

FACULTY PERSPECTIVES ON THE NEED OF BUSINESS ENGLISH FOR MANAGEMENT GRADUATES

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Abstract

Over the last five decades, management education has grown as a key contributor to the Indian economy. However, it has failed in providing quality talent to the industry. The skill-gap reflects the marginal availability of high-quality management education in India and the galloping pace of the country's service-driven economy. The demands of the business world necessitate a paradigm shift in the approach towards management education. The present paper is an attempt to stress the need of integrating Business English with the B-School curriculum thereby preparing the B-School graduates of the 21st Century for the professional workplace.

Keywords: Employability, Skill-Gap, Paradigm Shift, curriculum, Management Education

Introduction

As the industry expectations from the 'B-School products' are more towards 'skills' rather than 'domain knowledge', it has become essential for management graduates to imbibe certain soft skills which are crucial to their career. Soft Skills have become one of the deciding factors of placements. As employees are becoming more engaged in organizational decision-making, soft skills such as critical thinking and communication have assumed great importance. As educators, our endeavor is to equip the students with the skills and ability to address the issue with confidence and finesse.

The intake of most of the students in B- Schools is from all over India and the acumen of the English language is highly diversified. We live in an era when the written and the spoken word and also the nonverbal communication have become alarmingly important. They can make or break careers, contacts, and credit in the market place.

An integrated approach to management communication will make everyone more conscious about the need for effective communication. Language and expression are now perceived as a more significant component of every assignment. As we continue to review our strategies, we should look for further ways to develop the managerial communication skills needed in the contemporary global workplace.

The objective of the study:

The primary objective of the study is to analyze the faculty perceptions about the importance of communication skills for management graduates.

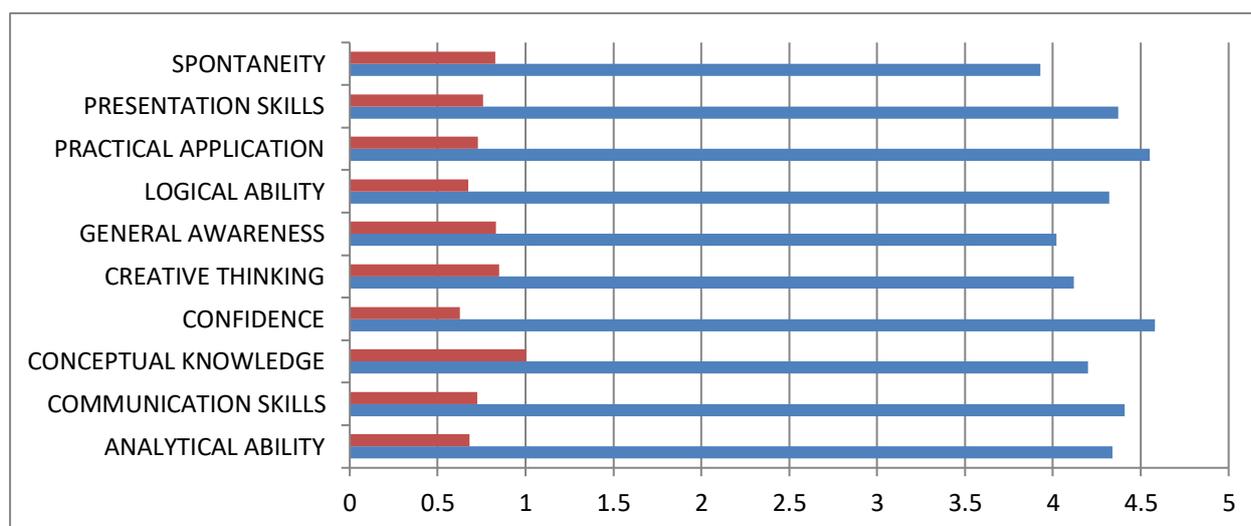
Research Methodology

The study was conducted on a population of 45 full-time faculty members teaching in the Business Schools in Hyderabad. These faculty members represent all the departments of business management studies. The study deliberately did not focus only on business communication instructors but on the faculty from other disciplines irrespective of the subject/course they taught. All the respondents had an average experience of 5 years.

The survey instrument was developed in three phases. In the second phase, a pilot study, using a group of 20 faculty members, was conducted. The results of the pilot study helped to refine the questionnaire and data-analysis techniques. In the third phase, the final version of the survey was administered. Subsequently, copies of the questionnaire were distributed to faculty members of management schools. The questionnaire focused on faculty perceptions about the important qualities of a management student, faculty perceptions about the importance of various components of business communication skills and other points of view. After receiving the completed questionnaires, responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Wherever ratings were asked, a five-point Likert scale was used, where 5 represented the most positive response and 1 represents the most negative response. The tool used to analyze the data is descriptive statistics.

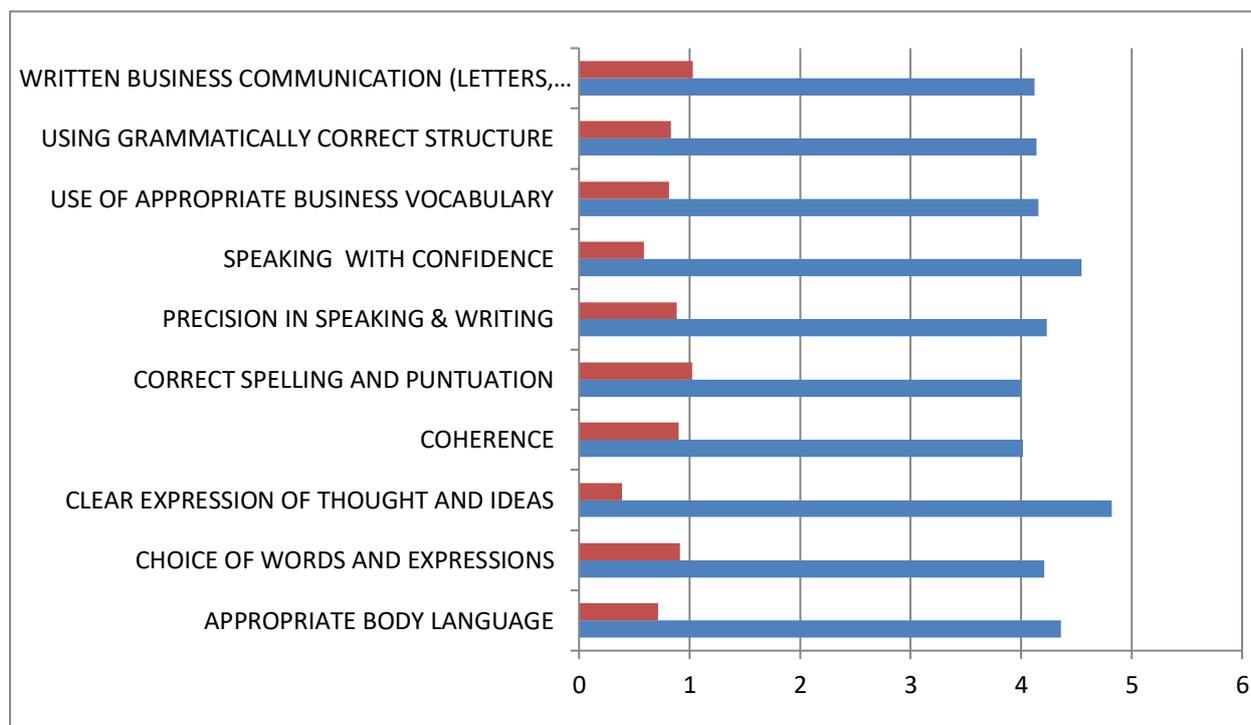
Analysis:

Table 1: In the first part of the questionnaire, faculty members were asked to rate the given skills on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important) as per their level of importance for a management graduate. The given responses are calculated on the mean values and standard deviation. The graphical representation in the form of Bar charts has also been given for a better understanding of the data.



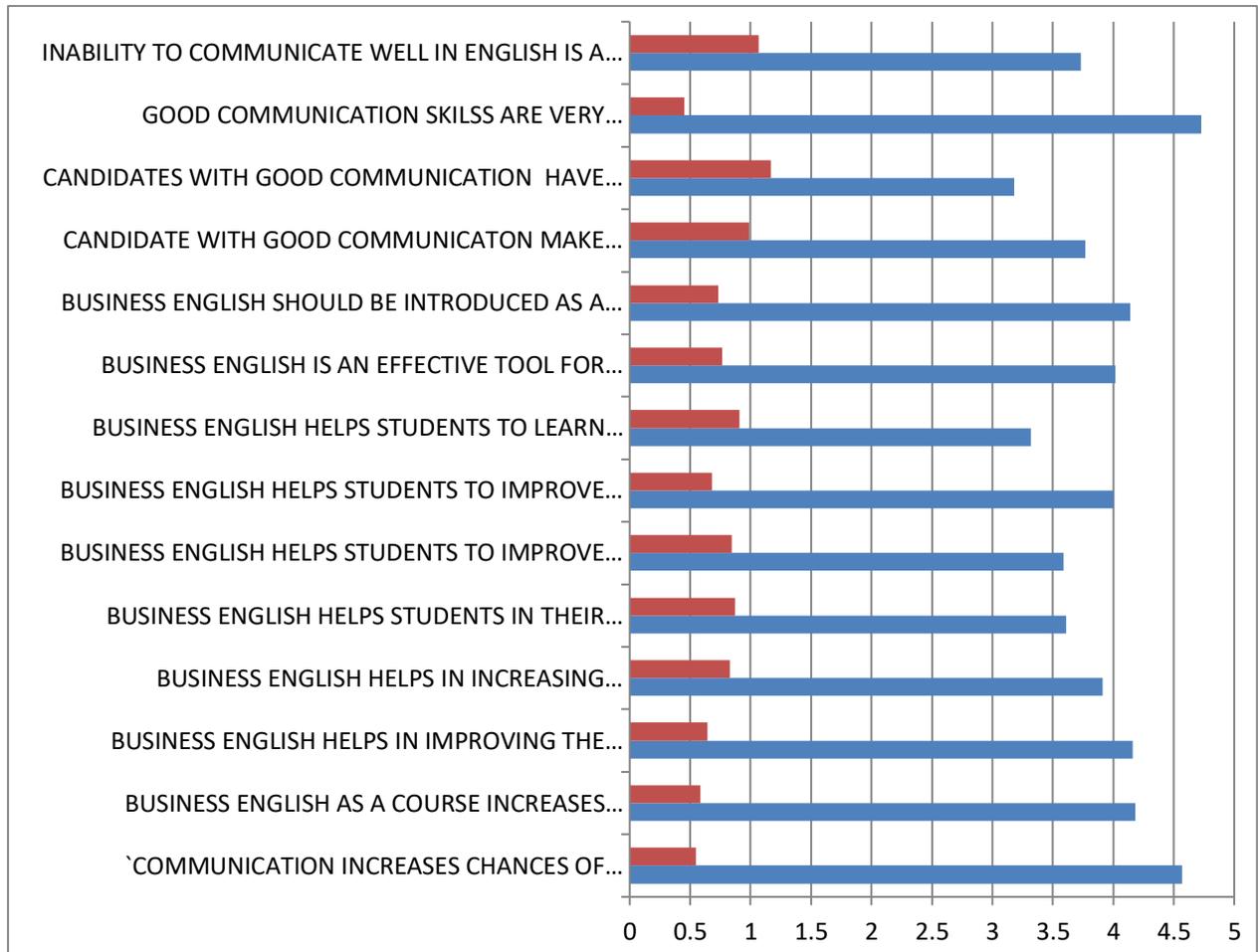
A look at table 1 shows that the qualities or skills found to be highly important for management students, as the faculty perceived, were confidence (M= 4.58) with the lowest standard deviation (0.626). It is followed by practical application (M= 4.55) and the standard deviation is slightly more in this component. Next comes Communication Skills (M=4.51) followed by presentation skills (M=4.37). What is worthy of mention is that communication and presentation skills appear at almost the top of the list which indicated their importance as perceived by the B School faculty members.

Table 2: In the second part of the table, respondents were asked to rate the following attributes of communication on a scale of 1 to 5



According to this outcome, a clear expression of thoughts and ideas is the most important attribute of communication with the highest mean of 4.82, followed by speaking with confidence with an average of 4.55. This choice coincides with the parameters indicated in table 1 where confidence is chosen as the most important attribute of a management student. Appropriate Body Language with the mean value of 4.36 takes third place. This implies that presentation skills assume great significance and similar opinion is expressed in Table 1. Presentation skills feature in the two factors that showed improvement as per the student responses in chapter 3. Using grammatically correct structure (4.14), written business communication (4.12), correct spelling and punctuation (4.02), and coherence (4.00) appear at the bottom of the table. This indicates that oral communication skills are given preference over written skills. This may be because these skills are generally assessed during the campus placement. It is generally assumed by the faculty members that writing emails, reports and others are required after the candidates join the corporate and not so much during the course of study. The table also indicates that all the components, in terms of their importance, had a mean value of >4 indicative of the fact that all the specified components are important for a business management student.

Table 3: The respondents were required to indicate their opinions about the statements by choosing the options like strongly disagree(1), disagree(2), neither agree nor disagree, (3) agree(4) and strongly agree. (5)



The mean values and the standard deviation indicate that most part of the sample strongly agrees that good communication skills are very essential for management students (4.73) and that communication increases chances of employability among management graduates (4.57). The next three statements that are almost uniformly agreed upon are that Business English as a course increases articulation and fluency in communication(4.18), Business English helps in improving the communication skills of management students(4.16) and that Business English should be introduced as a credit course in B schools(4.14) It is surprising to see that most respondents disagree that inability to communicate well in English is a major problem among management students(3.73). Time and again faculty expresses their dissatisfaction about poor language skills of the students either in their exam responses or during their placement. But that is not reflected in the questionnaire. Moreover, the population disagrees that Business English helps students to improve their performance in core subjects (3.59). This is a contrast to the opinion indicated by the management students who opined that Business English sessions helped them to improve their performance in the core management subjects.

Conclusion:

1. Confidence, Practical application, Communication skills, and Presentation Skills are the much-needed qualities of a management graduate.
2. Among the most desired communication skills are a clear expression of thoughts and ideas, speaking with confidence and appropriate body language.
3. Good communication skills increase confidence levels and the chances of employability among the management graduates.
4. Business English as a course helps in increasing the articulation and fluency, thereby enhancing the communication skills of the management students.
5. Business English must be introduced as a credit course in B Schools.

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