

# Teachers' Employability Skills in Secondary Schools

**Bapi Kumar Sardar<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Md.Kutubuddin Halder<sup>2</sup>,  
Dr. Nimai Chand Maiti<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, K. K. Das College & Research Scholar, Department of Education, University of Calcutta, West Bengal, India.

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of Education, University of Calcutta, West Bengal, India

<sup>3</sup>Professor (Retd.), Department of education, University of Calcutta, West Bengal, India.

## Abstract

Employability skills are recognized as a reliable indicator of job performance. Improving the employability of educators can serve as a foundation for enhancing educational standards. In West Bengal and throughout India, there has been limited research on the employability skills of teachers. This study aimed to evaluate the employability skills of secondary school teachers utilizing a descriptive survey research methodology. A sample of 100 secondary school teachers was chosen from South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, employing the stratified random sampling technique. Data was gathered through the "Questionnaire on Employability Skills of Teachers" (QEST), which was created by Professor M. Mukhopadhyay, the previous director of ETMA in Gurgaon. Notable differences were identified in specific areas of the employability skills of secondary school teachers. Various elements of teachers' employability skills in secondary education were found to differ significantly. It was observed that around 66% and 56% of secondary school teachers displayed "weak" and "very weak" application of their critical & creative thinking skills, as well as their emotional resonance skills during instruction, whereas 62% of secondary school teachers exhibited a "very strong" and "strong" application of initiative & enterprise skills in their teaching.

**Keywords:** Employability Skill, Secondary School Teachers, Critical & Creative Thinking, Initiative & Enterprise, Emotional Resonance.

## Introduction

The advent of industrialization, especially during the 19th century, marked a significant shift from family-oriented production methods to machine-driven manufacturing processes. This change facilitated market expansion and stimulated economic growth. Consequently, there arose a demand for workers to acquire specialized skills. Individuals began to concentrate on specific tasks, enhancing work efficiency and boosting productivity, thereby establishing a strong connection between skilled labor and employment. Therefore, employability is crucial as it ensures that an individual remains competitive in the workforce.

### **Background of the problem**

Employability and unemployment are closely related concepts within the labor market. They encompass a set of transferable skills that empower individuals to secure, maintain, and excel in their jobs. This skill set includes soft skills that facilitate effective collaboration, the application of knowledge to address challenges, and the ability to integrate into various work environments. These soft skills are referred to as 'employability skills'; they are the attributes that enhance one's employability. Loughborough University defines employability skills as the professional competencies that employers seek—competencies that must evolve in tandem with subject knowledge. Individuals achieve the highest employability when they possess a well-rounded education and training, along with fundamental and versatile high-level skills, such as teamwork, problem-solving, information and communications technology (ICT), and communication and language abilities. This blend of soft skills equips them to navigate the evolving landscape of employment.

### **Significance of the study**

The employability skills required in the 21st century include a wide line of vital knowledge, competencies, and personal qualities that reflect effectiveness and proficiency in today's world, especially concerning educational programs or the pursuit of new job opportunities. These skills are crucial for social mobility, career advancement, and individual development. Presently, the education system fosters competition among students, propelling them into a relentless rat race. Teaching stands out as the primary approach to addressing these challenges. As noted by Danielson (2013), "teaching skills involve a teacher's ability to design and organize instructional materials, create a graceful classroom environment, deliver effective instruction, and assess student understanding." The Sustainable Development Goals (2015) advocate for skill enhancement through SDG-4 (Quality Education), significantly improving the availability of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, particularly in the least developed regions, as we strive to transform our world by 2030. These skills ensure that every student, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, is given the opportunity to excel both academically and in their career pursuits. In light of the pressing demand for employability skills, this study has been undertaken to present relevant facts and findings.

### **Review of related literature**

**Arif et al. (2023)** conducted "Identifying Essential Employability Skills for New Graduate Teachers: School Employers' Perspectives." This study looks into how employers perceive recently graduated teachers' readiness for the workforce. Twelve Lahore-based secondary school administrators make up the sample. Thematic analysis was used to look at the interview transcripts. The results show that hiring recently graduated teachers presents a number of difficulties for employers. These issues include a gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, a lack of communication and transferable skills, and higher expectations for recent graduates.

**Nu'Man, M. R. (2020)** studied the "Teacher Trauma: An Exploratory Study of Self - Efficacy/Relationship/School Climate and the Correlation to PTSD Retention Amongst K-12 Educators." This research seeks to enhance the understanding of teachers' perceptions regarding primary and secondary trauma by examining the associated personal, professional, and relational effects they have encountered, as well as exploring the various types of trauma that educators face within their

school settings. A sample of 400 teachers was selected from K-12 classes in Southern California. The study utilized the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES) and the SIP Scale as its questionnaire instruments. The findings indicated that, irrespective of the trauma type experienced by educators, those who encountered negative trauma within a school environment reported lower efficacy, difficulties in student relationships, and a higher tendency to leave the profession. Furthermore, this study identified that the two main types of trauma experienced by the teachers in the sample were school violence and community violence.

**Yahya et al. (2017)** studied “Technical skills and employability skills of vocational high school students in Indonesia.” The purpose of this study was to evaluate how vocational high school students' technical and employability skills improved, with an emphasis on the effects of using a scientific approach. The study sample is made up of 221 students, 172 of whom are male and 49 of whom are female, who are enrolled in a mechanical engineering skills program in Indonesia. In order to create a non-experimental survey, this study uses a quantitative methodology, collecting data via questionnaires and using sample data collected from the population. The results showed that using a scientific approach is essential for improving technical skill mastery and has a positive impact on vocational students' employability skills.

**Rahmat et al. (2015)** investigated “Determination of Constructs and Dimensions of Employability Skills Based Work Performance Prediction: A Triangular Approach.” This study's main goal was to identify the different dimensions and constructs related to employability skills. Participants in this study of the electrical and electronics industry were graduates of electronic polytechnics. For this study, the researcher used an interview protocol. The results showed that communication skills, personality traits, teamwork skills, critical thinking abilities, problem-solving skills, technological proficiency, organizational competencies, and learning skills were all included in the elements and dimensions of ESWPP.

### **Operational definitions of key terms/variables**

#### **Employability Skill**

Employability skills are the fundamental aptitudes and traits needed for almost every kind of work. These are the essential abilities that employers look for in applicants. Candidates with these skills are always given preference by employers. Often referred to as "work readiness skills," these competencies are highly regarded by employers due to their ability to increase productivity, foster teamwork, and enable people to adjust to changing work environments.

#### **Secondary School Teachers**

Secondary school teachers are qualified educators hired to teach students in grades 6 through 10 (ages 11 to 16). During this crucial stage of education, they plan lessons, carry out instruction, assess student learning, and assist students' general development. A secondary school teacher's main goal is to instruct students and help them develop the skills necessary for success in either the job market or higher secondary education.

#### **Objectives of the study**

To study the employability skills of teachers at the secondary school level.

**Research Questions**

**RQ1-** Are the employability skills of secondary school teachers distinct from each other?

**Hypothesis of the Study**

The following null hypotheses have been developed in light of the objective.

**Null-Hypotheses of Objective-1**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the employability skills of secondary school teachers, which include the ability to demonstrate critical & creative thinking.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the employability skills of secondary school teachers, which include the ability to demonstrate initiative and enterprise.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significance difference in emotional resonance as a part of secondary school teachers' employability skills.

**Research design****Variables of the study**

Dependent Variable: Employability Skill

Independent Variable: Secondary School Teachers

**Sample of the study**

A total of one hundred male and female secondary school teachers from the South 24 Parganas District in West Bengal were selected for this research using a stratified random sampling technique. Initially, ten circles were identified within the South 24 Parganas. The district is categorized into five sections: east, west, north, south, and center. From each section, two circles were randomly chosen. Following this, five secondary schools were randomly selected from each circle. The selection process utilized the government DISC list along with the names of the schools. Consequently, 50 secondary schools were ultimately included in the final draft. From each secondary school, two teachers were chosen.

**Table-1 Sample size of the Research (Collected Data)**

| Gender | Secondary School |
|--------|------------------|
| Male   | 49               |
| Female | 51               |
| Total  | 100              |

**Research tools**

The researcher employed the Questionnaire on Employability Skills of Teachers (QEST), developed by Professor M. Mukhopadhyay, the previous director of ETMA in Gurgaon. The design of the questionnaire corresponds with different elements of employability skills. These skills include critical and creative thinking, initiative and enterprise, along with emotional resonance.

**Table-2 Response pattern of the employability skills questionnaire**

A five-point Likert scale framework was anticipated for each item's response and scoring methodology.

| Response Type | Scoring for Positive Item | Scoring for Negative Item |
|---------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Very Often    | 5                         | 1                         |
| Often         | 4                         | 2                         |
| Sometimes     | 3                         | 3                         |
| Rarely        | 2                         | 4                         |
| Not at all    | 1                         | 5                         |

The responses are classified into the following categories: Very Often, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, and Not at all, which correspond to scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 for positive responses. Additionally, the assessments for negative items were conducted in reverse order. The lowest possible score for each item is one, while the highest possible score is five. The final version of the test consists of eighteen statements. As a result, each participant can attain a maximum score of 90 (5x18). In contrast, the minimum score is eighteen, or 1x18. Thus, the range of employability skills scores extends from 18 to 90.

### Table-3 Final form of the Questionnaire

The final version of the assessment consists of 18 statements designed to evaluate the "Employability Skills of Teachers" specifically for secondary school teachers. This test features seven negative items and eleven positive items. The tool includes three distinct factors.

|                       | Sl. No of Item                     | Total |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Positive Items</b> | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 17, 18 | 11    |
| <b>Negative Items</b> | 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16,         | 7     |
| <b>Total</b>          |                                    | 18    |

**Table-4 Serial number-wise items divided into factors of employability skills**

| Sl. No. | Factors                      | Sl. No. of Items              | Total |
|---------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1.      | Critical & Creative Thinking | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 | 10    |
| 2.      | Initiative & Enterprise      | 11, 12, 13, 14                | 4     |
| 3.      | Emotional Resonance          | 15, 16, 17, 18                | 4     |
|         |                              | Total                         | 18    |

### Validity test

Expert assessment was employed to verify the face validity of the items. Consequently, following item analysis, the scale demonstrates content validity.

**Table-5 Reliability test**

| Cronbach's Alpha | No. of Items |
|------------------|--------------|
| .734             | 18           |

The Employability Skills of Teachers scale exhibits a strong internal consistency, evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha of .734 presented in the table. Therefore, this reliability value indicates that the data gathered from the study is highly reliable.

## Analysis & interpretation of the data

### Employability skills of secondary school teachers

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the employability skills of secondary school teachers, which include the ability to demonstrate critical & creative thinking.

The critical & creative thinking aspect of the employability scale was addressed in items: 2, 8, 11, 31, 34, 47, 50, 59, 63, and 73. This section included 8 positive items and 2 negative items. The response from teachers regarding this issue is presented in table 6:

**Table 6: Scores of secondary school teachers' responses to items under the dimension of critical & creative thinking in employability skills**

| Item no         | Very Often | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Not at All | Total Number of Teachers |
|-----------------|------------|-------|-----------|--------|------------|--------------------------|
| 2               | 2          | 6     | 15        | 37     | 40         | 100                      |
| 8               | 5          | 2     | 10        | 30     | 53         | 100                      |
| 11              | 0          | 7     | 29        | 35     | 29         | 100                      |
| 31              | 0          | 1     | 7         | 31     | 61         | 100                      |
| 34              | 0          | 2     | 10        | 43     | 45         | 100                      |
| 47              | 2          | 2     | 12        | 37     | 47         | 100                      |
| 50 <sup>#</sup> | 2          | 15    | 23        | 38     | 22         | 100                      |
| 59              | 1          | 6     | 23        | 39     | 31         | 100                      |
| 63              | 3          | 6     | 12        | 21     | 58         | 100                      |
| 73 <sup>#</sup> | 3          | 5     | 4         | 15     | 73         | 100                      |

# Statements of item numbers 50 and 73 were negative.

**Table 7: Secondary school teachers' response to the critical and creative thinking component (10 items) in employability skill distribution**

|            | Very strong | Strong | Moderate | Weak | Very weak | Total |
|------------|-------------|--------|----------|------|-----------|-------|
| Response   | 108         | 85     | 145      | 293  | 369       | 1000  |
| Percentage | 10.8        | 8.5    | 14.5     | 29.3 | 36.9      | 100   |

The results reveal that around 66% of secondary school teachers possess "weak" and "very weak" critical & creative thinking skills. The findings suggest that a majority of teachers face challenges in analyzing critical situations, generating innovative ideas, and employing creative techniques in the teaching and learning process.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the employability skills of secondary school teachers, which include the ability to demonstrate initiative & enterprise.

The initiative & enterprise component of the employability scale comprised four items, three of which were negative. Table 8 presents the number of responses in relation to the respective item numbers 7, 19, 39, and 61.

**Table 8: Scores of secondary school teacher's responses to items under the dimension of initiative & enterprise in employability skills**

| Item no         | Very Often | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Not at All | Total Number of Teachers |
|-----------------|------------|-------|-----------|--------|------------|--------------------------|
| 7 <sup>#</sup>  | 5          | 10    | 6         | 24     | 55         | 100                      |
| 19 <sup>#</sup> | 7          | 1     | 4         | 17     | 71         | 100                      |
| 39              | 0          | 1     | 14        | 40     | 45         | 100                      |
| 61 <sup>#</sup> | 4          | 3     | 13        | 39     | 41         | 100                      |

# Statements of item numbers 7, 19, and 61 were negative.

**Table 9: Secondary school teachers' response to the initiative & enterprise component (4 items) in employability skill distribution**

|            | Very strong | Strong | Moderate | Weak | Very weak | Total |
|------------|-------------|--------|----------|------|-----------|-------|
| Response   | 167         | 81     | 37       | 54   | 61        | 400   |
| Percentage | 41.75       | 20.25  | 9.25     | 13.5 | 15.25     | 100   |

The findings indicate that 62% of secondary school teachers fall into the "very strong" and "strong" categories concerning their initiative & enterprise skills. This suggests that a considerable proportion of teachers demonstrate the ability to take initiative, suggest innovative ideas, and engage actively in improving their professional practices.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significance difference in emotional resonance as a part of secondary school teachers' employability skills.

The emotional resonance component of the employability scale included items 29, 56, 65, and 80, which consisted of 2 positive and 2 negative items. The responses from teachers regarding this issue are presented in table 10:

**Table 10: Scores of secondary school teachers' responses to the items under the dimension of emotional resonance in employability skills**

| Item no         | Very Often | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Not at All | Total Number of Teachers |
|-----------------|------------|-------|-----------|--------|------------|--------------------------|
| 29 <sup>#</sup> | 28         | 31    | 24        | 10     | 7          | 100                      |
| 56 <sup>#</sup> | 2          | 2     | 9         | 23     | 64         | 100                      |
| 65              | 2          | 3     | 20        | 31     | 44         | 100                      |
| 80              | 0          | 3     | 14        | 29     | 54         | 100                      |

# Statements of item numbers 29 and 56 were negative.

**Table 11: Secondary school teachers' response to emotional resonance component (4 items) in employability skill distribution**

|            | Very strong | Strong | Moderate | Weak  | Very weak | Total |
|------------|-------------|--------|----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Response   | 73          | 39     | 67       | 93    | 128       | 400   |
| Percentage | 18.25       | 9.75   | 16.75    | 23.25 | 32        | 100   |

The emotional resonance abilities of secondary school teachers were identified as "weak" and "very weak" for around 56%. These results indicate that a considerable proportion of teachers have faced difficulties in comprehending, addressing, and handling the emotional needs of their students.

### **Major findings of the study**

The following insights regarding the employability skills of secondary teachers were derived from the previously presented data.

- According to the findings, approximately 66% of secondary school teachers demonstrate 'weak' and 'very weak' abilities in critical and creative thinking. This indicates that a significant number of teachers encounter difficulties in analyzing critical situations, generating innovative ideas, and utilizing creative techniques within the classroom.
- The results reveal that 62% of secondary school teachers are classified as 'very strong' and 'strong' in terms of their initiative & enterprise skills. This suggests that a substantial portion of teachers possesses the ability to take initiative, introduce innovative concepts, and actively participate in enhancing their professional practices.
- The emotional resonance skills of secondary school teachers were assessed at around 56%, categorizing them as 'weak' and 'very weak.' These findings imply that a notable number of teachers struggle with understanding, addressing, and managing the emotional needs of their students.

### **Conclusion**

The results reveal notable differences in the employability skills of primary school teachers, as well as specific elements of these skills. Secondary school teachers demonstrate a lack of effective use of their employability skills in their teaching practices, especially in the areas of critical & creative thinking, as well as emotional resonance. In contrast, the integration of initiative & enterprise skills within the educational framework was observed to be highly effective.

### **Recommendations**

- Often, certain schools may have a greater number of teachers but a smaller student population, and conversely. Consequently, if the government was to adopt a rational approach to student enrollment and teacher recruitment, aiming to maintain an optimal teacher-student ratio, educational productivity could be significantly enhanced.
- Teachers can cultivate critical thinking skills by regularly engaging in self-reflection. It is important to recognize your preferences, biases, strengths, and weaknesses to improve your understanding of your cognitive processes. Before taking action or making decisions, endeavor to assess situations with objectivity.
- In many classrooms, a majority of teachers fail to apply the knowledge gained during their B.Ed training. If they do not implement this knowledge, a monitoring system will be enforced on the teachers.

### **Educational implication of the study**

In light of the findings from the present study concerning the employability skills of school teachers, the following educational implications are presented:

- For prospective researchers, this study introduces a novel area for exploration. The findings can serve as a foundation for future investigations into different facets of teachers' employability skills.
- Most importantly, this study holds significance for government policymakers, administrators, and educational planners as they develop strategies across various levels of school education.
- The employability skills of teachers can also foster the creation of new knowledge for emerging researchers, benefit teachers, and ultimately enhance student outcomes.

### Limitations of the study

The study employed measures that relied on self-reported responses, which may introduce response bias and heighten the potential for validity and reliability errors.

### Suggestions for the further studies

1. In the future, researchers may investigate the levels of education in government, government-aided, and private schools for comparative analysis in their studies.
2. Further research is necessary to examine the disparities in employability skills of teachers according to their school type, including urban and rural institutions.
3. Future researchers might conduct a comparative analysis of the employability skills of teachers across different employment categories, such as part-time, para-teachers, contractual teachers, and full-time educators.

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