



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Designing an Employability-Oriented Curriculum in English Studies: A Skill-Based Approach

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## Abstract

In today's highly competitive global job market, the value of a college degree extends beyond the mere transmission of factual knowledge to the development of market-relevant competencies. Traditionally, English Studies has focused on literature and the knowledge of cultural acquisition; however, contemporary demands necessitate its alignment with industry expectations and skill development. Addressing this shift, the present study explores the integration of employability skills into the curriculum of English Studies programs. Particular attention is given to how a literature-based education can foster essential professional competencies such as critical thinking, effective communication, creativity, emotional intelligence, teamwork, and problem-solving—skills that are increasingly valued across diverse business sectors. Furthermore, the study proposes a comprehensive curriculum framework that combines literary knowledge with industry-oriented skill development. By reconceptualizing English Studies as a dynamic and evolving discipline, the research highlights practical strategies for bridging the gap between theoretical literary understanding and workplace applicability. In addition, it provides meaningful insights into transforming English Studies into a curriculum that not only preserves its cultural significance but also emphasizes career readiness and lifelong learning.

**Keywords:** Employability Skills; Curriculum Design; English Studies; Industry-Academia Collaboration.

## Introduction

The need for preparing students for the ever-changing demands of today's business is becoming increasingly apparent to institutions throughout the world. Due to globalisation and technological improvements, teaching non-academic skills like communication, critical thinking, and teamwork has become very important in the present time.

English literature and cultural studies often include literary criticism, linguistic theory, and cultural studies (Andrews, J., & Higson, H., 2008). These are crucial for

students' intellectual growth, but they fall short in preparing them for the workforce, where employability and effective communication are essential skills.

Enhancing students' marketability has become a top priority in the design of university degree programs. This trend has been fueled by the necessity of ensuring that graduates of postsecondary institutions possess the knowledge and skills essential to prosper in the workforce at the time of graduation (Barrie, S., 2006). The skills-based technique of teaching English will prepare students for careers in advertising, public relations, digital marketing, journalism, publishing, education, and corporate communication.

The objective of this essay is to give a framework for the development of an English studies curriculum that is focused on employability and to investigate the necessity of such a program.

## Literature Review

In higher education, the idea of employability is an issue that is frequently addressed in a variety of academic and policy circles that are now in existence. According to Yorke (2006), "Employability refers to a set of achievements and understandings that enhance graduates' likelihood of gaining employment and succeeding in their chosen careers."

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Knight and Yorke (2004) states, "Academic knowledge is not enough; graduates also need to develop a range of skills that are often referred to as 'transferable skills,' such as skills in communication, working in a team, and problem-solving, which are all important in a complex work environment."

Andrews and Higson (2008) state, "To employers, soft skills are very important, in particular: graduates' ability to communicate effectively, to demonstrate flexibility and adaptability, and to demonstrate interpersonal skills."

Scholars in the field emphasize the need for a transformation in the English Studies curriculum to address growing concerns about students' ability to secure employment. Carter and Long (1991) state that "language and literature programs should include communicative and professional skills to help students to develop their career prospects."

Jackson (2014) further asserts that employability skills need to be integrated into the academic curriculum and not be considered additional training programs. This will, therefore, lead to the development of significant learning experiences for the students, which will be useful in the future as they join the work industry.

Recent studies have also demonstrated that gaining knowledge via experience is essential for the development of skills that are marketable. This was outlined by Kolb (1984) as a means through which students gain practical experience".

The findings of the study suggest that a skill-based curriculum may play a significant role in enhancing the employability of graduates from English Studies programs.

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

Adopting a mixed-method research design with both descriptive and exploratory elements, the study examined the need for an English Studies program that emphasizes employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). This approach enabled a comprehensive investigation of the research problem by integrating qualitative insights with quantitative evidence.

The primary objectives of the study were to identify the competencies required for student employability and to explore how such skills can be effectively integrated into English classrooms through a skill-based pedagogical framework.

To obtain a holistic understanding of employability perspectives, data were collected from students, teachers, and industry professionals using both qualitative and quantitative methods (Fallows & Steven, 2000). This combination of methodologies facilitated a more nuanced analysis, allowing for both in-depth exploration and empirical validation of findings.

### Objectives of the Study

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

- To identify and analyse the core employability competencies required by students enrolled in English Studies programs.
- To critically evaluate the gap between existing English Studies curricula and current industry expectations and demands.
- To examine students' perceptions and attitudes towards the integration of skill-based learning within English Studies.
- To develop a structured, employability-oriented curriculum framework for English Studies programs.

### Research Questions

The objectives of the research include the following:

- What employability skills are most essential for graduates of English Studies programs?
- To what extent does the existing English Studies curriculum equip students with skills relevant to the contemporary workplace?
- How do students perceive the integration of skill-based learning within English Studies?
- What pedagogical and curricular strategies can be implemented to enhance the employability of English Studies students?

### Sample and Participants

The research design involved 120 students pursuing various courses in English and communication in higher learning institutions.

In addition, 10 members of staff from various higher education institutions who taught English and communication courses were consulted to gain insights into teaching and learning.

Purposeful sampling was employed to recruit participants who possessed relevant experience in English language and communication courses. The sample comprised undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in English Studies programs, faculty members with teaching experience in English and communication skills, and industry professionals involved in recruitment or training. Participants were selected based on their direct engagement with English Studies and their familiarity with employability-related competencies.

This sampling strategy was adopted to ensure the inclusion of information-rich cases that could provide meaningful insights into the integration of employability skills within the curriculum. By selecting participants with relevant academic and professional backgrounds, the study aimed to enhance the depth, relevance, and validity of the findings.

### Data Collection Tools

The following methods of collecting data were employed:

#### Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed to learn more about students' perceptions of the curriculum's effectiveness and employability skills.

The questionnaire comprises questions related to:

- Communication skills
- Professional writing
- Digital communication
- Critical thinking
- Industry readiness

#### Interviews

A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the faculty in order to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and difficulties associated with the incorporation of employability skills into English language lessons (Hillage, J., & Pollard, E., 1998).

#### Document Analysis

The degree to which employability skills are emphasised in the curriculum may be seen in course outlines and curriculum papers.

### Data Analysis

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was employed in the analysis of the collected data. Quantitative data obtained from surveys were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency distributions and percentages, to identify patterns and trends (Holmes, 2013).

Qualitative data gathered through interviews were subjected to thematic analysis following a systematic, multi-stage procedure. Initially, all interview responses were transcribed and carefully reviewed to achieve data familiarisation. This was followed by open coding, wherein meaningful units of data were identified and labelled. Subsequently, related codes were grouped into broader categories, leading to the development of initial themes. These themes were then reviewed, refined, and defined to ensure internal consistency and relevance to the research objectives. Finally, the themes were interpreted and organised to highlight recurring patterns related to curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and employability skill development.

This structured approach to thematic analysis enhanced the reliability and depth of the qualitative findings by ensuring a rigorous and transparent analytical process.

### Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted in a manner that was ethical in every facet of the research procedure (Knight, P., & Yorke, M., 2004). The participants were made aware of the goal of the research, and they were given the opportunity to participate

in an informed manner. In addition, the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were ensured.

### Concept of Employability Skills

Skills that enable an individual to obtain employment, perform effectively in that job, and adapt to shifting work conditions are referred to as employability skills.

These skills can be systematically categorised into the following core domains:

#### Communication Skills

Clear and effective communication is a skill that requires an individual to express ideas in a coherent fashion, both in written and spoken formats (Lowden, K., Hall, S., Elliot, D., & Lewin, J., 2011). For English studies students, this would include academic writing, business correspondence, presentations, and public speaking.

#### Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a skill that requires an individual to analyze information and then decide on a course of action (Pegg, A., Waldock, J., Hendy-Isaac, S., & Lawton, R., 2012). It is a vital skill in problem-solving and decision-making in a professional environment.

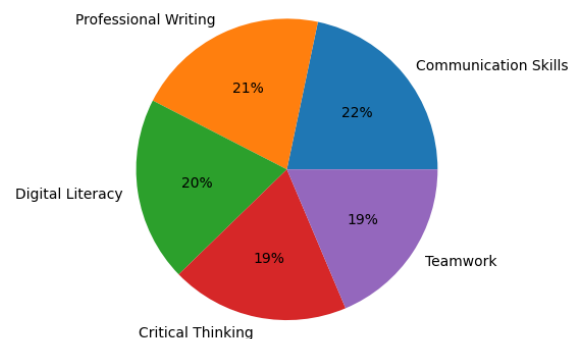
#### Digital Literacy

The increasing use of technology in the working environment has resulted in the acquisition of digital literacy as an indispensable ability for students to acquire (Succi, C., & Canovi, M., 2020). The use of digital technology for the purposes of production, communication, and research ought to be accessible to each student.

**Table 1:** Students' Perception of Important Employability Skills

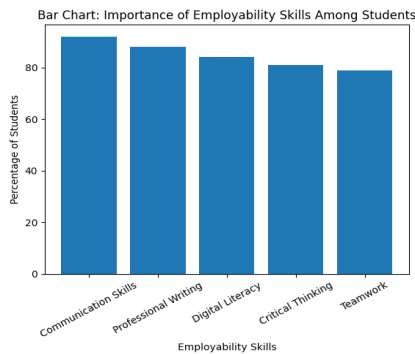
Sr. No.	Skill Area	%
1	Communication Skills	22
2	Professional Writing	21
3	Digital Literacy	20
4	Critical Thinking	19
5	Team Work	19

Students' Perception of Important Employability Skills



**Table 2:** Importance of Employability Skills Among Students

Sr. No.	Employability Skills	%
1	Communication Skills	92
2	Professional Writing	88
3	Digital Literacy	84
4	Critical Thinking	81
5	Team Work	79



### **Collaboration and Teamwork**

Collaboration and cooperation are essential in today's workplaces; thus, students need to develop their social skills.

### **Adaptability and Lifelong Learning**

Employers respect workers who can swiftly adjust to new situations, challenges, and technology developments.

### **Need for Employability-Oriented Curriculum in English Studies**

#### *Industry Expectations*

Currently, employers across various sectors expect students to demonstrate effective communication and professional competencies. Graduates of English Studies are particularly well suited for roles in which strong writing and oral communication skills are essential.

#### *Bridging the Skill Gap*

The gap between academic and professional knowledge has been identified as a significant concern in English education. Traditional English classes may not always provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop their communication abilities.

#### *Expanding Career Opportunities*

An employability-focused English curriculum helps students to explore various career opportunities in fields like:

- Journalism
- Corporate communication
- Content writing
- Publishing
- Media and broadcasting
- Digital marketing
- Education and training

### **Skill-Based Approach to Curriculum Design**

A skill-based curriculum must incorporate active learning techniques for skill development.

- Key Principles
- Integrating Theory and Practice
- Student-Centric
- Relevance
- Assessment
- Industry Partnerships
- Project-Based Learning

A skill-based approach to curriculum design emphasises the integration of knowledge acquisition with the development of practical competencies that enhance students' employability. Such a curriculum moves beyond traditional content delivery by incorporating active and experiential learning strategies that facilitate the application of theoretical concepts in real-world contexts.

A central principle of this approach is the integration of theory and practice. Rather than treating literary knowledge and skill development as separate domains, the curriculum should embed communication, analytical, and interpretive skills within the study of texts. This alignment enables students to translate conceptual understanding into practical outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Equally important is the adoption of a student-centric pedagogical framework. In this model, learners actively engage in the construction of knowledge through discussions, presentations, collaborative tasks, and reflective activities. Such engagement fosters autonomy, critical thinking, and adaptability—key attributes associated with employability (Fallows & Steven, 2000).

Relevance to industry expectations constitutes another essential dimension of a skill-based curriculum. Course content and learning outcomes should be aligned with contemporary workplace requirements, ensuring that students acquire competencies such as effective communication, teamwork, and problem-solving (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). This alignment enhances the applicability of academic learning beyond the classroom.

Assessment practices must also be reoriented to reflect skill development. Instead of relying solely on traditional examinations, a diversified assessment strategy—incorporating presentations, portfolios, case analyses, and reflective writing—can more effectively evaluate students' applied skills and professional readiness (Holmes, 2013).

Furthermore, collaboration with industry stakeholders plays a crucial role in strengthening curriculum relevance. Partnerships with employers, guest lectures, internships, and workshops provide students with exposure to professional environments and expectations, thereby bridging the gap between academic learning and workplace demands.

Finally, project-based learning serves as a key pedagogical tool within a skill-based framework. By engaging in real-world or simulated projects, students

develop problem-solving abilities, teamwork skills, and practical communication competencies, all of which are essential for career success.

### **Proposed Curriculum Model**

**Table 3: Example Curriculum Structure**

<i>Semester</i>	<i>Course</i>	<i>Skill Focus</i>
Semester 1	Academic Writing	Writing Skills
Semester 2	Communication Skills	Speaking & Listening
Semester 3	Professional Writing	Workplace Communication
Semester 4	Media and Digital Communication	Digital Literacy
Semester 5	Public Speaking and Presentation	Confidence and persuasion
Semester 6	Internship/Project	Industry Exposure

### **Significance of the Curriculum Model**

The proposed curriculum model demonstrates a progressive and structured integration of employability skills across the six semesters of an English Studies program. Each stage is designed to build upon previously acquired competencies, moving from foundational writing and communication skills to more advanced, application-oriented abilities. The inclusion of industry-relevant courses and a final internship or project ensures that students gain practical exposure to professional environments. This systematic progression not only enhances skill development but also facilitates the alignment of academic learning with workplace expectations, thereby improving students' overall employability and career readiness.

### **Teaching Strategies for Skill Development**

#### *Project-Based Learning*

Students find the opportunity to engage on real-world initiatives such as creating communication campaigns, blogs, or newsletters.

#### *Role Plays*

Students be enabled to learn professional communication skills through exposure to role-plays that mimic the actual workplace.

#### *Workshops*

Students gain practical knowledge of the subject from seminars led by industry experts.

#### *Internships*

Students are given a chance to experience the actual work environment.

### **Assessment Strategies**

Traditional examinations do not provide an effective assessment of employability skills. Other assessment methods are:

- Portfolio assessment
- Presentations
- Project evaluation
- Peer assessment
- Reflective journals

Instead, then depending on what they have learned in the classroom, these approaches allow students to demonstrate their true talents.

### **Challenges in Implementation**

It is possible that the implementation of a curriculum that is focused on employability will present a number of distinct challenges. These include:

- Resistance to curriculum change in institutions
- Poor cooperation from the industry
- Poor training of staff
- Poor technological resources

The implementation of an employability-focused curriculum in English Studies may present several institutional and pedagogical challenges. One of the primary concerns is resistance to curriculum change within academic institutions, where established teaching practices and rigid structures may hinder the adoption of innovative, skill-oriented approaches. Faculty members may also exhibit reluctance due to unfamiliarity with new pedagogical models or increased workload associated with curriculum redesign (Fullan, 2007).

Another significant challenge lies in limited collaboration between academia and industry. Inadequate engagement with industry stakeholders can restrict opportunities for curriculum alignment, internships, and practical exposure, thereby weakening the relevance of academic programs to labour market expectations (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Additionally, insufficient training and professional development of faculty members can impede effective implementation. Educators may lack the necessary expertise to integrate skill-based teaching methods, such as experiential learning, project-based instruction, and competency-based assessment (Biggs & Tang, 2011). The absence of continuous staff development programs further exacerbates this issue.

Technological constraints also pose a barrier, particularly in institutions with limited access to digital infrastructure and learning resources. The integration of digital literacy and modern communication tools is essential for a skill-based curriculum; however, inadequate technological support can restrict both teaching innovation and student engagement (Holmes, 2013).

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach. Policy-level interventions are essential to support curriculum reform and provide institutional flexibility. Regular faculty development and training programs can equip educators with the necessary pedagogical skills. Furthermore, strengthening partnerships with industry

through collaborative initiatives, internships, and guest engagements can enhance curriculum relevance and practical exposure for students.

### **Implications for Higher Education**

The implications of the redesigning of English studies curricula with the aim of making them more employable are far-reaching, particularly for higher education institutions (Tomlinson, M., 2008).

The advantages of such a change include:

- Making humanities more relevant
- Enhancing graduate employability
- Encouraging interdisciplinary learning
- Encouraging innovation in learning approaches

In order to encourage innovation and employability, it is crucial to provide flexible frameworks.

### **Conclusion**

- The findings highlight the growing need for educational institutions to move beyond traditional content-based approaches and align curricula with the demands of the contemporary workplace.
- English Studies emerges as a significant domain for fostering transferable competencies, particularly in communication, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning.
- The integration of skill-based components within the curriculum substantially enhances students' preparedness for diverse professional contexts.
- Emphasis on writing proficiency, industry engagement, and experiential learning contributes directly to improving graduates' employability outcomes.
- Innovative pedagogical practices and continuous assessment strategies play a crucial role in creating dynamic and learner-centred classroom environments.
- A structured and progressive curriculum model ensures the systematic development of market-relevant skills across different stages of the program.
- Overall, the adoption of an employability-oriented curriculum framework is essential for bridging the gap between higher education and the evolving expectations of the global workforce.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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