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Identify and Evaluate the Skill Gap between Industry and Academic a Study in a B-School

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Abstract:

The hyper-competitive economy has brought in a lot of challenges and competitions for the corporate to survive in the market. It is necessary to have a right skill, knowledge, attitude and resourcefulness of people is critical to sustain development and survive in the dynamic markets. In recent past there has been a constant debate about the quality of management graduates and their employability. As per the a survey conducted by the Associated chambers of Commerce and industry of India(Asscham)currently has 3900 Business schools and only 10% of management are actually employable despite of the great demand. Therefore the corporate's are looking out for a talent pool and the business schools are not able to cope up with the corporate expectation. This research attempts to identify the required skill expectations of the corporate and is based on exploratory research and identified five broad categories, i.e interpersonal skills, communication skills, attitude, decision making and ethics. On the other hand a primary data was collected to identify the existing skill sets amongst management students. . A questionnaire was designed based on the above variables and primary data was collected from a sample size of 117 management students. The analysis was carried out using SPSS package. Implications and the findings are further discussed and the role of management institutes to bridge the skill gap has been discussed.

Keywords: *Competency, employability, corporate expectation*

1. Introduction

To promote sustainable development higher education plays a vital role. Today's higher education should aspire to develop the three C's for every candidate, i.e. Competency, Character, and Commitment. It is very important for Institutes to ensure that the fundamentals of technical aspect, efficiency, knowledge and cognitive abilities of the individuals should be developed. The syllabus designing and regular up gradation of the syllabus will ensure that what is taught in the class room is relevant and latest. Industry connect plays a vital role with respect to competency as it helps us in understanding the kind of efficiency and quality is required from the fresh graduates. Most of the Corporates want that the classroom training should be complemented with practical understanding and functioning so as to develop the competency level of the graduate. We come from the country of Vedas. Character building has been a key focus in our education system from time immemorial. Patience, virtue, integrity, loyalty, fair judgment, ethical approach used to be an important aspect of education in India. Over a period of time the percentage and the cut throat competition have pushed these character building traits far in the background. The education has lost its shine because the character building is no more the Institutes prerogative. Subject like Business Ethics and corporate governance are made mandatory by few universities but its all theory. Students are deprived of the opportunities to develop their character, where they can take decisions which will help them realize and identify the few basic values they wish to build in their personality.

Inclusion of on field training, Industry Immersion projects, real life business problem solving opportunities will help the young professional to understand the relevance of various terminal and instrumental values help them develop a strong character which will directly have an impact on their performance at work place.

The biggest and the most critical challenge that today's generation of young professionals are faced is the lack of commitment. The generation of young professionals is what we call the tech generation. These young managers are from the era of Information technology. They are used to instant gratification and satiation. Holding their attention and interest is a challenge which academia faces in the classroom and HR has to deal with it in the corporate environment.

Very often this short term interest and lack of long-term attention holding is perceived as lack of commitment. Having said that; very often the employable are much in demand and the non employable are open to all offers. There is an evident lack of commitment in

terms of their performance and their understanding of what the organization expects from them. Jobs are plenty but there is still a lacuna in the fresh graduates which makes them under confident after failed attempts and interviews or even in the job environment. The tenacity and sincerity are often absent.

Higher education should help the individual realize the importance of commitment and dedication towards the task allocated and the organization. The understanding of synergy between the organization and the professional should be realized and respected at all times.

The culmination of 3Cs will help the individual understand the real world functioning of the corporate world and will lead to tangible growth at the same time understanding the intangible values; and self reflection through strong character building exercises will help them develop themselves as corporate citizens and stranger human beings. Today's India needs value oriented strong business minds to contribute towards building our nation.

2. Literature Review

The Vedas, Upanishads, Indian Gurukul system are the platforms where education was not intended for employment only but was a means to develop the individual as a person, values, integrity, skills, capabilities, attitude, character building and survival instincts too were developed. Albert Einstein once said "The aim of schools must be training of independently acting and thinking individuals, who however; see in the service of community their highest life problem." The focus should be on the development of the individuals so as to overcome their shortfalls and how to build a well trained professional who is not only theoretically sound but is comparatively more effective and successful in the practical implementation of the learning's gained in his/her situations. (Sarda, Sharma and Mal 2013). More and more management graduates are labeled as unemployable. When management education was introduced in India, MBA was a degree which ensured that one is getting a graduate who knows the know how of running the business. It was taken for granted that the business acumen of this graduate will be higher than that of other graduates.

Competency = Knowledge + Skills + Attitude

Management education can only develop competency when over all KSA is developed. One can not ignore the role of faculty and their experience has a direct impact on the Management Education and its quality. (Kishore and Majumdar). To bridge the gap learning has to be more in synched or linked with corporate development, there has to be partnership between business and business development, the real time scenarios needs to be the centre of the learning experience and therefore a regular and active involvement of corporate with the academics is way to go (Ghoshal, Sumantra 1992)

Management education needs to blend in the diversity, international quality and performance standards, leadership and continual development of the faculty with respect to teaching methodology, developing syllabus and doing more of industry based research to sharpen the management education standards. (Prachi Srivastava June 2013). There is dire need to bring in the nurturing mode of evaluation where in the area to development / improvement is identified and is constantly worked on so as to develop the individual and ensure their progressive growth not only based on theoretical knowledge but also their learning, capability to perform a task, take decisions and identify and solve problems in future. (Attar Rabbani December 2013). In order to develop better students our faculty also should undergo training and research so as to keep them selves updated and to be able to bring in the industry- academia blend in the classroom and in their teaching methodologies. Some of the enablers for research are : developing a more learning society, improved industry and academia connection, incentivizing quality research by faculties, regular monitoring and evaluation, public private partnership and many more. This blending of research with industry needs will lead to better teaching styles and an updated knowledge base that can be correlated with the syllabus. (J D Singh August 2013). Management education should be transformational. Ideally, management should be a lifelong process and not a just two year class room learning for better placement opportunities.

The transformational effect of management education will only emerge when the learning shifts its centre of gravity from being theoretical to action based/oriented. The key challenges that Indian Management education is facing currently are: well trained professionals except the few like IIM and IIT, Highlighting the importance of interpersonal interactions and soft skills, and last but not the least meeting quality standards to achieve successful human resource creation and management. (Maharishi, Niharika, Arora, Lokesh, Chaturvedi, Richa, January 2013)

Three important aspects that should be incorporated in Management education:

- Vision to create talented individuals of the corporations
- A curriculum fitting to understand the environmental dynamics
- Quality management of the program

It is important to reinvent the management education and its ideology so as to synergize it with the global standards of quality and ever changing dynamics of the business world around us. (Baral Jun 2013).

Revitalizing the management education from the perspective of stake holders; which would majorly be the students, corporate and the nation at large. All management education institutes needs to rethink their mission and vision statement to incorporate what they wish to achieve through their respective institutions. Involvement of government regulators, corporate houses, international perspectives, global issues and international standards are a must to turn around the Management education in India. (Kumar, Manoj, Jha, Shweta June 2012).

3. Research Objective

- To identify the perceived skill gap between the corporate rating and the students self assessment on skill set of B-Schools graduates
- To recommend working solutions for bridging the gap between the graduates self-assessment and the corporate assessment of B-School graduates.

4. Conceptual Framework

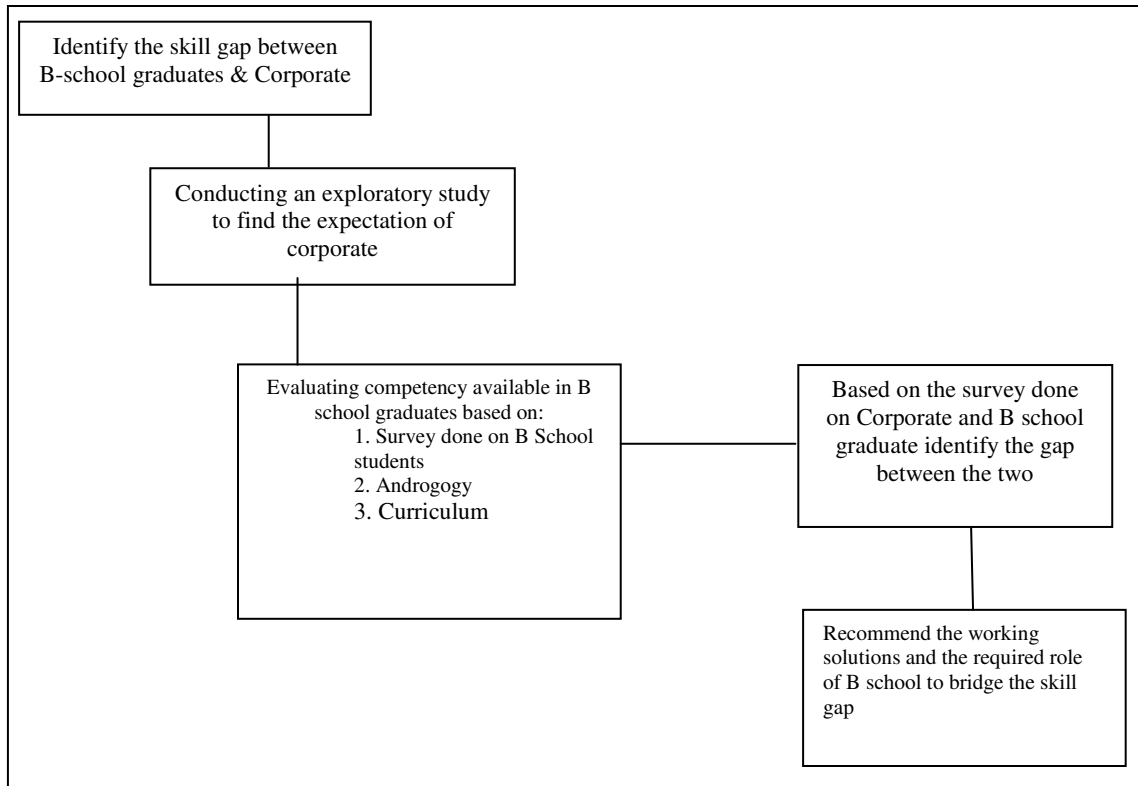


Figure 1

5. Research Methodology

The research methodology followed is primary data and secondary data is used to find the related literature. An exploratory research was conducted to identify the skill sets required in a management students. Taking the same variables a questionnaire was drafted, validated and data was collected from management students based on the perceived skill sets they possess. The data was further analysed using SPSS and using different statistical tools.

5.1. Sampling

In this research paper, the entire population consists of B- school students and the corporate that have recruited the students of B-schools in Mumbai City. But the potential respondent’s students (elements) are selected from known business school and the Corporate that have recruited these students. The sample size is 50 corporate who have recruited these fresh B-school graduates and 112 students from final year b-school in Mumbai City.

5.1.1. Measurement of Instrument

A questionnaire was drafted to identify the skill sets based on five variables identified interpersonal skills, communication skills, attitude, decision making and problem solving and ethics. A five point likert scale was used to measure these variables. The demographics in form of gender, specialization and basic graduation was used to identify the skill sets. The reliability of the instrument was found

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.996	15

Table 1: Reliability of the questionnaire used for the corporate survey Reliability Statistics

Source: Authors calculations based on primary data

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.742	.770	15

Table 2: Reliability of the questionnaire used for the student survey Reliability Statistics
Source: Authors calculations based on primary data

5.1.2. Sample Description

In the given sample of students the percentage of sample for males is 66% and Female is 34%. In the specialization category the statistics of student from marketing are 36%; finance are 33%, human resources are 20%, operations are 6% and from IT are 5%. In Graduation BA, BBA, and BMS are 40%, B Com are 33%, BE, B. Sc, BCS are 20% and 7% are from other streams.

6. Data Analysis and Findings

6.1. Hypothesis Testing for Variables of Skills by Corporate

Variables	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Inter-personal skills	50	4.0952	3.91142
Communication	50	4.0595	3.80064
Attitude	50	4.0714	3.86858
Ethics	50	4.1429	3.91781
Decision making & Problem Solving Skills	50	4.1518	3.84198
Valid N	50		

Table 3

Source: Authors calculations based on primary data

With reference to table 3 the highest mean score of 4.1518 has been revealed for decision making & problem solving skills and ethics which has a mean score of 4.1429 which is very close which implies that corporate have rated students highest on the above two skill sets. The decision-making and problem solving skills that have been rated highest.

Reasons for the same could be: that the admissions of B-school students are based on assessment of certain identifiable competencies and during course of the 2 year MMS program student's decision making and problem solving skills are improved.

6.1.1. Hypothesis Testing for Variables of Skills on Students

HO: There is no significant relationship between Skills sets and Gender

H1 : There is a significant relationship between Skills and Gender

Independent Samples Test						
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	
Interpersonal skills	Equal variances assumed	.076	.783	-.323	110	Accepted
	Equal variances not assumed			-.326	76.959	
Communication skills	Equal variances assumed	1.770	.186	-1.197	110	Accepted
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.251	84.334	
Attitude	Equal variances assumed	2.356	.128	-.575	110	Accepted
	Equal variances not assumed			-.632	96.003	
Decision making & problem solving skills	Equal variances assumed	.040	.842	-.263	110	Accepted
	Equal variances not assumed			-.262	74.211	
Ethics	Equal variances assumed	.656	.420	-1.258	110	Accepted
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.324	85.909	

Table 4

Source: Authors calculations based on primary data

HO: There is no significant relationship between Skills and Gender

H1 : There is a significant relationship between Skills and Gender

As the Sig t Value is less than .05 we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis i.e. there is no significant relationship between Gender and Skills.

The value of t is -.323 and the Sig t value is .783 as the t value is less than sig value we accept the null hypothesis. There is no relationship between the Interpersonal skills and the gender. The value of t is -1.197 and the Sig value is .186 as the t value is less

than sig value we accept the null hypothesis. There is no relationship between the Communication skills and the gender, i.e there is no variation between communication skills in females and males.

On similar basis other variables like attitude, decision making & problem solving and ethics are also scoring hence it is proved that there is no significant relationship between attitude, decision making & problem solving and ethics and gender.

Also it is studied that no significant relationship between the female skill sets and the male skill sets. Reasons for the same could be that the admissions of B-school students are based on assessment of certain identifiable competencies.

Hypothesis:

H0a: There is no significant relationship between Specialization and skill sets. H1a: There is a significant relationship between Specialization and skills sets.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Interpersonal skills	Between Groups	1.738	4	0.434	1.403	0.238	Rejected
	Within Groups	33.142	107	0.31			
	Total	34.88	111				
Communication	Between Groups	1.025	4	0.256	0.84	0.503	Null Accepted
	Within Groups	32.654	107	0.305			
	Total	33.679	111				
Attitude	Between Groups	1.526	4	0.382	0.994	0.414	Null Accepted
	Within Groups	41.092	107	0.384			
	Total	42.618	111				
Decision making and problem solving skills	Between Groups	2.758	4	0.689	1.974	0.104	Null Accepted
	Within Groups	37.365	107	0.349			
	Total	40.123	111				
Ethics	Between Groups	1.795	4	0.449	0.495	0.739	Null Accepted
	Within Groups	96.919	107	0.906			
	Total	98.714	111				

Table 5: Anova (Analysis of specialization)

Source: Authors calculations based on primary data

The above table states that f value is 1.403 is more than the significant f value i.e. .238, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis i.e. there is a significant relationship between Specialization and Interpersonal Skills . The above table states that f value is more than the significant f value for the variables communication, decision making, attitude and ethics we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis i.e. there is a significant relationship between Specialization and Communication Skills. The above table states that f value is .495 is more than the significant f value i.e. .739, we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis i.e. there is a significant relationship between Specialization and Ethics.

Hypothesis: Graduation and Skill sets

H0a: There is no significant relationship between skill sets and Graduation.

H1a: There is a significant relationship between skill sets and Graduation.

Variables		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Interpersonal skills	Between Groups	0.621	3	0.207	0.653	0.583	Null Accepted
	Within Groups	34.259	108	0.317			
	Total	34.88	111				
Communication	Between Groups	0.407	3	0.136	0.44	0.725	Null Accepted
	Within Groups	33.271	108	0.308			
	Total	33.679	111				
Attitude	Between Groups	1.429	3	0.476	1.249	0.296	Null Accepted
	Within Groups	41.189	108	0.381			
	Total	42.618	111				
Decision making and problem solving skills	Between Groups	2.587	3	0.862	2.481	0.065	Null Accepted
	Within Groups	37.536	108	0.348			
	Total	40.123	111				
Ethics	Between Groups	0.93	3	0.31	0.342	0.795	Null Accepted
	Within Groups	97.784	108	0.905			
	Total	98.714	111				

Table 6: Anova

Source Authors calculations based on primary data

The above table states that f value is .653 is more than the significant f value i.e.583, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis i.e. there is a significant relationship between Graduation and Interpersonal Skills, Graduation and Attitude Graduation and Decision making & problem solving skill . The above table states that f value is .440 is less than the significant f value i.e. .725, we accept the null hypothesis there is no significant relationship between Graduation and Communication Skills also there is no significant relationship between Graduation and Ethics.

7. Findings

During the research the statistical analysis of primary data collected by the corporate and the students does establish the gap between the competencies self assessed by students and rated by the corporate.

According to corporate assessment, decision making & problem solving skills along with ethics scores maximum which leads us to reason that interpretation of knowledge to solve every day real time problems with integrity is what helps B-school graduate to carve a niche and make an impact at work place.

Also as per the Table 5 it is evident that choice of specialization has a significant impact on the interpersonal skills, communication skills, decision making & problem solving skills. This comes as no surprise since depending on the specialization different aspect of competencies gets developed. For e.g. a Marketing specialization B-School graduate will be comparatively high on communication skills when compared to other specialization graduate where as an Operation specialization B-school graduate would be high on decision making & problem solving skills. Similarly in Table 6 graduation has a significant relationship with the interpersonal skills, communication skills, attitude and decision making & problem solving skills. Depending on the graduation these skills get developed and the student's competency evolves. For e.g. a student who is an engineering graduate will have higher decision making & problem solving skills as compared to an arts graduate. At the same time Table 4 indicates that gender has no significant relationship on the identified competency skill set. B-school graduates are selected on the basis of pre defined competencies and certain parameters of aptitude and hence it is safe to nullify the significance of gender in this scenario.

8. Conclusion

Global job opportunities require global professionals. Now is the time to take account of our B-School graduates and the kind of job opportunities that await them. Indian global market has raised the bar and therefore we need to identify the skills that are lacking and holding our B-school graduates back from exploring the new heights of quality professionalism.

Graduation plays an important role in future competency development at the same time the choice of specialization also hones in the various competency of an individual. Competency development by itself is not enough; the interpretation and integration of knowledge is what adds value to the B-school graduates. Ethical value system and informed decision making are the key skills sets that are desired by the corporate. B- Schools need to incorporate different approaches that will evolve these aspects and develop them through innovative pedagogy and regular updating of syllabus so as to bridge the gap between the desire and delivery.

9. Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to bridge the gap between corporate rating and the students self assessment on skill set.

- Innovative Pedagogy: to bring in the real time learning in the classroom we must explore beyond the realms of classroom boundaries and explore innovative approaches like use of technology, role reversal, more of industry projects.
- Bring in more participation of the corporate in our teaching methods so as to be able to synch our teaching as per industry needs
- Make learning more desirable so that student engagement is high and they are more committed to the learning rather than forcing it through traditional norms and methodologies which are significantly outdated.

We need to meet the industry needs and not just academic criteria to ensure we are developing quality B- School graduates who are not only strong conceptually but are also capable logically, strategically and ethically.

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