = 0.001) and "well versed with office applications and other technology" (p value = 0.004). For the rest of the items the p value was more than 0.05 indicating no difference in item ratings across undergraduate degrees of intern students. Further analysis indicated that for items like "identifying problems and developing creative and practical solutions," "operating the computer" and "well versed with office applications and other technology", ratings are lower for B.A. and B.Com degree students compared to students of other degrees. This finding has implications that B.A. and B.Com students need to be mentored in the areas mentioned above. A training module would have to be developed for students of those streams.

In terms of the ratings, certain aspects linked to the interns need to be studied. The interns are inexperienced when they join the summer internship as part of their university curriculum. The prime motivation for students to pursue internship is the marks related to credits associated with it. Interns most of the time are either not paid any stipend during the internship or are underpaid. Several interns get to work on projects that are related to sales with huge and non-achievable targets. They lack motivation and spirit to achieve this target due to the issue of payments. It was found that students

who are paid a stipend perform well. At all management institutes, internships are a compulsory part of the syllabus and have to be done as a part of degree completion. Due to this approach, several institutes and students develop a ritualistic approach towards it, considering it to be a formality undertaken to earn the degree. Such internships consist of no work and poor skill development at the student end. There have been instances of ghost internships undertaken by management students where work certificates are generated with no actual work happening at the organization.

This study indicates the important skills required by management graduates as per industry expectations and reinforces the fact that it is the responsibility of the management institute to develop technical and professional skills (Etaat, 1999; Mahmoodi, 1993; Zolfaghari, 2003). In the curriculum, summer internships, if conducted in the right manner, could bridge this skill gap. Industry expectation from management graduates is communication (both oral and written), business understanding, problem solving and analytical skills (Dacko, 2006). Institutes/universities must design courses that integrate these skills into the learning activities or arrange for workshops related to the job/work profile that enhances employability skills (Cooper, Orrell, & Bowden, 2010). Graduates must be given business problems which they solve in a group and develop their entrepreneurial/business skills, problem solving, decision making skills and analytical skills. Since there will be group assignments and projects, they will also learn interpersonal skills and leadership skills which are also required by the corporates (Dacko, 2006). This can also be done in collaboration with the industry or corporate according to their requirement (Cooper, et al., 2010, Duoc & Metzger, 2007, Tran, 2010). Higher education, in the view of proponents of professional education, is best organized in response to the demands of the labor market. Teaching should provide students with the qualifications necessary for skilled jobs (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz, 1992). The main objective of management institutes worldwide should be developing their graduates to be workplace ready. Educators must impart or develop skills that are required across various industries and other competencies in their graduates which will be useful to the employers (Rainsbury, Hodges, Burchell, & Lay, 2002).

Suggestions for Skill Development

1. Communication skills

Based on the above findings it is suggested that an exclusive program focusing on spoken and written skills could be conducted by management institutes. It is also possible that such a program be a continuous intervention throughout the entire course to ensure constant training. Students would be required to write a number of reports, projects, essays, presentations, group discussion, and more that would develop their communication skills (oral, written, listening). In the rapidly changing global business scenario, which is very dynamic and competitive, graduates require effective communication skills to understand, analyze and deal with different issues (Hodges & Burchell, 2003). Students do not have professional skills of communication which is expected in corporate.

2. Business understanding

Talks with senior managers during the first phase of research and the survey of employers pointed towards the importance of business understanding. It is suggested that corporate immersion programs be conducted in different subjects. Students could work part time or on project basis in companies to understand the working of business, stakeholder expectation and the importance of role and job in the larger scheme of things

3. *Problem solving*

For developing problem solving skills in the graduates, corporate managers suggested to focus more on teaching through live case studies in the classroom. It is further suggested that managers take their daily problems to the class and put it across to the student to solve. This could be an interesting way to increase problem solving capabilities. Practicing managers would put-up real-life problems faced by them and ask the students for innovative and practical solutions. According to experts interviewed, conducting practical exercises would be a good way to strengthen this skill of students.

4. *Analytical skills*

Interviews and survey findings suggest that analytical skills are sought after by employers and it can be inculcated by inserting case studies, exercises and projects that focus on development of analytical skills among management students. Development of analytical skills should be a learning outcome in the syllabus of courses designed by management teachers. Allocation of marks or grades for analytical skills is also a way to incentivize students towards developing analytical skills as a part of curriculum-based learning (Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017).

SUGGESTIONS FOR INTERNSHIPS

Keeping in view the discussions regarding internship supervisor ratings, the process followed in the study can be suggested to make the internship process achieve its deliverables. The objective of the internship has been to not only sensitize interns towards the corporate but to also develop employability skills among them. The skills needed by intern students have been discussed at length in this paper. Based on the study it is suggested that an objective score sheet could be used which may include the 22-item questionnaire that evaluates the intern on different skills. Based on this 22-item questionnaire, further skill gaps could be identified, and remedial action could be taken by the institute to fill the remaining skill gap. Another challenge faced due to the existing systems of internship was that its duration of two months caused anomalies like intern supervisor not paying attention and taking interest in the intern as the intern would be gone and would not contribute like a full-time employee. It is suggested that internship should be linked to final placement and the duration of internship be extended to six months or a mutually decided substantial amount of time where the intern supervisor has the time and motivation to sufficiently train the intern and have the motivation to objectively assess the intern as he/she has to be considered for final placement (Allison, Harvey, & Nixon, 2002). This organizational "courtship" should play a key role in developing employability skills for the employment "wedding" to happen. The rationale of the final placement clause to be incorporated in the internship is that the stakeholders, that is, the intern and the intern supervisor will take the entire process more seriously and the outcome will be more rigorous and result oriented. Interns will take the process more seriously as rather than just academic grades; their careers are also being decided by their performance in the internship and their output would be better. In case of sector or work specific skills required, the institute and the company on the basis of the discussion with the internship supervisor may conduct interventions or workshops for subsequent batches of interns before they join the internship so that the interns quickly get into the work process of the organisation. These activities must be done in a way that intern student understands and learns processes and realities of modern workplace (Hodges & Burchell, 2003). If intern student develops these skills, they will be able to work well in competitive organizational workplace or environment, understand stakeholders' needs, resolve problems effectively and understand the rapidly changing business environment.

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APPENDIX A: Mean and Kruskal-Wallis test values across Sectors for employability skills.

| Sr. No. | Items | Mean Values | | | | | Kruskal -Wallis Test |
|---------|---|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------|---------------|----------------------|
| | | Finance, Banking and Stock based | IT and ITES | FMCG and Consumer Durables | Media | Manufacturing | |
| 1 | Speaking and writing clearly | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 0.1 |
| 2 | Able to convey messages effectively | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 0.2 |
| 3 | Being pro-active | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 0.16 |
| 4 | Reliable and committed | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 0.1 |
| 5 | Effective time management in terms of managing tasks and time for self and others | 4.0 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 0.3 |
| 6 | Meeting deadlines and targets | 4.0 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 0.3 |
| 7 | Identifying problems and developing creative and practical solutions | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 0.1 |
| 8 | Collecting, analyzing and organizing information | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.3 | 3.0 | 0.3 |
| 9 | Operating the computer | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.7 | 4.0 | 3.9 | 0.2 |
| 10 | Well versed with office applications and other technology | 3.5 | 3.4 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 0.001 |
| 11 | Being enthusiastic & open to new ideas | 3.6 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 0.6 |
| 12 | Eager to learn new skills | 3.9 | 3.7 | 3.8 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 0.2 |
| 13 | Understanding of business processes | 2.9 | 3.1 | 3.3 | 3.0 | 3.3 | 0.18 |
| 14 | Recognizing needs of stakeholders | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 3.7 | 0.001 |
| 15 | Understanding how an individual job fits into the organization as a whole | 2.7 | 4.5 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 4.5 | 0.002 |
| 16 | Co-operating and working well with team members | 4.2 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 0.1 |
| 17 | Being responsible to others | 3.9 | 4 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 4.0 | 0.2 |
| 18 | Communicating well in groups | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.8 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 0.13 |
| 19 | Able to relate with different people in different settings | 3.9 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 0.12 |
| 20 | Coming up with out of the box ideas and suggestion for problems | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3.3 | 3.7 | 0.2 |
| 21 | Dresses well as per corporate requirement and conducts himself/herself well | 3.8 | 3.8 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 0.14 |
| 22 | Well-mannered and polite in dealings | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 0.12 |

APPENDIX B: Mean values and Kruskal-Wallis test values for employability skills across under-graduate degree of Intern

| Sr. No. | Items | Mean Values | | | | | | Kruskal-Wallis Test |
|---------|---|-------------|-----|------------|-------|-----|----------|---------------------|
| | | B.Com | BBA | BE/B. Tech | B.Sc. | BA | B. Pharm | p-value |
| 1 | Speaking and writing clearly | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 0.12 |
| 2 | Able to convey messages effectively | 2.5 | 2.7 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 0.12 |
| 3 | Being pro-active | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 4.3 | 0.13 |
| 4 | Reliable and committed | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 4.0 | 0.12 |
| 5 | Effective time management in terms of managing tasks and time for self and others | 3.9 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 0.1 |
| 6 | Meeting deadlines and targets | 3.9 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 0.2 |
| 7 | Identifying problems and developing creative and practical solutions | 3.3 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.1 | 2.5 | 2.9 | 0.002 |
| 8 | Collecting, Analysing and organising information | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.7 | 3.2 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 0.13 |
| 9 | Operating the computer | 3.0 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 0.001 |
| 10 | Well versed with office applications and other technology | 3.0 | 3.5 | 4.5 | 3.8 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 0.004 |
| 11 | Being enthusiastic & open to new ideas | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 0.31 |
| 12 | Eager to learn new skills | 3.7 | 3.7 | 4.0 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.7 | 0.24 |
| 13 | Understanding of business processes | 3.0 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 0.13 |
| 14 | Recognizing needs of stakeholders | 3.4 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 0.31 |
| 15 | Understanding how an individual job fits into the organization as a whole | 3.9 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 0.1 |
| 16 | Co-operating and working well with team members | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 0.2 |
| 17 | Being responsible to others | 3.9 | 4.0 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 0.21 |
| 18 | Communicating well in groups | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 0.14 |
| 19 | Able to relate with different people in different settings | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 0.24 |
| 20 | Coming up with out of the box ideas and suggestion for problems | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.4 | 0.13 |
| 21 | Dresses well as per corporate requirement and conducts himself/herself well | 3.8 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 3.7 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 0.22 |
| 22 | Well-mannered and polite in dealings | 3.8 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.8 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 0.24 |