

## Exploring the Dimensions of Employability Skills

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### Abstract

The modern workplace is characterized by rapid changes in technology, industry practices, and organizational structures, making employability skills crucial. In such a fast-changing competitive job market, individuals with strong employability skills catch the attention of employers. Possessing a specific set of skills and competencies apart from educational qualifications is essential for students to secure employment in this competitive scenario. This skill set varies across countries, leading to the development of diverse frameworks for employability skills, characterized by well-defined skills and attitudes. This paper specifically explores various dimensions of employability skills. The findings presented in this paper are drawn from secondary sources available across different countries and publishers. This manuscript aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the global landscape of employability skills. The results may prove beneficial for future studies, offering clarity in defining employability skills and their dimensions and career progression.

**Keywords:** Competencies; Employability; Employability skills; Employability frameworks

### 1. Introduction

With the ongoing evolution of technology, work processes, and global institutional dynamics; industries actively seek competent and skilled employees. Governments, businesses, and policy-makers link employability rates to the skill levels and competencies of Higher Education (HE) graduates, as these factors have an impact on the overall prosperity of nations [1-3]. The responsibility of educational institutions in developing employability skills is now a major focus as their role in preparing students is not just limited to academics only but also practically for the challenges of the professional world. Despite a rising trend in the annual demand for manpower, there is a simultaneous increase in unemployment rates. A substantial number of graduates are passing out from higher educational institutions, but not all are successful in securing employment. Industries encounter challenges while recruiting from a huge pool of educationally qualified graduates, indicating a mismatch between higher education curricula and industry needs. Recognizing this misalignment, there is an urgent call to integrate employability skills into higher education programs. This study is conducted

to meet the essential need for an in-depth understanding of employability skills and to define their dimensions through evidence-based findings.

### 2. Objectives of Study

The primary aims of this research study are to gain a comprehensive understanding of employability skills and the existing national and international frameworks. The main objective is to outline the diverse dimensions of employability skills.

### 3. Methodology

This study is exclusively based on an extensive review of existing literature on employability skills. A meticulous examination of journals, books, and periodicals has been done to achieve the research's objectives and to gather valuable insights and information. Consequently, all the information presented in this study is sourced from secondary data sources.

### 4. Review Of Literature

#### 4.1. Employability

Over the years employability has been approached through different dimensions. 'Employability' refers to one's ability to gain employment. According to the

Confederation of British Industry (CBI), employability encompasses attributes, skills, and knowledge essential for an individual in the current labor market. These qualities enable them to be

effective contributors in the workplace, benefiting not only themselves but also their employers and thus the broader economy [4] Table 1 shows Scholarly literature on definitions of ‘Employability’

**Table 1 Scholarly literature on definitions of ‘Employability’**

| <b>Authors</b>                             | <b>Definition of Employability</b>                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hillage & Pollard                          | “Employability refers to a person’s capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment if required” [5].                                        |
| T.N. Garavan                               | “The new form of the psychological contract between employer and employees” [6].                                                                                                            |
| L. Harvey                                  | “Employability relates to the property of students to obtain a job” [7].                                                                                                                    |
| UUK, Harvey, L. Locke, W. and Morey, A.    | “Employability is about how individuals engage with opportunities and reflect and articulate their skills and competencies” [8].                                                            |
| A. de Grip, J. Van Loo, and J. Sanders     | “The capacity and the willingness to be and to remain attractive in the labor market, by anticipating changes in tasks and work environment and reacting to these changes proactively” [9]. |
| M. Fugate, A.J. Kinicki, and B.E. Ashforth | “A form of work-specific active adaptability that enables workers to identify and realize job opportunities” [10].                                                                          |
| Rothwell, Jewell, & Hardie                 | “The perceived ability to get employment relevant to an individual’s qualification level” [11].                                                                                             |

Table 1, highlights the diverse definitions of employability employed by various researchers between 1998 to 2009 expressing their perceptions on employability.

#### **4.2. Employability Skills**

Employability skills are considered crucial in the modern workforce, as they play a pivotal role in individual success, and team dynamics, and thus enhance overall organizational effectiveness. They are often demanded by employers because they empower employees to navigate a dynamic and ever-changing work environment. Broadly, the term "employability skills" refers to a set of attributes, behaviors, and personal qualities that enhance an individual's ability to secure and succeed in employment. These skills extend beyond specific technical or job-related knowledge and are valued most across diverse professions and industries [12]. The scholarly articles on employment skills have been thoroughly examined and are enumerated below. As researchers have approached the concept of employability with diverse definitions based on the context of their studies conducted from 2000

onwards, there exists a variation that highlights a lack of consensus on a unified definition for employability skills [13]. These fundamental skills are essential not only for securing employment but also for excelling in and advancing within a job [14]. They play a crucial role in realizing one's potential and contributing effectively to an enterprise's strategic objectives [15]. Often referred to as soft skills, they represent a distinct set of capabilities that individuals bring to the workplace [16]. These encompass personal qualities, attributes, and commitment levels that distinguish an individual, even among those with similar skills and experience [17]. Employability skills constitute a combination of achievements, understandings, and personal attributes that enhance the likelihood of gaining employment and achieving success in chosen occupations [18]. These skills have broad applicability, cutting horizontally across all industries and vertically across all job levels, from entry-level positions to executive roles [19]. Described as essential for acquiring, maintaining, and advancing in a job, employability skills encompass general and non-technical competencies applicable to

various job types [20]. They center on graduates' capacities to adapt and leverage their personal and academic skills, enhancing employability and job success [21]. Beyond securing employment, these skills are pivotal for career progression and contributing meaningfully to an enterprise's strategic objectives [22]. In specific fields, such as engineering, employability skills entail the ability to apply engineering-related skills, knowledge, and personal attributes to secure and excel in employment within the engineering domain [23]. It is emphasized that individuals require a combination of transferable skills, technical skills, and subjective knowledge to thrive in their roles [24]. Employability skills, crucial for success, are not limited by industry or job level, spanning from entry-level positions to high-level profiles. They encompass a harmonious integration

of technical skills, specific to the job (hard skills), and non-technical, generic skills (soft skills). Employers place a significant emphasis on soft skills, asserting that they can cultivate technical skills as needed for their professionals.

#### 4.3. Dimensions of Employability Skills

Employability skills encompass various dimensions, representing the diverse elements that constitute these skills. Beyond specific or technical expertise, there are universal skills that are relevant across all industries. Various research articles categorize skills related to employability under different terms, including transferable skills, generic skills, necessary skills, core skills, and key competencies [25-27]. These skills are referred to by different names in different countries, as represented in the following table .

**Table 2 Scholarly Literature on the Terms Used In Various Countries**

| Country   | Terms Used                                                | Country           | Terms Used               |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| India     | Core Employability skills                                 | New Zealand       | Essential skills         |
| Australia | Key competencies, generic skills<br>employability skills, | Singapore         | Critical enabling skills |
| Canada    | Essential skills, employability<br>skills                 | Switzerland       | Trans-disciplinary goals |
| Denmark   | Process independent qualifications                        | United<br>Kingdom | Core skills              |
| France    | Transferable skills                                       | United States     | Foundation skills        |
| Germany   | Key Qualifications                                        |                   |                          |

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2003), Defining generic skills report. Table 2 describes the varied terminology used to represent generic skills in different nations.

#### 4.4. Skills Explored through Diverse Research

Many articles and papers have thoroughly examined a wide range of skills essential for gaining employment. Studies in 2010 on employability skills highlighted verbal reasoning, logical reasoning, soft skills, core employability skills, communication, and professional skills [28-29]. Scholars observed a

significant increase in several skills in studies done between 2012 and 2014, including problem-solving, and leadership skills along with presentation, and critical thinking skills. This expansion included the introduction of personal and behavioral attributes as a novel skill [30-32]. From 2014 to 2022, the proliferation of Information Technology tools further escalated the variety of skills to encompass earlier mentioned skills. Few researchers have emphasized technical skills too along with other basic and Higher-order skills [33-36]. These skill constructs include

higher-order thinking skills, people/social skills, self-perceived skills, affective skills, transferable skills, subject knowledge, digital generic skills, personal attributes, modern employability skills, career-related and teamwork skills, critical thinking skills, and communication skills.

#### 4.5. Global Conceptual Framework for Employability

Researchers at the international level have formulated a conceptual framework for employability skills, serving as a key reference in this manuscript.

**Table 3 Employability Skills as Discussed in International Frameworks**

| Country   | Skills    | Skills discussed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| USA       | 42 skills | <b>Applied Knowledge, Effective Relationships,</b> Workplace Skills, Resource Management, Information Use, Communication Skills, Systems Thinking, Technology Use [37]                                                                                                     |
| Canada    | 11skills  | Fundamental Skills, Personal Management Skills, Teamwork Skills [38].                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Australia | 8 skills  | Communication skills, Teamwork skills, Problem-solving skills, Initiative and enterprise skills, Planning and organizing skills, Self-management skills, Learning skills, and Technology skills [39].                                                                      |
| Malaysia  | 8 skills  | Communication skills, Critical thinking, Problem-solving, Teamwork, Leadership skills, Lifelong learning, Entrepreneurship skills, Moral and professional ethics [40].                                                                                                     |
| UK        | 9 skills  | Numeracy, IT skills, Communication skills, Teamwork, Research, Critical thinking, Creativity, Problem-solving, Organizational skills, Commercial awareness [41].                                                                                                           |
| China     | 9 skills  | Personal qualities, Basic knowledge, Skills, and Abilities, Honesty, Independence, Self-confidence, Adaptability, Enthusiasm Interpersonal relationships, Teamwork, Strain capacity, Problem-handling capacity, Leadership [42].                                           |
| Japan     | 9 skills  | Critical thinking, Problem-solving, Collaboration across networks and learning by influence, Agility and adaptability, Initiative and entrepreneurialism, Effective oral and written communication, Accessing, and Analyzing Information, Curiosity, and Imagination [43]. |

Table 3 unveils the number of skill constructs and the array of employability skills included in international frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the competencies that are valued globally in seeking employment.

#### Conclusion

The in-depth exploration of existing literature provides valuable insights into the dimensions of employability skills. To succeed in today's ever-changing job market, it is must to invest in building employability skills that meet the evolving needs of different industries and regions. Thus, the findings and empirical evidence presented in this paper hold

the potential to contribute significantly to defining employability skills and their dimensions in the context of India. This study accelerates further research efforts in the domain of employability skills, offering constructive perspectives and laying a foundation for future investigation in this highly significant area.

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