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**A STUDY ON THE EMPLOYABILITY SKILL GAP OF
ENTRY LEVEL PROFESSIONALS: AN INDUSTRY
PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract

In today's competitive scenario, getting a perfect and most suitable job for any fresh professional graduate is a major challenge. Every year professional students face many challenges and obstacles during job recruitment process. This research document discuss the various insight of the job provider or an organization owner that how much job-fit criteria is relevant and needed in fresh professional business graduate in various levels of business scenario. Feedback of various job providers on proficiency or skill they are taking into account as an important key point for appointing any fresh business graduate, validating their job responsibilities with business skills, is resembled with what is the actual set of proficiency is persist by a fresh business graduate of several higher education centres. With inclusion of comparison, this paper also explores various stages of centrality of various scope of capacities, needed for any fresh professional graduate which is expected by the employer's for working in different industry service-sectors. This difference in skill set acquired by a fresh business graduate and various set of skills expected by an employer is known as "Skill-set gap". Many researches had been conducted on this topic "skill-set gap".

This study outcome will highlight on this topic and provide guidance to various institutional education programs in preparing the fresh graduates to become more competitive and confident. A 'skill-set gap' between actual and expected is identified from this research work as final outcome can be a thunder-bolt for the current business education system and its syllabus in various program schemas. Our research work is basically constructed on the basis of several classifications of different employability

proficiency and skill needed in India's foremost work- relevant exploration. Our review study also shows that a vast amount of annoyance within employers with the quality of professional graduates and their performance at the practical industry level. The survey conducted in this study, depicts that employers who has hired fresh professional graduates in their industries, find them no worthy for some initial period of recruitment years in any of the organization where they are appointed as a employee, which clearly shows that the proficiency-skill an fresh business graduate is meager as we are aware that due to high dynamic job market changes, it raises the compulsory need of drastic changes in skill-set of fresh business graduate. Our research work will provide a valuable contribution in the areas of entry level professional's career growth, student's development at education centres, institutional education programs and industry employers.

Keywords: Skill, Competencies, Business, *Professional Development*, Professional Fresher, Employer, Institutional Programs.

1. INTRODUCTION

From the last thirty years, there is a tremendous growth in production in our country, because of well-trained manpower in information-driven domains. Our Country is fast growing globally and is having a competitive economy. After decades of being the uncompetitive, unchallenged and preminent personals of the industrial economy and of the free world, the Indian government was forced to become strong with its economies, political and military vulnerability. On the basis of recent review done in India, it has been found that the growth ratio in employment-zone was apparently increased in the previous year 2006-2014. Review analysis outcome shows that our India has achieved a second position in employment-zone. Our latest physical and manual recourses and future available manual resource is going to be a very wide spread amount it is compared with world's share market. Our research work is primarily engrossed on difference of several types of proficiency-skills set an fresh business graduate must have and a set of proficiency-skill set required by an employment-zone area, and this difference level directs the higher level of imbalance in the supply of graduates to industry. Many studies and research done in past (both private and public authorized agencies), will validate it. The employers placing weightage and importance of high degree on employability skills of fresh graduates has been mentioned and adequately formatted and structured through various review studies. Employees proficiency-skill are basically categorised in two aspect that are external aspect and internal aspect. External aspects are basically related on the choice of occupation and the internal aspect is basically related on his/her several interpersonal skills. In our work, we will represent the employers' perception of professional graduates' competency level of different organisation industry sectors. The presented analysis

mainly focuses on the employer's views on the relation between multiple competencies, skills, knowledge and performance of the fresh graduates based on Work (job) fit theory.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

From the various reports and studies conducted in past, it has been found that a fresh graduate who has recently passed out with his/her professional qualification do not have the capability to match with the expectation scale of an employer. Employer wants a jobseeker to demonstrate their range of potential skill set, attributes and talent at various levels of job requirement. This skill set mismatch in skill set expected by the employer and existing skill set in potential job seeker or fresh graduate makes employer much frustrated, A 'skill gap' between actual and expected is basically a result of lack in knowledge and course content, of institutional education courses.

It should be noted that country has enough potential and ability to deliver to the needs of universal job market, but the strong challenges of employability skills, specifically technical and practical skills needed by business graduates, becomes a hindrance for India's growth prospect. As we are aware, that if industries don't optimally utilise their available resources particularly the human resources, then the production will be hampered thus resulting in decline of country growth. Many studies had been conducted in India to understand the various employability skills of the fresh graduates. In the latest review outcome document it has been observed that 75% of overall passed fresh business graduate is not employed (as per the review of talent survey 2016). All over global review report outcome shows that 39% of the powerful job-providers faces too much difficulty in determining the difference in proficiency-skill set, and specially in our country India 66% of job-providing agency facing too much difficulty in identify the appropriate talent. All these obtained outcomes shows that there is strong need of enhancement in the education system contents, to improve the skills of an graduate so that they can compete and perfectly match with employer's expectation.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Performance of employee at their work place acts as an important key-factor in defining the continual growth of an organization and also its survival in this real competitive world. In the Recruitment & Selection process, both person job (work)-fit (P-J) and person-environment (P-E) is analysed by employer so as to ensure that the job-seeker is having required competency and is compatible and

adapts to the industry systems, processes and practices, which will further promote the job seeker to deliver the performance as expected by the employer. Form one of the study and survey report presented by a non-profitable organization known as edge foundation 2014, they found, that there is a lack of systematic practice and process to promote employability skills across the educational institutions. The common skill shortfalls identified were in communication; with internal and external clients, team management, application based technical and practical skills, client management, and the least skill shortfalls identified were in numerical and literacy skill. Employability skills are basically very common and generic set of skills but considered very highly important in supporting a professional when making his entry to industrial world.

Most of employer considers this employability skill as “CORE SKILL” or “GENERIC SKILL” or “TRANSFERABLE SKILL” or “NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS” or “KEY SKILL” or “SOFT SKILLS”, all these above mentioned terms reflects the same meaning and most employers expects that a fresh graduate must have this employability skill. In author analysed some employer’s satisfaction with specific type of job-skills of fresh business graduate of different regional universities in the India. Basically in their paper they had identified which skill set employers perceived as key skills when recruiting or hiring any employee or fresh business graduate.

4. OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

1. To assess the skill-set gap of fresh professional graduate’s which has developed in their academic process with respect to the expectations of industry.
2. To determine key employability kills expected by industry.
3. To determine the employability skill as listed below: Person environment theory, person to vocation, and person to job skill set.

5. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:

The Employability analysis is generally based on “Work-Fit” concept. Work-fit hypothesis reveals that an individual's character qualities will uncover understanding regarding his flexibility inside an association. The level of compatibility between the individual and the association is defined as Person-Environment (P-E) work-fit. Main motive behind this idea this P-E work-fit immovably established in the convention of Kurt Lewin's saying that $B = f(PE)$; conduct is an element of both individual and situation. A people's practices and perspectives are resolved together by close

to home and ecological conditions. At the individual side, attributes may incorporate interests; inclinations; aptitudes information, and capacities (SKAs); character characteristics; qualities; or objectives. On the climate side, attributes may incorporate professional standards, work requests, work qualities, authoritative dreams & cultures, and organization or gathering objectives. Different equivalents have been utilized to depict fit, including consistency, match, comparability and need satisfaction.

This person-Environment (P-E) work-fit review survey is basically concerned in adapting the employee (job-seeker) with four various stages or level of organizations environment.

1. **Person – Organization(P-O) fit**
2. **Person – Job(P-J) fit**
3. **Person – Person/Group (P-P, P-G) fit**
4. **Person –Vocation (P-V) fit**

Each of these subtypes of PE fit emphasizes different person and environment characteristics as relevant to employability analysis.

1. **Person – Organization fit (P-O)**

This first person-environment sub category depicts the adaptability with in organization and recently recruited employee where both of them is capable of sharing the common features for achieving or fulfilling each other requirements. The fundamental processes underlying PO fit is the concept of need fulfilment, where fit is determined by the extent to which the person's needs are met by the organizational environment or the organization's needs are met by the capabilities of the individual. The operationalization of P-O fit focus's upon measuring similarity between fundamental characteristics of people and organizations; majorly the congruence between individual and organizational mission & values & (Boxx, Odom, & Dunn, 1991; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Posner, 1992). Individual goal congruence with organizational leaders or peers goals (Vancouver & Schmit, 1991). And individual preferences or needs and organizational systems, policies and structures (Cable & Judge, 1994; Turban & Keon, 1993). Thus, PO definition includes examples of mutual need fulfilment, value congruence between individuals and organizations, personality similarity between individuals and other members of the organization, and shared individual and organizational goals. PO fit has also been called person-culture fit.

2. **Person-Job fit (P-J)**

The concept of person-job fit is the traditional foundation for employee selection (Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). Person-job (P-J) work fit sub-categories depicts the adaptability level of an

employee and a assigned work to him/her This definition includes compatibility based on employee needs and job supplies available to meet those needs, as well as job demands and employee abilities to meet those demands. The primary concern in employee selection has been with finding those applicants who have the skills and abilities necessary to do the job. Generally this person-job work-fit category represents the common characteristics between the requirements of job or work needed and the employee proficiency skill set. This category when applied to the individual will provide a result that depicts whether a selected employee is adaptable in an organization or inadaptable with the organization's job demands.

3. Person-Person, Person-Group fit. (P-P, P-G)

Person-group fit depends on the notion that position in the work requires interaction among employees. PG fit is, "the similarity degree of an employee personality with other members' personalities in the group." Ferris *et al* (1985) define person-group fit as similarity in the personality traits (Shin, 2005). PG fit identifies both supplementary and complementary aspects of fit necessary for successfully working with co-workers in a workgroup or a team (Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). Supplementary fit involves employees sharing similar attributes among their group members, whereas complementary fit is concerned with providing the skills and abilities that are not widely shared by other group members (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987. Thus, PG fit is defined most broadly as "the compatibility between individuals and their work groups" (Kristof, 1996). What constitutes compatibility, however, is a difficult question. Compatibility reflecting supplementary fit occurs when "a person supplements, exhibits, or possesses characteristics which are similar to other individuals in the environment" (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987:269). Supplementary fit is typically assessed as similarity on psychological characteristics such as values, goals, attitudes, or personality traits. Complementary fit often refers to a person possessing the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to meet job demands. Thus, PG fit can exist when one is similar to work group members on values (supplementary) or when one possesses job-relevant KSAs (complementary).

4. Person –Vocation fit (P-V)

This last Person-Environment (P-E)'s sub category reveals the affiliation between the person and the type of job they had chosen for themselves. Vocational interests of each individual differ according to one's personality types. Individuals person always has its own type of interest, attitude and personality. The idea that sparked person-vocation (PV) fit came from Frank Parsons, 1909 one of the earliest figures in vocational psychology, who believed

that people need a clear understanding of themselves and the environment in which they would should work so to be happy in their jobs and careers. Holland 1959, proposed a theory that divided interests and work .The main principle of the theory is that individuals search for work environments that allow them to express their vocational interests and associate with other people with similar interests. Furthermore, the interaction between the person's interests and the work environment's requirements is likely to influence job satisfaction and tenure. For example, if an employee is interested in the artistic domain, then he would be most likely to find satisfaction in work that has a large creativity component involved in tasks. If, however, his work environment is different with his interests, say he is working in a conventional orthodox environment that does not allow him to do creative work, and then he may express dissatisfaction with his job.

Thus, the Employability skill analysis is generally based on above categorised "Work (job)-Fit" sub-categories. Being job-capable is known as employability skill which is defined as a particular set of proficiency-skills which is must required for accomplishing any work or task assign by any organization. This skill-set is completely depend on the type of organization an individual is working and a most important key-point for selecting and deciding that whether a job-seeker is perfectly fit for the organization or not is considered as a set of skills needed to complete a task. It varies from one job to another and it is a yardstick to decide whether one person is fit for a task.

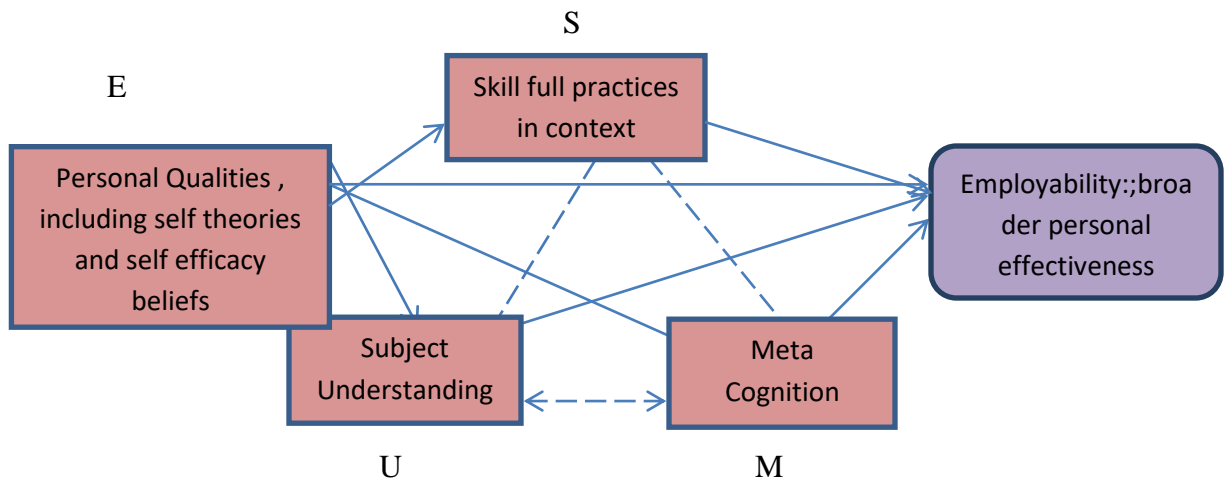
Dearing (1997) linked employability to the acquisition of skills for life. He recommended that higher education focus on key skills which were the 'key to the future success of graduates whatever they intend to do in later life'. Skills identified included: communication skills, numeracy, information technology, learning how to learn/personal development planning, problem solving and team works.

Knight and Yorke (2003) not only proposed a definition for employability but also a framework for embedding it into the curriculum. They suggested that there is a close relationship between employability and good learning and stressed that employability results from a blend of achievements in four broad areas. They represented this in their USEM model of employability, one of the best known and respected in the area of employability. Their model proposes four inter-related components of employability:

- Understanding (understanding of disciplinary subject matter , field of knowledge or specific discipline and how organisations work);

- Skilful practices (key skills and soft skills academic, employment, and life in general);
- Efficacy beliefs (reflects the learner’s notion of self, their self-belief, and the possibility for self-improvement and development);
- Metacognition (complements efficacy, embraces self-awareness, how to learn and reflection. It encompasses knowledge of strategies for learning, thinking and problem solving, and supports and promotes continued learning/lifelong learning).

Knight and Yorke say they developed this model ‘in an attempt to put thinking about employability on a more scientific basis, (Knight & Yorke, 2004, p 37.)



Our research work gives an brief analysis of different employability and proficiency skill set .The analysis is done by considering the Work (Job)-Fit hypothesis which is in practically based on the feedback collected by several job-providing organization using a Employability Skill based model (USEM).This is an very effective and dynamic model which uses the four basic categories of proficiency skill set also known as employability skill-set. The four classification of these employability skill-set are as follow:

- 1. Efficiency Level (E)**
- 2. Subject Understanding Level (U)**
- 3. Skill Levels (S)**
- 4. Meta-Cognition Level (M)**

These sub-categories (“E”, ”U”, ”M”, ”S”) can be mapped with major employability skill categories like “E- (Efficiency)” is mapped with P-O (Person-Organization) fit, P-G (Person-Group) fit, P-P (Person-Person) fit, ”U (Understanding)” can be mapped with P-V (Person - Vocation) fit,& P-J (Person-Job) fit categories, “M (Meta Cognition)” can be mapped with P-O (Person -Organization), P-G (Person-Group), and substituent “S (Skill)” can be mapped with P-P (Person-Person), P-O (Person -Organization), P-G (Person-Group). This above

mapping can be used to analyze the how each skill will be realized by the employer to assess the overall performance of the job seeker (employee). Fig (5.2) shows the relationship between different employability skills substituent with the employability skill analysis model.

For designing the above USEM model, an review of questionnaire has been conducted in 70 employer in several organizations available in various industrial zone in Maharashtra. In this review job-provider (Employers) was requested to specify the exact degree of priority they consider in every proficiency-skill set which should be persisted by any fresh business graduate willing to invade in various business positions. Several fresh business graduates who has been appeared and valuated in the organization’s recruitment procedure with in duration of 2010-2019 have been considered in this review process. The various rating of employers has been noted down based on five-point scale which is having arrange of 0 to 5 where 0 depicts the least significant skill-set and 5 depicts the (most significant skill-set). One can also read “0” as no skill set at all and 5 read as higher level of skill-set.

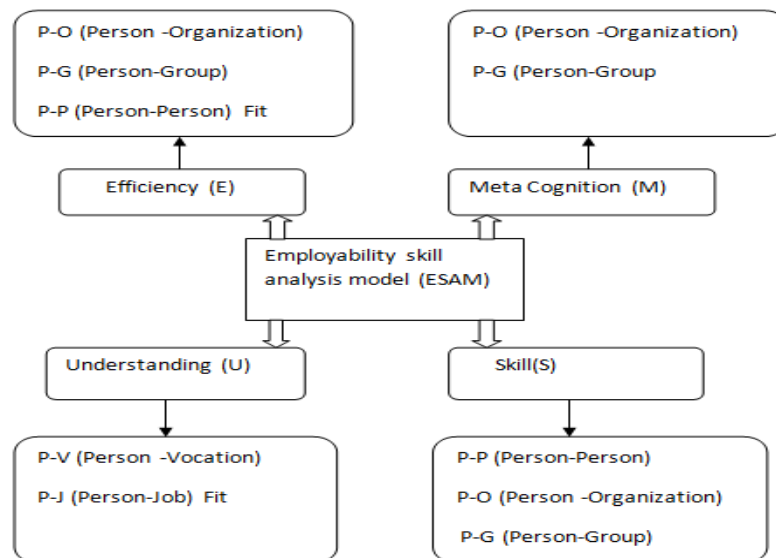


Fig (5.2) Mapping of USEM substituent with employability skill set

Although the actual proficiency skill-set was evaluated by the organization’s higher authorities by mean of their own assessment methods like conduction of self-assessment test based on the initial employment duration of fresh graduate in their industry and the evaluation score that an fresh graduate achieved in recruitment procedure and in the organization selection process. According to the feedback of various employers, the most wanted and handpicked proficiency skill-set are sorted and classified into below three groups:

(a)Personal

(b) Core

(c)Process

6. ANALYSIS OF RESULT:

The Employability skills considered for survey are generic and are listed following literature review. According to the review, out of the 50 Employability skills, the highly preferred 30 skills by employers were sorted out which is categorised into three groups as per the Work (Job) fit theory. At the Recruitment process, the employers evaluated the fresh professionals at three levels of Job fitness ; P-P (Person-Person) fit theory, P-V(Person-Vocation) fit theory, and P-J (Person-Job) fit theory and has been used to assess the employability skills of any fresh business graduate.

Assessment of Employability Skill-Gap based on expectation by industry and actual skills of the Fresh Business Professionals:

Below the Table 1, displays a list of various skills where there exists a gap between the industry expectation and the skills perceived by the fresh business professionals. Positive difference denotes higher expectation of industry from professionals while negative difference denotes higher level of skills attained by the professionals.

Skills such as Responsibility, Ethical thinking, Listening skills Adaptability to dynamic situations, market awareness, Honesty Competitiveness attitude; the fresh business professionals level is higher than the industry expectations. The findings depict the impact of living conditions and environment on the professional’s attitude. Whereas, in Critical analysis skills , decision making and motivation the industry expectations are higher , due to dynamic and complex business operations where goals needs to be met. These variations are majorly observed in the personal and core skills mapped to P-P and PV fit theory.

Table1: Variations in Personal and core skills of professionals and Industry expectations

Employability skills	Industry expectations(%)	Actual skills perceived in fresh professionals.(%)	Std Error Mean	
			Positive "t"	Negative "t"
Critical Analysis skills	95	75	20	
Decision Making	92	84	8	
Motivation	94	86	8	
Responsibility	80	95		-15
Ethical thinking skill	80	95		-15

Listening skills	70	90		-20
Adaptability to situations	80	95		-15
Market Awareness	80	96		-16
Sincerity & Honesty	85	94		-9
Competitiveness attitude	80	98		-18

In Table 2, shows the findings where skills such as; cross cultural knowledge, General knowledge, IT awareness and continuous learning approach, there is no significant difference in the industry expectations and level of fresh business professionals. This majorly happens as Globalisation paved way for job markets to open across states and nations boundaries, thus allowing migration of job aspirants barring cultural and language barriers. Also, since professionals are at early stages of their career, they have an open attitude for further learning's and industry are eager to impart them with knowledge.

Table 2: Skills where there is no variation in professionals and Industry expectations

Employability skills	Industry expectations (%)	Actual skills perceived in fresh professionals (%)	Std Error Mean	
			Positive "t"	Negative "t"
Cross Cultural Knowledge	90	88	2	
General Knowledge	92	90	2	
IT knowledge	86	84	2	
Continuous Learning attitude	93	94		-1

Table 3: Variations in skills where fresh professionals perceived skill are higher than industry expectations.

Employability skills	Industry expectations (%)	Actual skills perceived in fresh professionals (%)	Std Error Mean	
			Positive "t"	Negative "t"
Numerical analysis	80	84		-4
Technical Application Skill	90	93		-3
Discipline knowledge	92	94		-2
Self-Awareness	83	86		-3
Self-Reliant	80	85		-5

Competitiveness Skill	78	84		-6
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In case of Numerical analysis, Discipline knowledge and Technical Application skill, the fresh professional’s level is higher than the industry expectations. This is due to the knowledge gained and applied in academic curriculum in institutes. The findings are shown in Table 3 below

In case of job specific skills, stress tolerance, reasoning skills Business communications , where industry expectations are high so as to ensure professionals attain them to meet the challenging demands of the company.

Table 4: Variations in skills where industry expectations are higher than perceived professionals’ expectations.

Employability skills	Industry expectations (%)	Actual skills perceived in fresh professionals (%)	Std Error Mean	
			Positive "t"	Negative "t"
Stress handling	88	83	5	
Reasoning skills	90	85	5	
Business writing skills	80	75	5	
Time Management	83	78	5	
Presentation skills	70	66	4	

In case of process skills; mapped to the PJ fit theory, problem solving skills, result oriented creativity & innovation skill Emotional balance, results show high variations between the expected and actual skills. This is due to lack of opportunities to fresh professionals in getting industry experience through projects and experimental learning.(Table 5).

Table 5: Skills with high level of variations in perceived skill and industry expectations.

Employability skills	Industry expectations (%)	Actual skills perceived in fresh professionals (%)	Std Error Mean	
			Positive "t"	Negative "t"
Problem Resolving Skill	80	67	13	
Result oriented Skill	88	75	13	
Emotional Balance Skill	85	70	15	
Creativity Skill	95	84	11	

Assertiveness Skill	75	88	-13
Innovative thinking	80	90	-10
Confidence	77	92	-15

In case of Self Learning, Team work, self-motivated, positive attitude and multitasking skill, there is no much difference in the industry expectation and fresh business professionals (Table 6).

Table 6: Skills with low /similar level of variations in perceived skill and industry expectations.

Employability skills	Industry expectations (%)	Actual skills perceived in fresh professionals (%)	Std Error Mean	
			Positive "t"	Negative "t"
Information Retrieval Skill	88	86	2	
Self Learning	80	82		-2
Team work	88	90		-2
Organisation knowledge	75	73	2	
Self Motivated	88	90		-2
Interpersonal skills	86	87		-1
Positive Attitude	78	80		-2
Multitasking	88	90		-2

7. CONCLUSION

The main objective of our research work is to determine the skill- gap between the skill set acquired by a fresh graduate and expected skill set by an employer of any organization at the time of job selection (Recruitment) process. We have discussed every point of view and expectations of an employer of an fresh business graduate and the skill-set that graduates has acquired during their higher education courses (professional studies).From our research we have concluded that respondent employers feel that only 37% of fresh graduates are employable, with high level of variations that each graduate possess based on many factors.

Based on the Work (job) fit theory, from the all four sub-categories of person-Environment (P-E) work Fit theory only two sub categories referred as Person-Person(P-P) work-fit and Person-Job (P-J) work theory has been proven much relevant categories for employability gap in during recruitment process of fresh business graduates in any organization. After joining the organisation and the types of task being assigned to graduates, the other two P-V (Person-Vocation) and P-O (Person to Organisation) will be relevant and it is assumed that the

professionals can adapt to P-O requirements after undergoing learning and development trainings at the organisation.

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