



Enhancing University Student Employability: The Impact of Teacher Development in Practical Skills Integration

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Abstract: This study, a collaborative effort between educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders, examines the impact of various dimensions on the employability of university students in business departments in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. We collected data from 210 students through structured questionnaires and analyzed using linear regression in Statistical Program for Social Sciences. The results demonstrate positive relationships between practical exposure, real-time case studies, hands-on training, industrial protocols, student communication skills, industrial backgrounds, digital skills, technical/practical skills, and employability. Theoretical implications emphasize the importance of holistic approaches to enhance employability by integrating diverse experiences into university curricula. Practical implications highlight the need for continued collaboration among educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to align educational programs with labor market demands. Limitations include the use of convenient sampling and self-reported data, while future research could explore additional factors influencing employability.

Key words: Employability, University students, Business department, Practical exposure, Skill development

1. Introduction

The demand for highly skilled and adaptable professionals is ever increasing in today's rapidly evolving job market. As universities strive to prepare students for successful careers, the role of teachers becomes pivotal in bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world employment requirements. This research explores the significance of teachers' development in practical skills integration and its impact on university students' employability (Colombari and Neirotti 2021). Integrating practical exposure, real-time case studies, hands-on training, industrial protocols, student communication skills, industrial backgrounds, digital skills, and technical/practical skills into the curriculum has garnered attention to enhance the employability of university graduates (Ebaid 2021). Students immersed in real-world environments gain a valuable understanding of the practical application of academic information and develop a contextual understanding of the challenges and solutions faced by real-world enterprises. Through hands-on learning, students may acquire the visual skills and knowledge required for success in their chosen sectors.

Students familiar with corporate conventions and processes can blend seamlessly and professionally. Students who want to interact with social circles or people in the workplace, collaborate with peers, and exchange ideas must have practical communication skills. Instructors can help students acquire these skills. In past industrial experiences, teachers enhanced student learning skills and prepared the students' first knowledge of industrial

exactions. Teachers can use technology to improve their pedagogy and assist students in gaining the digital skills that are required for today's industrial sector. The organisation finds the students with practical and technical skills that are highly important since they allow them to apply their academic knowledge to real-world circumstances. This study aimed to determine how teachers develop students' mindsets in these critical areas and how they relate. This study identifies how students incorporate and interpret practical skills into the curriculum to offer suggestions for more effective ways to involve students and help them prepare for the industry's ever-changing needs.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Practical Exposure

Practical exposure plays a crucial role in increasing undergraduate students' employability. It provides them with firsthand experience using academic knowledge in real-world scenarios (Doolan et al. 2019). When teachers' incorporate real-world experiences into the classroom, students gain valuable insight into industry practices, trends, and concerns. Students will get practical project experiences, internships, and field visits to enhance their knowledge and develop applicable skills (Winberg et al., 2022). This exposure develops critical thinking, flexibility, and problem-solving skills necessary for success in the industrial sector.

Hypothesis 1: Teacher's higher awareness of practical exposure opportunities is positively related to students' perceived employability.

Hypothesis 2: The incorporation of practical exposure into the curriculum is positively related to students' perceived employability.

2.2 Real-Time Case Studies

Time-based studies enable students to analyze and resolve industrial problems and bridge the gap between knowledge and real-world applications. When teachers incorporate practical studies into their classrooms, students are compelled to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life scenarios, which helps them develop analytical and decision-making skills (Winberg et al., 2022). Furthermore, exposing students to various classes from different industries broadens their horizons and prepares them for complex challenges in the workplace. Through real-world experience, students learn critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and communication (Gill, 2018).

Hypothesis 3: Teacher's greater awareness of real-time case studies is positively related to students' perceived employability.

Hypothesis 4: Incorporating real-time case studies into the learning process is positively related to students' perceived employability.

2.3 Hands-On Training

Practical training enhances employability by offering university students real-world experience and practical skills. Incorporating hands-on education into the curriculum can help students learn technical skills and improve their decision-making ability under challenging phases (Kleckner & Butz, 2021). Through hands-on activities, students have practical experiences while learning problem-solving, cooperation, and invention. Further, by exposing students to tasks and challenges similar to those they would encounter in the profession, practical training increases their sense of self-efficacy and confidence (Romgens et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 5: Teacher's increased awareness of hands-on training opportunities is positively related to students' perceived employability.

Hypothesis 6: Incorporation of hands-on training sessions into academic programs is positively related to students' perceived employability.

2.4 Industrial Protocol

Students must know industry standards and practices to thrive in their chosen field and transition into the tax system. When teachers include industrial legislation standards and best practices related to their subject in their curriculum, students learn about real-world scenarios (Mainga, Daniel & Alamil, 2020). Students can safely and honorably navigate the working world with this knowledge practice. In addition, introducing the industry laws cultivates the cultures of professionalism and ethical behaviour, preparing them to uphold industry standards and contribute significantly to the field. By assisting the student in adapting to the shifting demands of the company, the teachers integrate industrial ethics into their curriculum to help them thrive in the workplace (Damoah et al. (2021).

Hypothesis 7: Teacher's awareness of industrial protocols is positively related to students' perceived employability.

Hypothesis 8: The incorporation of industrial protocols into the curriculum is positively related to students' perceived employability.

2.5 Student Communication Skills

Proficiency in communication is the fundamental factor for college students' success in the workplace. Teachers play a critical role in fostering these skills and helping them develop these abilities through integrating research activities that focus on developing communication skills in the students (Kwarteng and Mensah (2022). Teachers help students develop the ability to explain ideas, collaborate with students, and generate information clearly and concisely. According to Mistry (2021) communication proficiency helps students thrive in the workplace overall and is more appealing to employers. Additionally, practical communication skills encourage participation, build a positive learning environment, and make meaningful discussion among students more accessible.

Hypothesis 9: Teacher's awareness of the importance of communication skills is positively related to students' perceived employability.

Hypothesis 10: The incorporation of communication skills training into academic programs is positively related to students' perceived employability.

2.6 Industrial Background

As per Shrestha (2021), professors who bring considerable industry knowledge and experience to the classrooms. Students comprehend the value and relevance of academic learning when professors apply their professional expertise to explain concepts, offer examples from real-world situations, and offer helpful guidance. Students' perspectives will improve and help them make informed judgments about their future employment when teachers with business experience teach them. This exposure exposes students to different perspectives, business practices, and professions. In addition, faculty with industry experience act as mentors and role models for their students, providing advice, connections, and networking opportunities that can support their career development (Kalogiannidis and Papaevangelou, 2020).

Hypothesis 11: Teacher's awareness of industrial backgrounds and their relevance is positively related to students' perceived employability.

Hypothesis 12: Incorporation of industrial background knowledge into the curriculum is positively related to students' perceived employability.

2.7 Digital Skills

College students must become proficient in digital abilities to succeed in contemporary jobs in the digital era. Teachers must ensure students are ready for the digital world by incorporating technology, digital tools, and learning methodologies into the classroom (Succi & Canovi, 2020). Through implementing programs like media presentations, online research, collaboration, and digital project management, educators assist students in gaining the technical skills and digital literacy required for success in the workplace. Distinct. Additionally, kids exposed to digital skills are more adaptable, innovative, and capable of solving problems, increasing their marketability. Teachers who include digital skills in their lessons enable their pupils to use technology for communication, innovation, and career success (Yıldırım & Kurbanoglu, 2022).

Hypothesis 13: Teacher's awareness of digital skills and their importance is positively related to students' perceived employability.

Hypothesis 14: The incorporation of digital skills training into academic programs is positively related to students' perceived employability.

2.8 Technical and Practical Skills

According to Kalogiannidis and Papaevangelou (2020) technical and practical skills are the foundation for university students who wish to enter the workforce, and instructors are crucial to their growth. Teachers allow students to learn and apply technical information and skills linked to their studies by integrating practical projects, assignments, and evaluations into their curricula. Students' desire to utilize popular equipment, technologies, and software in the business rises due to this experience, which helps them become proficient in using them. As per concerned of Kwarteng and Mensah (2022), teachers emphasize the program's ability to increase students' technical and practical skills, problem-solving abilities, attention to detail, and desire for further growth. Through the incorporation of both technical and practical skills into their instruction, educators equip students to handle the

challenges.

Hypothesis 15: Teacher's awareness of technical skills and their importance is positively related to students' perceived employability.

Hypothesis 16: The incorporation of technical skills training into academic programs is positively related to students' perceived employability.

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Sampling Details

The population for this study consisted of university students enrolled in business departments in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. This study used convenient sampling to float 400 questionnaires out of which a sample size of 210 university students was achieved. Convenient sampling was employed due to its practicality and ease of access to participants within the target population.

3.2 Study Type

This study adopted a causal, cross-sectional, and explanatory research design. A causal approach allowed for the investigation of cause-and-effect relationships between variables, while a cross-sectional design enabled data collection at a single point in time to provide a snapshot of the current situation. The explanatory nature of the study aimed to identify and explain the factors influencing university students' employability.

3.3 Data Collection

University students were given a structured questionnaire to complete for gathering data. This questionnaire collected information on practical exposure, time-based studies, practical training, industry standards, students' communication skills, industrial background, digital abilities, technical/professional skills, and perceived influence on the job.

3.4 Instrumentation

Employability was measured with three items adapted from the scale of Wittekind, Raeder and Grote (2009) and its reliability revealed as 0.76. However, all other variables were measured from two dimensions including awareness and incorporation (in teaching pedagogy and curriculum design and but evaluated as separate due to its nature. These variables were rated from the teachers from three dimensions including extra question on their efforts to get a grip on the relevant factor required to bridge industry-academia gap.

3.5 Data analysis

SPSS was used for analyzing mean values, comparisons and causality. The process involves several processes, such as cleansing the data, assessing measurement and structural models, and conducting hypothesis tests. The connection between the following was made: students' communication skills, industrial background, digital skills, time studies, practical training, industrial values, practical exposure, technology/work, and work utilizing linear regression. After interpreting the data, judgments are made on the implications for theory and practice.

4. Analysis

Firstly, descriptive statistics were performed in SPSS and revealed mean values on each factor required for future employability of the students. Results revealed marginally increased from an average value i.e. 3. This shows the weak position but not in danger. However, on some points in time, these values were less than 3 and this indicates serious problems on the part of teacher's awareness and failure to incorporate the said dimension into teaching pedagogies and curriculum design. For example, teachers' awareness on real-time case studies has mean value of 2.62 with high standard deviation of 1.27, which means situation is quite worse, and requires serious retrospection. Similarly, teacher's awareness on industrial protocols and incorporation into teaching pedagogies and curriculum design rated less than 3 requires serious attention.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Comparative Analysis

	Rated by Students			Self -rated by Faculty	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Correlation with Employability	Mean	Std. Deviation
Practical Exposure Awareness	3.5333	1.37348	0.130	4.37	0.74
Practical Exposure Incorporation	3.4476	1.13222	0.488**	4.22	0.80
Real-Time Case Studies Awareness	2.6238	1.27786	-0.066	4.15	0.81
Real-Time Case Studies Incorporation	3.3857	1.03932	0.481**	4.18	0.83
Hands On Trainings Awareness	3.3238	1.14912	0.564**	3.59	0.84
Hands On Trainings Incorporation	3.3476	1.12735	0.461**	4.03	0.81
Industrial Protocols Awareness	2.4381	1.14853	-0.259**	4.18	0.83
Industrial Protocols Incorporation	2.6667	1.16707	-0.87	3.85	0.94
Communication Skills Awareness	3.5857	1.19199	0.504**	4.26	0.71
Communication Skills Incorporation	3.2381	1.35917	0.084	4.07	0.78
Industrial Backgrounds Awareness	3.2381	1.42784	0.057	4.11	0.697
Industrial Background Incorporation	3.3667	1.12978	0.520**	4.03	0.85
Digital Skills Awareness	3.5286	1.14149	0.471**	4.18	0.83
Digital Skills Incorporation	3.1857	1.34797	0.046	3.96	0.81
Technical Skills Awareness	3.4000	1.15415	0.520**	4.296	0.72
Technical Skills Incorporation	3.3905	1.17791	0.531	4.18	0.73
Employability	3.2016	.95686	1	na	na

Students were asked to rate their perceived future employability and it revealed the mean value of 3.2 which is quite weak. It shows that after passing 4 years in the university they are still doubtful about the translation of the knowledge acquired in the university and the exposure provided through the teacher for their ability to be employable. Overall, this situation significantly demands special reconsideration of the curriculum design and teachers’ professional development. It is particularly noticeable that the same dimensions were self-rated by the teachers as well and surprisingly they rated themselves more than 4 mean value in most of the cases. It means that they are not aware of the opinion of students about themselves and their weakness. If you are not aware of the shortcomings, there is no question arises of the remedial actions. Despite human bias of high self-rating on own performance, still there is some consistency on some dimensions where mean value is rated less than 4 or low both by students and the teachers. For example, see awareness on hands on trainings, incorporation of digital skills and industrial protocols into teaching pedagogies and curriculum design. So this should be top of the list which revamping the curriculum or designing an intervention of professional development of the teachers.

Table 2 Results of Linear Regression

Variables	β	t value	Sig	R - Square	F Value
(Constant)	3.400	10.409	.000		
Age	.099	.505	.614	0.008	0.557
Gender	-.100	-.737	.462		
Degree	-.085	-.972	.332		
(Constant)	-1.915	-4.236	.000		
Age	.205	1.614	.108		
Gender	-.166	-1.869	.063		
Degree	-.060	-1.004	.317		
Practical Exposure Awareness	-.001	-.029	.977		
Practical Exposure Incorporation	.094	1.919	.056		
Real-Time Case Studies Awareness	.045	1.254	.212		
Real-Time Case Studies Incorporation	.148	2.882	.004		
Hands On Trainings Awareness	.178	3.757	.000	0.643	17.991
Hands On Trainings Incorporation	.093	1.969	.050		
Industrial Protocols Awareness	.102	2.118	.036		
Industrial Protocols Incorporation	.099	2.423	.016		
Communication Skills Awareness	.119	2.539	.012		
Communication Skills Incorporation	.069	2.118	.035		
Industrial Backgrounds Awareness	.117	3.797	.000		
Industrial Background Incorporation	.112	2.177	.031		
Digital Skills Awareness	.093	1.940	.054		
Digital Skills Incorporation	.088	2.627	.009		
Technical Skills Awareness	.113	2.250	.026		
Technical Skills Incorporation	.141	2.679	.008		

Results of linear regression analysis revealed R square value of for 0.643 that means variables included in the analysis explain 64.3 percent of variance in perceived student’s employability. Moreover, result revealed significant relationship of key variables identified as predicted as independent variables to predict students’ perceived employability, as results are significant (<0.5) for all variables except Practical Exposure Awareness and Real-Time Case Studies Awareness.

5. Conclusion

Each idea included in this study has significant theoretical ramifications for our comprehension of the factors influencing university students' careers. Research demonstrates the significance of several factors in preparing students to "shape" the workforce, including study time, practical training, industrial values, student communication skills, business development, digital abilities, and technical skills. This study contributes to the body of literature by demonstrating a favorable association between these factors and work while offering empirical proof of their influence when examining university students in Rawalpindi, Islamabad. To better prepare students for career success, these findings underscore the holistic character of the profession and the necessity for colleges to include a range of experiential and professional development initiatives in their curriculum.

Educators, legislators, and business representatives involved in the planning and executing of educational initiatives can all benefit from an understanding of adoption theory. Teachers may establish experiential learning opportunities that bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical applications by highlighting the significance of hands-on exposure, time-based learning, and hands-on training. The transition of students and staff can be facilitated, and their professional support can be strengthened by applying industry standards, improving

communication skills, and providing faculty development support. Furthermore, curricular changes and targeted interventions that define digital and technical/professional skills can better prepare students for the skills required by the digital economy. These real-world implications highlight the need for professionals, businesses, and policymakers to ensure that the curriculum supports the profession and adapts to the needs of the labour market.

5.1 Limitations

Although this research provides in-depth information, it must be acknowledged that it has several limitations. First, considering the context of students studying at the Universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, using a small sample size may reduce the generalizability of the findings (Tipton et al., 2017). In addition, using self-rated information from research can lead to bias and input from the public. In addition, the cross-sectional research design makes it difficult to determine the relationships between various variables, thus highlighting the need for longitudinal research to investigate the long-term impact of multiple factors (Cohen et al., 2017). Lastly, while appropriate for the current study, the research instrument, SPSS results, may have complexity and interpretation issues as scales used are self-developed and are not gone through rigorous psychometric tests required for ensuring reliability and validity.

Future research could expand the findings of this study by investigating other factors and variables, such as social background, work experience, and career counselling, that may influence college students' careers. Longitudinal studies can examine changes in job performance over time and determine how stable the impact is. Comparative studies between regions or academic institutions can also clarify employment differences and provide solutions to institutional or regional conflicts. Additionally, qualitative research methods such as focus groups and interviews can provide a better understanding of how students view and understand their work (Willis, 2008). Future research needs to clarify the complexity of the profession and develop treatments that have great potential to improve students' readiness to enter the job market.

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