

## **Service Quality in Higher Education-Employers' Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

On numerous occasions, it is understood that prospective graduates are experiencing difficulties in securing jobs. The requirement of the skills and competencies in global organizations are going on changing. This particular study aiming to assess the expectation and perception of employers on employability skill sets. It may help the higher educational institutions to reframe the curriculum to prepare the role ready or industry ready graduates for the workplace. In this study, it was found that the graduates are not having sufficient subject and analytical knowledge, and also not competent enough to apply the conceptual knowledge at the workplace. Hence, it is suggested that the educational institutions can concentrate on developing the subject-pedagogy by reviewing the curriculum and assessment with employers' feedback.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Employability Skill Sets, Expectation, Perception and Workplace.

### **1. Introduction**

Education is "the aggregate of all the process by which a person develops ability, attitudes and other forms of behavior of practical value in the society in which he lives". One of the basic functions of education is to cultivate people to meet the needs of the labour market. Education is a triangular process. At one end there is the educator, on the other end is the educand and still on the other end is society. Education in India is a hoary tradition from the gurukuls of 200 BC, the ancient Buddhist Viharas, the medieval Maktabs and Madrasas, finally down to the modern education system – a direct result of the British rule. According to University Education Commission of India "Education is the great instrument of social emancipation, by which democracy establishes, maintains and protects the spirit of equality among its

members". The objective of education is geared towards enhancing and enlarging capabilities by building different dimensions of well-being, self-image and self-worth which in turn help individuals to be less vulnerable to the variations within a given context.

In today's world, higher education has become a huge service industry. It is important for the institution to satisfy their customers because a satisfied customer is a loyal customer and a source of future revenue. Higher educational institutions should ensure that all service encounters are managed to enhance consumer perceived quality. This study looks at employers as one of the customer groups of education whose needs must be addressed and satisfied. The employability of graduates is becoming an increasingly important topic within higher education. Graduate prospects are also a key determination of university league ranking. Thus, it is important for universities to better understand employer skills requirements, so that their graduates can better meet those requirements. This study provides a conceptual framework for understanding what employers think about the value of graduates with similar educational credentials in the workplace (their employability), using insights from the new institutionalism. In this framework, the development of employers' beliefs about graduates' employability is broken into a number of factors and measured for the study purpose.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

On several occasions, it is understood that the graduates are facing difficulties in securing jobs. Even if they secure jobs they find it difficult to sustain and succeed in their workplace. It is believed that the curriculum offered by the higher educational institutions provide only with the theoretical knowledge. Claims with regards to the unresponsiveness of higher education to the changing needs of the nation's workforce are mounting. The literature indicates that graduates are leaving from the college without the necessary skill sets required at the workplace. Increasing opportunities in globalization and a severe thrust in information technology industry have made the employability skills more crucial. Previously, the assessment of skills and competencies of graduates were from the perspectives of supplier market i.e. territorial curriculum, domestically framed higher education policy and locally motivated culture and learning. Today's learning environment is steadfast, very different and often across borders. The demand for graduate skills and competencies are from demand side. The requirements of the skills and competencies in global organizations are going on changing. Keeping abreast of the situation, the researcher felt that it is more pertinent to make an attempt to identify the potential workplace skills required for the graduates. Hence, this particular research study has been undertaken by the researcher.

### **1.2. Research Questions**

The research questions that provided the basic framework for this study were as follows:

1. What employability skills, are the employers expecting from the graduates to enter in to the labor market?

2. What employability skills, are the employers find to be lacking when the graduates enter in to the labor market?

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

The following are the objectives of the study

1. To identify the employability skill sets mandatory for the graduates.
2. To examine the employers' perception on skill sets of their employees.
3. To explore the employers' expectation on skill sets for their employees.
4. To analyze the gap between expectation and perception of employers regarding employability skill sets.

### **1.4. Scope of the Study**

Today's graduates must be able to relate the curriculum taught in their perspective work environments via the integration of curriculum into the workplace. Employers want to know whether the prospective job candidates can think, solve problems, make decisions and make up the application of gained knowledge. This study focuses to identify the employability skills required for the graduates to work in the organization. Such employability skills can be integrated in to the curriculum for cultivating the required human capital. This particular study aims to assess the expectation and perception of employers on employability skill sets may help the higher educational institutions to reframe the curriculum to prepare the role ready or industry ready graduates for the workplace.

## **2. Research Methodology**

### **2.1. Research Design**

This study is empirical and analytical in nature. Field Survey technique and online method of data collection has been employed to collect the primary data. Scientifically designed and structured questionnaire was administered to the employers of affiliated colleges of Bharathiar University for the collection of data. The literature review served as a basis in designing the instrument for the data collection.

### **2.2. Area of the Study**

Bharathiar University in Coimbatore has been chosen for the study, which comprised 107 affiliated colleges<sup>1</sup> of which 96 were Arts, Science and Commerce Colleges and 11 are Management Institutes. In addition, there were 29 Research Institutes affiliated to this University. The population for the study was the recruiters visiting the affiliated colleges of Bharathiar University.

### **2.3. Sample Description and Size**

There are 107 Arts & Science Colleges affiliated to Bharathiar University, which were categorized as follows.

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of Bharathiar University 2015.

**Table 1-Total Number of Affiliated Colleges of Bharathiar University**

S.No	Colleges	Number
1.	Government	6
2.	Aided Autonomous	11
3.	Aided Non-Autonomous	5
4.	Self-Financing Autonomous	10
5.	Self-Financing Non Autonomous	72
6.	Constituent	3
	Total	107

*Source: Annual Report of Bharathiar University 2015-16*

Among the colleges listed above only 30% of the colleges were selected on the basis of stratified random sampling method as mentioned in the table below.

#### 2.4. Sample Size of Colleges

**Table 2-Total Number of Selected Affiliated Colleges of Bharathiar University**

S.No	Colleges	Number	Sample
1.	Government	6	2
2.	Aided Autonomous	11	3
3.	Aided Non-Autonomous	5	2
4.	Self-Financing Autonomous	10	3
5.	Self-Financing Non Autonomous	72	21
6.	Constituent	3	1
	Total	107	32 <sup>2</sup>

*Source: Bharathiar University Annual Report 2015-16*

For the selected 32 colleges, the lists of recruiters who have come for placement were prepared from the information provided in the websites of the concerned colleges. From the list prepared, it is understood that the total number of recruiting companies are 275 in number. From the frequency table prepared, it was also understood that most of the recruiting companies have visited two and more than two colleges during the study period. The researcher has decided to consider those recruiting companies as the sample for the study

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<sup>2</sup>30% of 107 =32.

which is 81 in number. Multi stage stratified sampling technique is adopted for the study purpose.

### 2.5. Sources of Data

- Questionnaire has been framed to collect the primary data from the respondents.
- Secondary data have been collected from various sources like Journals, Magazines, Textbooks, Websites etc., for the study purpose.

### 2.6. Statistical Tools

The average score analysis and weighted average score analysis is used to analyze the data.

### 2.7. Limitations

1. The employers are not ready to reveal the name of the educational institutions from where they have selected their employees. Therefore, in-depth analysis based on the background of the educational institutions was not carried out. Only the generalized findings are given.
2. The employers visited to the colleges affiliated to Bharathiar University alone are considered for the study purpose due to time and cost constraint.

## 3. Review of Literature

### • Service Quality

**Gordan Paul (1993)** examined service quality perceptions in the transportation industry. The study analyses the theory about service quality conceptualization. A modified SERVQUAL instrument is developed, and applied to the inter-city bus industry. The investigation critically analyses SERVQUAL, an instrument authorized by Parasuraman, Zeithami, and Berry. The service quality factors for the transportation industry viz. readiness or reliability, trust, comfort, security and access are identified. They are examined in terms of the impact of customer's overall quality perception and their willingness to recommend the firm to be a friend. These variables are found to be affected heavily by two dimensions namely trust and comfort. They concluded that SERVQUAL is a good starting base to quantify service quality.

### • Service Quality in Higher Education

**Firdaus Abdullah (2006)** compared the relative efficacy of three measuring scales of service quality (namely HEDPERF, SERVPERF and the moderating scale of HEDPerf-SERVPERF) within a higher education setting. He aimed to determine which instrument had the superior measuring capability in terms of uni-dimensionality, reliability and validity. Tests were conducted utilizing a sample of higher education students and concluded that HEDPERF scale resulted in more reliable estimations, greater criterion and construct validity, greater explained variance and consequently were a better fit than the other two instruments. Finally, a modified five-factor structure of HEDPERF is put forward as the more superior scale for the higher education sector.

**Chau (2004)** has assessed the perception of quality in higher education of the school of Business Management, Ryerson University, Toronto-Canada, using the input-process-output (IPO) framework. This study supported the fact that different groups of customers have different perspectives of quality. Students' perspective of quality falls into mainly the process (46.56%) and output (46.56%); parents seemed to think that quality should be in terms of input (46.52%) and output (46.52%); faculty's perspective of quality focus on all aspects of their activities, i.e., input-process-output; and the employers considered quality in terms of process (41.27%) and output (58.73%). The students suggested that the improvements should be done in the process of educational system to achieve quality output. Some of the suggestions mentioned were caring professors, provision for various support services for students, provision for a variety of advising services, participation in curriculum design, and encouragement for lifelong learning. They also noted that there is a large variation in terms of quality teaching, such as contents, feedback, and assessment to inspire learning. For most quality dimensions, students expect more than what they perceive the school would provide. Using the paired t-test, this study indicated that all the dimensions except reliability were significant. Moreover, the study showed that all the quality dimensions are primarily related to the educational process of the IPO framework.

**Faganel and Macur (2003/04)** conducted a case study at the faculty of management, Koper, Slovenia by using the SERVPERF model (i.e., an instrument used to measure perception of performance only) in order to identify the most important quality dimensions. They concluded that students and professors understand quality differently. Students' understanding of service quality can be described with two factors consisting of several items. The first factor includes four out of five quality dimension, i.e., reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy; while the second factor which is less important consists of only one quality dimension, i.e., tangibles; which is less important in understanding quality and do not influence students satisfaction as much as others. On the other hand, the academic staffs understand quality in different ways than the students. They recognize five different quality dimensions which differ from the Parasuraman et al. They find (1) attention to students, (2) being regular and timely in informing students about services, (3) realization of planned services and students' suggestion, (4) attractiveness of study materials and other service materials, and (5) service performance in time as the most important determinant of quality, respectively.

- **Employers' Expectation and Perception from Higher Education**

**Prof. Matthias Pilz (February 2016)** in his book, explored how the Indian education and training system prepares young people for the world of work and for the requirements of the employment market because India is a leading industrialized nation with a very young population and a high demand for a skilled workforce. The virtual absence of a formalized system of vocational training in India underlines the importance of this research.

**Lee Harvey (2010)** in his article addressed one aspect of the 'New Realities' of higher education: the Employer-Higher Education Interface. It explored the development of the 'employability' agenda in higher education, examined the nature and implication of organizational change for graduates and assessed what attributes graduates are required in the next decade. Flexible organizations need flexible and increasingly empowered employees; that in turn calls for transformative and empowering learning. The way that higher education might address this, particularly in the context of lifelong learning, is explored.

**T. Hillman Willis and Albert J. Taylor (2010)** in their study explored the question of how business employers perceive the quality of today's college graduates. Sample survey data obtained from business organizations are presented. In general, a significant proportion of businesses do not perceive a difference in the quality of schools based on employee performance. A ranking of required skills is presented and the implications for colleges and universities are discussed.

#### **4. Analysis & Interpretation**

##### **4.1. Identification of Employability Skills**

The employers' expectation of graduate's employability has been evidenced in many literatures Harvey et al, (1997 cited in Holden and Jameson, 2002; Mason *et al*, 2003). The research literature indicates that the employability skills and attributes pertaining to the potential employees should be integrated within the curriculum (eg de la Harpe et al 2000, Knight and York 2002). So, employability skills should be delivered through higher educational institutions through curriculum. To conduct this study utmost care was required in framing the dimensions as well as in identifying the factors that were required to evaluate the employability skills. Based on the available literature, employability skills pertaining to the graduates have been identified to evaluate the employers' perception and expectation. These statements were found to be consistent with the studies of (Lankard 1990; Carnevale et al., 1988; Clark 1992; Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia 1997; Adamson, Harris & Hunt 1998; Carnevale et al. 1988; Koffel, 1994). The group of constructs and its relative variables identified were administered for pilot study as detailed in Chapter I. These constructs were demonstrated through 5-point Likert scale, and their relative variables were exhibited in the form of statements. The following factors have been identified as the constructs for employability skills.

- Foundation Skills
- Technical Skills
- Teamwork Skills
- Workfare Skills

Table 1 showed the manifestations relating to Reliability of the Scale. The results showed that all the values were above 0.7, which provided internal consistency of the scale and its reliability (Sekaran, 1992). The high Cronbach's alpha values generated for each dimension

indicated that the modified SERVQUAL scale is an efficient measure of the perception and expectation of employability skills among the employers.

#### 4.2. Reliability analysis - Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

Cronbach's alpha is a measure used to assess the reliability, or internal consistency of a set of scale or test items. In other words, the reliability of any given measurement refers to the extent to which it is a consistent measure of a concept, and Cronbach's alpha is one way of measuring the strength of that consistency. The reliability of Cronbach's alpha is presented below.

**Table 1-Reliability Statistics**

S.No	Dimensions	Cronbach $\alpha$
1.	Curriculum	.779
2.	Foundation Skills	.824
3.	Technical Skills	.776
4.	Teamwork Skills	.728
5.	Workfare Skills	.814

These five factors and the related 43 statements were administered with the employers' in the form of a questionnaire. In order to determine the gap, the five constructs in the questionnaire were represented in the form of perception and expectation statements. Finally, the gap of SERVQUAL in terms of employability skills from the perspective of employers' was measured. The Questionnaire was administered with 81 employers who have recruited the graduates from the colleges affiliated to Bharathiar University through the campus placement.

#### 4.3. Analysis of Recruitment Variables

**Table 2-Influencing Factors during Recruitment**

S. No	Factors	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
1.	Type of the institution studied	175	2.16	4
2.	Academic Qualification	101	1.25	3
3.	Academic Performance	110	1.36	2
4.	Work Experience	180	2.22	5
5.	Family background	193	2.38	6
6.	Willingness to work across the country	257	3.17	1



From the above Weighted Average Score Analysis, it is understood that while recruiting graduates, the employers are giving first priority for the factor “willingness to work across the country”. “Academic Performance” was ranked as second priority, “Academic Qualification” was ranked as third, “Type of the institution studied” was ranked as fourth, “Work Experience” was ranked as fifth and “Family background” was ranked as sixth.

Hence, it is divulged that the employers are expecting the graduates to work across the country. The employers are not much concerned about family background and work experience.

#### 4.3. Analysis of Curriculum Skills

**Table3-Employers' Mean Gap Score on Curriculum**

Dimensions	Statements	Mean		
		Perception	Expectation	Gap
Curriculum	The college has to offer domain specific graduates (Banking, Insurance, Accounting, Nano Science, etc.).	3.642	3.84	<b>-0.198</b>
	The graduates should be equipped with sufficient subject knowledge.	2.741	3.235	<b>-0.494</b>
	They should remember the main principles and procedures which they have been learnt during their period of study	3.284	3.519	<b>-0.235</b>
	The graduates should apply the knowledge of concepts and principles in their workplace.	3.358	4.086	<b>-0.728</b>
	The Curriculum must develop the skill sets of the students as per the requirements of the career.	3.432	3.778	<b>-0.346</b>
	General Knowledge about local and global affairs of the graduates must be developed.	3.111	3.407	<b>-0.296</b>
	The Examination system and the weightage of marks should help in assessing the graduate's caliber.	2.79	2.716	<b>0.074</b>
	<b>Overall Curriculum Gap</b>	<b>22.358</b>	<b>24.581</b>	<b>-2.223</b>

The above table indicates employers' mean gap score on curriculum. While analyzing the mean gap score, a gap was found between the expectation and perception for the statements like “the graduates should apply the knowledge of concepts and principles in their workplace

(-0.728)", "the graduates should be equipped with sufficient subject knowledge (-0.494)", "the curriculum must develop the skill sets of the students as per the requirements of the career(-0.346)", "general knowledge about local and global affairs of the graduates must be developed (-0.296)", "they should remember the main principles and procedures which they have been learnt during their period of study (-0.235)". **Among these the highest gap (-0.728) was found for the statement "the graduates should apply the knowledge of concepts and principles in their workplace".** The Lowest gap (-0.198) was found for the statement "the college has to offer domain specific graduates (Banking, Insurance, Accounting, Nano Science, etc.)". There is a no gap for the statement "the examination system and the weightage of marks should help in assessing the graduate's caliber (0.074)" which reveals that caliber of graduates is correctly evaluated through the examination system conducted by the higher educational institutions. The overall curriculum gap is -2.223.

#### 4.4. Analysis of Foundation Skills

**Table 4-Employers' Mean Gap Score on Foundation skills**

Dimensions	Statements	Mean		
		Perception	Expectation	Gap
Foundation skills	The respective job specific skills are must for the graduates.	3.63	4.086	<b>-0.456</b>
	The graduates should be good in oral & Written Communication Skills.	3.321	3.272	<b>0.049</b>
	The literacy knowledge relating to numeric and quantitative aspects should be good.	3.272	3.901	<b>-0.629</b>
	The graduates should have basic computer skills.	3.889	3.975	<b>-0.086</b>
	They should have the capacity to analyze and solve problems in the organization.	3.16	4.037	<b>-0.877</b>
	<b>Overall Foundation Skill Gap</b>	<b>17.272</b>	<b>19.271</b>	<b>-1.999</b>

The above table shows employers' mean gap score on foundation skills. While analyzing the mean gap score, a gap was found between the expectation and perception for the statements like "they should have the capacity to analyze and solve problems in the organization (-0.877)", "the literacy knowledge relating to numeric and quantitative aspects should be good (-0.629)", "the respective job specific skills are must for the graduates (-0.456)". **Among these the highest gap (-0.877) was found for the statement "they should have the capacity to analyze and solve problems in the organization".** The Lowest gap (-0.086) was found for

the statement “the graduates should have basic computer skills”. There is a no gap for the statement “the graduates should be good in oral & Written Communication Skills (0.049) which explains that the employers are satisfied with the graduates communication skills”. The overall foundation skill gap is -1.999.

#### 4.5. Analysis of Technical Skills

**Table 5-Employers' Mean Gap Score on Technical skills**

Dimensions	Statements	Mean		
		Perception	Expectation	Gap
Technical skills	The graduates must possess strong technical knowledge.	3.346	3.728	<b>-0.382</b>
	They should apply technical skills in their workplace.	3.37	3.605	<b>-0.235</b>
	Effective use of technologies by the graduates is essential.	3.272	3.593	<b>-0.321</b>
	They should welcome the chance to learn and use a new technology.	3.321	3.63	<b>-0.309</b>
	<b>Overall Technical Skill Gap</b>	<b>13.309</b>	<b>14.556</b>	<b>-1.247</b>

The above table indicates the employers' mean gap score on technical skills. While analyzing the mean gap score, a gap was found between the expectation and perception for the statements like “the graduates must possess strong technical knowledge (-0.382)”, “effective use of technologies by the graduates is essential (-0.321)”, “they should welcome the chance to learn and use a new technology (-0.309)”. **Among these the highest gap (-0.382) was found for the statement “the graduates must possess strong technical knowledge”.** The Lowest gap (-0.235) was found for the statement “they should apply technical skills in their workplace”. The overall technical skill gap is -1.247.

#### 4.6. Analysis of Teamwork skills

**Table 6-Employers' Mean Gap Score on Teamwork skills**

Dimensions	Statements	Mean		
		Perception	Expectation	Gap
Teamwork skills	The graduate should be a good team member and encourage collaboration.	3.494	4.284	<b>-0.79</b>
	They should have passion towards learning from others.	3.321	3.914	<b>-0.593</b>
	They should be capable of listening to others in a team.	3.395	4.074	<b>-0.679</b>
	The graduate should share their knowledge with others and are willing to train others in their area of expertise.	3.333	3.963	<b>-0.63</b>
	They should possess excellent leadership skills to lead others in the team.	3.346	4.123	<b>-0.777</b>
	The graduate should be a good problem solver and troubleshooter in a team.	3.173	3.914	<b>-0.741</b>
	<b>Overall Teamwork Skills Gap</b>	20.062	24.272	<b>-4.21</b>

The above table explains the employers' mean gap score on teamwork skills. While analyzing the mean gap score, a gap was found between the expectation and perception for the statements like "the graduate should be a good team member and encourage collaboration (-0.79)", "they should possess excellent leadership skills to lead others in the team (-0.777)", "the graduate should be a good problem solver and troubleshooter in a team (-0.741)", "they should be capable of listening to others in a team (0.679)", "the graduate should share their knowledge with others and are willing to train others in their area of expertise (0.63)". **Among these the highest gap (-0.79) was found for the statement "the graduate should be a good team member and encourage collaboration"**. The Lowest gap (-0.593) was found for the statement "they should have passion towards learning from others". The overall teamwork skill gap is -4.21.

## 4.7. Analysis of Workfare skills

Table 7-Employers' Mean Gap Score on Workfare skills

Dimensions	Statements	Mean		
		Perception	Expectation	Gap
Workfare skills	The graduate should be punctual to the organization.	3.444	3.926	<b>-0.482</b>
	They should work confidently.	3.235	3.963	<b>-0.728</b>
	Positive work attitude should be shown by the graduates.	3.173	4	<b>-0.827</b>
	The graduates should be capable of managing time. (Time Management Skills)	3.272	4.037	<b>-0.765</b>
	They should plan and execute task independently.	3.272	4.062	<b>-0.79</b>
	They should be adaptable to develop new skills and update old ones.	3.358	4.173	<b>-0.815</b>
	The graduates should come up with new ideas.	3.222	3.901	<b>-0.679</b>
	They should choose appropriate information to address problems.	3.321	4.012	<b>-0.691</b>
	The graduates should be courteous to clients and colleagues.	3.296	4.025	<b>-0.729</b>
	The graduates should be flexible to adapt to the situations of the work place.	3.247	3.914	<b>-0.667</b>
	They should not hesitate to work extra hours when required.	3.42	4.136	<b>-0.716</b>
	They should work comfortably in cross culture differences.	3.358	4.123	<b>-0.765</b>
	They should have ability to cope with work pressure and stress.	3.284	4.062	<b>-0.777</b>
	The graduates should observe professional and general ethical standards.	3.21	3.852	<b>-0.642</b>
	Decision making skills are essentials for the graduates.	3.148	3.691	<b>-0.543</b>
	They should be capable of coping with uncertainty and complexity.	3.321	3.778	<b>-0.457</b>
	They should dress appropriately for	3.296	3.852	<b>-0.556</b>

their profession.			
They should be capable of self-management.	3.247	3.951	<b>-0.704</b>
They should be honest and sincere in the work.	3.172	3.802	<b>-0.630</b>
They should have ability to accept the mistakes.	3.284	4.012	<b>-0.728</b>
The graduates should have social awareness.	3.309	4.012	<b>-0.703</b>
<b>Overall Workfare Skills</b>	68.889	83.2837	<b>-</b> <b>14.394</b> <b>7</b>

The above table shows the employers' mean gap score on workfare skills. While analyzing the mean gap score, a gap was found between the expectation and perception for the statements like "positive work attitude should be shown by the graduates (-0.827)", "they should be adaptable to develop new skills and update old ones (-0.815)", "they should plan and execute task independently (-0.79)", "they should have ability to cope with work pressure and stress (-0.777)", "they should work comfortably in cross culture differences (-0.765)", "the graduates should be capable of managing time (-0.765)", "the graduates should be courteous to clients and colleagues (-0.729)", "they should have ability to accept the mistakes (-0.728)", "they should work confidently (-0.728)", "they should not hesitate to work extra hours when required (0.716)", "they should be capable of self-management (0.704)", "the graduates should have social awareness (-0.703)", "they should choose appropriate information to address problems (-0.691)", "the graduates should come up with new ideas (-0.679)", "the graduates should be flexible to adapt to the situations of the work place (-0.667)", "the graduates should observe professional and general ethical standards (-0.642)", "they should be honest and sincere in the work (-0.63)", "they should dress appropriately for their profession (-0.556)", "decision making skills are essentials for the graduates(-0.543)", "the graduate should be punctual to the organization (-0.482).

**"Among these the highest gap (-0.827) was found for the statement "positive work attitude should be shown by the graduates".** The Lowest gap (-0.457) was found for the statement "they should be capable of coping with uncertainty and complexity". The overall workfare skill gap is -14.3947.

#### **4.8. Analysis of Workplace Attributes**

Skilled, highly qualified employees are hard to find and even harder to keep. In today's tough job market, successful companies need to reduce their overhead and expenditures while keeping a lean workforce of top professionals. There are several important workplace

attributes that successful companies normally pay attention while recruiting the employees for their organizations. Perception and expectation about such workplace attributes are analyzed and interpreted in the following table.

**Table 8-Employers' Mean Gap Score on Workplace Attributes**

Dimensions	Statements	Mean		
		Perception	Expectation	Gap
Workplace Attributes	Knowing about the organization is very important for the graduates.	3.432	4.062	<b>-0.63</b>
	The graduates should uphold company reputation.	3.235	3.889	<b>-0.654</b>
	They must be loyal to the organization.	3.296	4.148	<b>-0.852</b>
	They should take instructions and directions from the higher officials.	3.432	4.074	<b>-0.642</b>
	They should have ability to operate in an international and multicultural context.	3.049	3.889	<b>-0.84</b>
	The graduate should involve in other activities like sports, dance, music, etc.,	3.321	3.74	<b>-0.419</b>
	Status of the Graduates and social background is important for the job.	3.037	3.358	<b>-0.321</b>
	Ethnic race and culture of the graduate is significant.	3.074	3.333	<b>-0.259</b>
	The graduate should be graduated from the reputed educational institutions.	3.099	2.988	<b>0.111</b>
	<b>Overall Workplace Attributes</b>	29.975	35.481	<b>-1.506</b>

The above table shows the employers' mean gap score on workplace attributes. While analyzing the mean gap score, a gap was found between the expectation and perception for the statements like "they must be loyal to the organization (-0.852)", "they should have ability to operate in an international and multicultural context (-0.84)", "the graduates should uphold company reputation(-0.654)", "they should take instructions and directions from the higher officials (-0.642)", "knowing about the organization is very important for the graduates (-

0.63)", "the graduate should involve in other activities like sports, dance, music, etc (-0.419)", "status of the Graduates and social background is important for the job(-0.321)",. **Among these the highest gap (-0.852) was found for the statement "they must be loyal to the organization"**. The Lowest gap was found for the statement "ethnic race and culture of the graduate is significant (-0.259)". There is no gap found for the statement "the graduate should be graduated from the reputed educational institutions" which reveals that employers are satisfied in this aspect as they are recruiting graduates from the reputed educational institutions only. The overall workplace attributes gap was -1.506.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. Findings based on the Recruitment Variables

- While analyzing the employers' perception about recruitment variables it is understood that the employers are expecting the graduates to work across the country. The employers are not much concerned about family background and work experience of the graduates.

### 5.2. Findings based on the Objectives

#### 5.2.1. The second objective of the study is **to examine the employers' perception on skill sets of their employees.**

It attempts to answer the following research question, which were sequentially answered to satisfy the second objective.

1. What employability skills, are the employers find to be lacking when the graduates enter in to the labor market?

#### Foundation Skills

- The employers mean perception score is high (3.889) for the statement "the graduates have basic computer skills". It is low (3.16) for the statement "they have the capacity to analyze and solve problems in the organization". It is understood that the graduates are good in basic computer skills whereas they are not having the analytical capacity to solve problems pertaining to their work.

#### Technical Skills

- The employers mean perception score is high (3.37) for the statement "they apply technical skills in their workplace". It is low (3.272) for the statement "they welcome the chance to learn and use a new technology". It is understood that the graduates are good in applying the technical skills at their workplace where as they are not showing interest to update their technical knowledge which is very much essential in the present day context.

#### Teamwork Skills

- The employers mean perception score is high (3.494) for the statement "the graduate is a good team member and encourages collaboration". It is low (3.173) for the statement "the graduate is a good problem solver and troubleshooter in a team". It is understood that the graduates are having the capacity for being a good team member in



a team and supporting collaborative activities where as they are not having capacity to negotiate and solve problems at the workplace.

#### **Workfare Skills**

- The employers mean perception score is high (3.444) for the statement “the graduates are punctual to the organization”. It is low (3.148) for the statement “the graduates are having appropriate decision making skills”. It is understood that the graduates are punctual to the organization where as they are not having the capacity to make appropriate decisions at the workplace.

#### **5.2.2. The third objective of the study is to explore the employers' expectation on skill sets for their employees.**

It attempts to answer the following research question, which were sequentially answered to satisfy the second objective.

What employability skills, are the employers expecting from the graduates to enter in to the labor market?

#### **Foundation Skills**

- The employers mean expectation score is high (4.086) for the statement “the respective job specific skills are must for the graduates”. It is low (3.272) for the statement “the graduates should be good in oral & written communication skills”. It is understood that they are expecting more job specific skills rather than communication skills.

#### **Technical Skills**

- The employers mean expectation score is high (3.728) for the statement “the graduates must possess strong technical knowledge”. It is low (3.593) for the statement “effective use of technologies by the graduates is essential”. It is understood that among the technical skills analyzed the employers are expecting strong technical knowledge from the graduates rather than the effective use of technology.

#### **Teamwork Skills**

- The employers mean expectation score is high (4.84) for the statement “The graduate should be a good team member and encourage collaboration”. It is low (3.914) for the statements “They should have passion towards learning from others” and “the graduate should be a good problem solver and troubleshooter in a team”. It is understood that among the teamwork skills analyzed, the employers are expecting more from the graduates that they should be a good team member and support collaborative activities rather than a problem solver or a trouble shooter and passionate enough to learn from others.

#### **Workfare Skills**

- The employers mean expectation score is high (4.173) for the statement “they should be adaptable to develop new skills and update old ones”. It is low (3.691) for the statement “decision making skills are essentials for the graduates”. It is

understood that among the workfare skills analyzed, the employers are expecting more from the graduates that they should be adaptable for the changing environment rather than developing skills to make decisions at the workplace.

**5.2.3.** The third objective of the study is to analyze the gap between expectation and perception of employers regarding employability skills.

#### **Foundation Skills**

- The employers mean gap score is high (-0.877) for the statement “they should have the capacity to analyze and solve problems in the organization”. It is also proved from the low perception mean score for this statement. The employers mean gap is low (-0.086) for the statement “the graduates should have basic computer skills”. It is also proved from the high perception mean score for this statement. It is understood that the graduates are not having analytical capacity to solve problems pertaining to their work whereas they are good in basic computer skills.

#### **Technical Skills**

- The employers mean gap score is high (-0.382) for the statement “the graduates must possess strong technical knowledge”. It is proved from the high expectation mean score for this statement. The mean gap score is low for the statement (-0.235) “they should apply technical skills in their workplace”. It is also proved from the high perception mean score for this statement. The findings manifest that graduates are not possessing strong technical knowledge whereas they are applying the known technical skills at their workplace.

#### **Teamwork Skills**

- The mean gap score is high (-0.79) for the statement “the graduate should be a good team member and encourage collaboration”. It is understood that even though the employers perception regarding this statement is high, the mean gap score found to be higher because the employers are expecting more in this regard. The Lowest gap (-0.593) was found for the statement “they should have passion towards learning from others”. It is also proved from the lower mean expectation score for this statement.

#### **Workfare Skills**

- The employers mean gap score is high (-0.827) for the statement “positive work attitude should be shown by the graduates”. It shows that the employers are expecting more positive work attitude from the employees. The Lowest mean gap score (-0.457) was found for the statement “they should be capable of coping with uncertainty and complexity” which shows that the employers are not expecting more from their employees to deal with the uncertainty and with the situations of complex in nature.

#### **Curriculum**

Curriculum plays a crucial role in higher educational institutions to meet the academic standards as well as to meet requirements of the future employers. Therefore, curriculum design and framework is a vital aspect towards the measurement of service quality in higher education.

- The mean gap score on curriculum is high (-0.728) for the statement “the graduates should apply the knowledge of concepts and principles in their workplace”. It is also proved from the high expectation mean score for this statement. It is understood that the graduates are not capable of applying the conceptual knowledge at the workplace.
- The mean gap score on curriculum is low (-0.198) for the statement “the college has to offer domain specific graduates (Banking, Insurance, Accounting, Nano Science, etc.)”. It is also proved from the high perception mean score for this statement. From this finding it is evident that higher educational institutions are preparing the graduates with the domain specific knowledge.

#### 5.2.4. Workplace Attributes

- The mean gap score is high (-0.852) for the statement “they must be loyal to the organization”. It is understood that the employers are expecting loyalty from their employees.
- The mean gap score is low (-0.259) for the statement “ethnic race and culture of the graduate is necessary”. It is understood that employers are not considering ethnic race and culture of the employees at the time of recruitment.

### 6. Suggestions

The following are the suggestions made from the findings of the study.

- While analyzing the recruitment variables it was found that the employers are expecting the graduates to work across the country. So, it is suggested to the higher educational institutions to consider this aspect while developing the graduates as geographical mobility and vertical mobility is very much dependent on education and training.
- The higher educational institutions may investigate the students study habits and can formulate the strategies to enhance their academic performance and may motivate the graduates by knowing their abilities and competencies.
- The educational institutions can concentrate on developing the subject-pedagogy by reviewing the curriculum and assessment with employers' feedback. Moreover, the higher educational institution can communicate with employers about the nature of skills that they are expected to have in order to reduce the gap. The graduates should be encouraged to seek advice directly from employers regarding the skills they are likely to need in the workplace by conducting career guidance programme.
- Developing technical skills among the graduates will make them to feel more comfortable with all forms of technology. Hence, the higher educational institutions through technical education can enforce the graduates to develop and maintain strong technical skills. The government can also encourage arts and science colleges to offer job oriented programs.
- The higher educational institutions can also take steps to build team spirit among the graduates by assigning team projects and meaningful group exercises.

- In the educational institutions the student must be taught to look for the good at their workplace and with their co-workers. Training the students to look for the opportunities to have fun, developing the attitude to enjoy their job will definitely help to avoid negative work attitudes.
- It is suggested to the employers of the organization to take care of their employees best interests at heart, pay attention to their career path, give them opportunities to improve their well being and so forth in order to make them loyal to the organization.

## 7. Conclusion

A key theme emerging from the research was the fact that many graduates appear to be lacking in the relevant employability skills. Lack of skills is a serious problem and the skill gap indeed preventing employers from finding the talents they need. There is a strong confirmation of the notion that the graduates need better skills to do their jobs. The only option to solve this problem is, the academia has to collaborate with the industries to design the curriculum to groom ability of the graduates according to the industrial requirements. Industries that groom talent according to their business goals are best positioned to lead tomorrow's economy. A joint effort is needed on the behalf of the institutions, educators, students, industry and policy makers in order to provide curriculum that will better enable students to enter the workforce. Therefore, such changes in curriculum that allow for more integration of employability skills should be developed to better facilitate the students to the workplace. Moreover, the effectiveness of education relative to workplace skill preparation should be assessed continually in order to ensure its effectiveness.

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