

Article

Are Business Graduates' Employability Skills and Learning/Teaching Techniques Universal? Exploring the Role of Culture: A Comparative Study among Australia, China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to explore the employability skills required in different countries/cultures and to further explore how cultural differences influence teaching/learning techniques required to equip students with required employability skills. Data were collected from 158 human resource managers working in different organizations and 169 faculty members who were engaged in teaching business graduates in four culturally different countries: Australia, China, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. SPSS version 20 was used to calculate the average and compute the values. Results of this study indicated that employability skills for business graduates vary among different countries/cultures but the five employability skills are common regardless of cultural differences: entry-level digital skills, problem-solving skills, organizational skills, decision making, and goal-oriented skills. In addition, the findings of this study also indicated that teaching/learning techniques such as case studies, conventional lectures, and simulations, etc., are not completely culture-sensitive and could be used in almost every country/culture. The findings of this study will be helpful for higher educational institutions, vocational training centers, and other stakeholders to use in determining the most effective teaching/learning techniques to equip the students with the employability skills required in their country/culture including common employability skills and make their graduates more employable.

Keywords: business graduates; country/culture differences; cultural sensitive skills; higher education

1. Introduction

With the growing trend of globalization, organizations have been expanding their business operations in multiple countries and have required their employees to perform job tasks in host countries. Considering the parent country culture, employees are often equipped with the necessary skills to perform their job tasks but may find it challenging to perform a similar task in a host country. This could be due to different cultures in the host country that require different skills for employees to successfully perform job tasks. For example, Indian culture scores low on long-term orientation [1] in which the employee is mostly dependent on the employer, and the nature of workplace communication is top-down where the employee is highly directed by the employer. These types of cultural beliefs and workplace practices discourage initiatives [2] which means that taking initiative may not be considered a highly important skill. In comparison with India, Australia is

low in power distance [1] where employees are less directed by their employers, and upward and downward communication is common [3]. These types of cultural practices encourage employers to prefer candidates with better communication and initiative skills. These details highlight that employability skills vary among countries/cultures making it challenging for individuals to possess all the skills required in different countries/cultures.

Ref. [4] explained that for sustainability in the education system, instructors should be able to effectively implement learning management systems. In this regard, Ref. [5] explained that educational institutions have been using various tools to manage learning management systems such as blackboards, schoology, etc. In addition, Ref. [6] explained that teacher ability to implement learning management systems effectively influence educational sustainability. Therefore, teachers should understand what type of teaching/learning techniques is useful and how these techniques can be used in learning management systems to improve educational sustainability.

In addition, it is also challenging for colleges/universities to equip their students with all necessary skills required in different cultures/countries especially when colleges/universities require their instructors to teach in foreign countries or teach individuals from foreign countries at home [7]. In comparison to employability skills required among countries/cultures, teaching/learning techniques to obtain employability skills may vary as well. In this regard, Ref. [8] pointed out that a specific set of teaching/learning techniques may be effective when learners hold a homogeneous cultural orientation but not effective when students hold diverse pedagogical preferences. In addition, Ref. [9] also highlighted that differences in cultures lead to differences in learning styles where students from specific cultures may prefer active learning styles such as case studies, and students from other cultures may prefer passive learning styles such as reading textbooks [7]. Considering these findings, the purpose of this study is therefore to determine what employability skills are required in different countries/cultures (Australia, China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia) and what teaching/learning techniques instructors consider effective ways to equip students with employability skills in these countries/cultures. In addition, the purpose of this study is to explore to what extent cultural differences influence employability skills and teaching/learning techniques in different countries/cultures.

Hofstede National Cultural Dimensions:

Ref. [10] developed a typology and classified culture into six dimensions as power distance, masculinity-femininity, individualism, long-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and indulgence. Ref. [10] defines *Power Distance* as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally”. *Individualism* is “the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its member”. *Masculinity-femininity* is defined as “The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (Masculine) or liking what you do (Feminine)”. *Uncertainty avoidance* is defined as “The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these”. *Long-term orientation* is defined as “how every society has to maintain some links with its past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future”, and *Indulgence* is “the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses”.

National Culture and Employability Skills:

In today’s global economy, employers are looking for graduates who are equipped with more generic skills and personal attributes, and researchers believe that generic skills are culture-specific [11]. Employers explain employability skills in terms of soft, transferable, or generic skills that students should gain from education [12]. In addition, Ref. [13] highlighted that employability skills are the combination of knowledge, personal qualities, beliefs, critical thinking, and adaptability skills that can be renewed throughout working life. In addition, social skills and habits help individuals to effectively participate in organizational activities [14]. In this regard, Ref. [15] argued that prospective employees should focus not only on technical skills for certain occupations but also on generic or soft

skills to obtain and maintain employees [16]. Ref. [17] reported that in comparison with hard and technical skills, soft skills such as transferable metacompetence and interpersonal skills are more important to individual employability. In addition, they found that English skills, soft skills, and adaptability skills positively influence individual employability.

Ref. [18] classified cognitive, methodological, technological, and linguistic abilities as instrumental competencies and individual abilities such as social skills (social activities, extracurricular activities) as interpersonal competencies. Ref. [19] classified employability skills into three categories: primary skills which include reading, writing, oral communication skills; advanced level skills which include decision making, problem-solving, and learning skills; and affective skills and characteristics which include team building and cooperation with others, positive attitude, ability to work without supervision, self-management, and self-discipline. In addition, Ref. [12] reported that digital skills are no longer optional skills but critical skills and need to be complemented with soft skills.

Ref. [12] divided digital skills into two categories as entry-level digital skills and advanced-level digital skills. Entry-level digital skills refer to primary functional skills that help individuals use digital devices and online applications for basic job tasks. Advanced-level digital skills refer to higher-level abilities that help individuals use digital technologies as a profession in ICT. In this regard, Ref. [20] highlighted that the demand for advanced-level digital skills has been increasing.

Ref. [2] argued that employability skills vary from country to country which is mostly influenced by national context and country-specific cultural values. For example, China is considered a highly collectivist society with a high score on “Masculinity” and “long-term orientation” [1]. Ref. [3] highlighted that Chinese society is achievement-oriented and competitive whose citizens like to be successful even if it means sacrificing their leisure time. Furthermore, Ref. [21] highlighted that traditional Chinese culture believes that high qualification with good grades helps to secure a government job that ultimately influences student learning [13]. These findings explain that cultural beliefs not only influence student learning styles but also the recruitment process as well as which candidate with high qualification and high grades is more likely to be hired as compared to graduates with only generic skills such as problem-solving skills, communication skills, etc.

In contrast to Chinese culture, Indian culture scores low in long-term orientation [1] in which the employee is mostly dependent on the employer, and the nature of communication at the workplace is top-down where the employee is highly directed by the employer. These types of cultural beliefs and workplace practices discourage initiative [2] which means that taking initiative may not be considered an important skill required by an employer. In comparison with India, Australia is low in power distance [1] where employees are less directed by their employers, and upward and downward communication is common. These types of cultural practices encourage employers to prefer candidates with better communication and initiative skills. According to the general guideline for employability skills and workplace culture in Australia, employees are required to have better communication and problem-solving skills to secure better employment opportunities which indicates that HEI in Australia should equip their graduates with these generic skills to improve their chances of getting jobs. A few researchers have explored how national culture influences the employability skills of graduates, but much more needs to be done in this area for better understanding. Limited research has been carried out to understand how workplace values and employers’ decisions during the recruitment process are influenced by culture and what types of employability skills are required in different countries/cultures.

National Culture and Teaching/Learning Techniques:

Ref. [22] suggested that in a rapidly changing economy, graduates should possess a broad range of employability skills that can be developed through a variety of teaching and learning styles [23]. In addition, Ref. [23] found that classroom-based learning strategies such as case studies, group work, class presentations, and projects help students develop their soft skills such as critical thinking, communication skills, cultural competency, and negotiation skills, whereas Ref. [24] believe that classroom-based learning strategies de-

velop soft skills among students and enhance their perceived employability. Furthermore, Ref. [25] suggested that learning approaches such as case studies, simulations, and role-plays serve important functions in developing real-life problem-solving skills and help students cope with challenges at the workplace.

1.1. About China

The education system in China consists of two models. The first model includes basic education which represents primary and secondary school, whereas the second model includes higher education that represents college and university education. Students need to study until the 12th grade in primary and secondary school before entering college and university to pursue higher education. Ref. [14] reported that higher education institutions in China provide industrial training to equip students with skills required by industry for better performance in emerging market economies. In addition, Ref. [26] highlighted that due to traditional teacher-centered classrooms with passive learning methods and the lack of using English as a medium of communication, higher education institutions in China have weak links with industries that has resulted in a low level of skills and capabilities among graduates. In addition, considering [10] cultural dimensions, China scores high (80) in power distance, low (30) in uncertainty avoidance, and pragmatic culture in long-term orientation.

1.2. About Pakistan

Similar to China, the education system in Pakistan also consists of two models. The first model includes basic education which represents primary and secondary school, whereas the second model includes higher education which represents college and university education. Students need to study until the 12th grade in primary and secondary school before entering college and university to pursue higher education. In Pakistan the higher education system is controlled by the higher education commission of Pakistan (HEC). Generally, there are two main mediums of communication used in the education system known as the Urdu (national language) medium and the English medium. The role of the HEC is to monitor quality standards in private and public universities through training faculty members in universities, providing scholarships to bright students, partnering with international universities, promoting research activities in universities, and facilitating a partnership between industry and universities, etc. In addition, considering [10] cultural dimensions, Pakistan scores intermediate (55) in power distance, high (70) in uncertainty avoidance, and with an intermediate score long-term orientation, it is not clear whether culture is normative or pragmatic.

1.3. About Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is one of the largest economies in the world with immense oil reserves discovered in 1930 and 34 million people that has moved from an underdeveloped economy to a major economic player in almost one decade. Currently, the Saudi government is working hard to diversify the economy instead of relying solely on oil under the development plan known as "Vision 2030". The main aim of "Vision 2030" is to diversify the economy through attracting foreign investment, increasing the number of jobs in the private sector, and increasing nonoil-related exports to up to 50% of total exports. One of the major parts of the "Vision 2030" is educational reforms that will support economic transformation. These major reforms include upgrading the school curricula, retraining teachers, and establishing new schools with smart classrooms and a digital education management system. The Saudi education system is divided into four stages, elementary level (six years), intermediate level (three years), secondary education (three years), and higher education (bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctoral degree). In addition, as part of "Vision 2030," the Saudi government has invested heavily in technical and vocational education to enhance the skills level among graduates. Considering Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions [10],

Saudi Arabia scores high (95) in power distance, high (80) in uncertainty avoidance, and a low score (36) in long-term orientation represents normative culture.

1.4. About Australia

Australia is considered a developed economy ranked as the thirteenth largest in the world, having the tenth-highest per capita income. From an educational point of view, Australia is the third most popular destination in the world for international students with more than 700,000 students which is increasing 11% yearly. As a popular destination for international students, the Australian government has invested AUD 300 million as a scholarship for international students. Primarily, the Australian education system consists of four levels where the first level is primary school also called pre-school till the age of 7 years, secondary school (four years), senior secondary school (two years), and tertiary education (higher education and vocational education). In Australia, around 70% of schools are managed by the government, whereas 30% are considered private schools. Considering [10] cultural dimensions, Australia scores low (36) in power distance, intermediate (51) in uncertainty avoidance, and a low score (21) in long-term orientation represents normative in their thinking.

With the current trend of globalization, instructors are required to teach multicultural students in foreign countries or students from various countries in their home country. In either situation, teaching in a foreign country or teaching students from other countries at home, instructors need to adopt certain teaching/learning techniques that are effective for students to achieve their learning goals. In this regard, researchers argue that specific teaching/learning techniques could be useful when all students are holding homogenous cultural orientations but may not be useful when students are holding diverse cultural orientations [7,27]. Similarly, other researchers such as Refs. [9,28] conceptualized different learning styles and explained that differences in cultures lead to different learning styles.

Individuals' different personality characteristics, cultures, and education systems, shape the way they acquire knowledge and skills which leads to different learning styles. In this regard, Ref. [29] classified these learning styles into four main types as active experimentation, abstract conceptualization, concrete experience, and reflective observation, but limited research has explored learning styles differences among different nations [30]. Considering these arguments, Ref. [7] tried to explore learning style differences among students from different cultures and divided teaching/learning techniques into two categories: active-like (A-like) and passive-like (P-like). Ref. [7] explained that some students prefer passive-like teaching/learning techniques such as textbook reading, traditional lectures, inviting guest speakers, student presentations, videos shown in class, learning assignments using a computer, etc., whereas active-like teaching/learning techniques are research projects by individuals or groups, case studies, and group discussion, etc. In this regard, Ref. [31] highlighted that Western learners prefer active learning/teaching techniques, whereas Asian learners prefers passive learning/teaching techniques.

Ref. [31] proposed that Western students like to discover and explore by themselves which encourages them to get involved in the learning process, whereas Chinese students want the instructor to take control of the learning process [8]. In this regard, Ref. [32] highlighted that some students take control of their learning process and get involved, whereas other students want the instructor to take control and provide structure. Considering these findings, these students can be classified as active learners and passive learners. Active learners are those students who like to take control of their learning process and prefer teaching/learning techniques such as problem-solving, classroom discussion techniques, etc. In contrast, passive learners are those students who want the instructor to take control of their learning process and prefer teaching/learning techniques such as lecturers, guest speakers, etc. In this regard, a few researchers [7,8,33] explored the differences in teaching/learning techniques among Western and Asian students, but these studies were limited in scope because they were restricted to teaching/learning techniques from only student perspectives.

2. Methodology

To find the answers to research questions, this research was carried out in three phases.

RQ1: Do employability skills for business graduates vary from one country/culture to another?

RQ2: Are there any employability skills for business graduates among different countries/cultures that can be considered universal?

RQ3: Do teaching/learning techniques vary from one country/culture to another?

RQ4: Which teaching/learning techniques can be considered effective in gaining common employability skills?

In the first phase, 50 human resource managers were randomly selected from each country (Australia, China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia). The selection of these countries was based on cultural differences considering [10] cultural dimensions including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. A self-administered questionnaire was designed based on a set of employability skills, and HR managers with at least five years of experience in different types of organizations (hospitality and tourism, banking, telecom, oil and gas, construction, manufacturing, etc.) were asked to rate each employability skill on a Likert scale ranging from “not required”, “little required”, “somewhat required”, “required”, and “highly required”. Simple random sampling was used to collect the data. If HR managers rated any generic skill as “highly required” it indicates that a specific skill was highly required in the industry and graduates with that specific skill would have high chances of securing employment (employability skill) and vice versa. At the end of phase one, all data were compiled from each country (Australia, China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia) and highly rated skills were identified (as reported in Table 1). Data were analyzed using SPSS, and descriptive statistics were used to obtain the average means score.

In phase two, common employability skills among the four countries (Australia, China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia) were determined and ranked based on their overall rating as reported in Table 2. Human resource managers from each country believed that graduates with these skills would have a high chance of securing employment. In the third phase, 50 faculty members who were involved in teaching business graduates at the college/university level were randomly selected from each country (Australia, China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia). A self-administered questionnaire was designed based on a set of teaching/learning techniques and faculty members were asked to rate each teaching/learning technique against each employability skill (identified in phase two) on a Likert scale ranging from “not effective”, “little effective”, “somewhat effective”, “effective”, and “highly effective” as reported in Table 3. In phase four, employability skills as identified in phase two and teaching/learning techniques as identified in phase three were compared among four selected countries (Australia, China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia) to determine overall highly rated teaching/learning techniques for each employability skill that was identified in phase two (as reported in Table 4).

Table 1. Employability skills.

Skills Type	No Required (%)	Little Required (%)	Somewhat Required (%)	Required (%)	Highly Required (%)	Rating (%)
Australia						
Entry-level digital skills	0.0	1.6	5.7	42.3	50.4	3.99
Organizational skills	5.5	10.4	20.0	38.4	25.7	3.19
Problem solving	2.5	7.5	11.5	35.9	42.5	3.34
Multicultural and diversity skills	7.1	15.6	37.1	21.5	18.6	2.19
Learning Process	10.1	14.0	40.5	28.6	6.8	2.11
Decision Making	3.6	7.3	24.4	29.6	35.1	2.99
Goal Oriented	5.2	12.4	23.3	32.5	26.5	2.74
Self-Management	3.6	25.0	32.1	30.9	8.4	2.20
China						
Entry-level digital skills	2.1	5.2	9.5	37.4	45.8	3.81
Multicultural and diversity skills	3.0	18.9	35.6	28.5	14.0	2.34
Organizational skills	1.2	5.6	26.5	44.3	22.4	3.11
Creativity	2.2	10.5	36.3	41.5	9.5	2.50
Problem solving	1.1	2.4	19.6	36.7	40.2	3.68
Skills Type	Not Required (%)	Little Required (%)	Somewhat Required (%)	Required (%)	Highly Required (%)	Rating (%)
Goal Oriented	3.5	10.4	25.5	36.2	24.4	3.00
Decision Making	2.9	8.9	24.0	30.1	34.1	2.97
Negotiation Skills	5.9	18.3	45.1	28.0	12.7	2.27
Pakistan						
Problem Solving	0.0	5.0	20.5	47.5	27	3.51
Organizational skills	1.9	10.7	20.7	38.0	28.7	3.21
Team work	2.8	17.1	20.5	37.9	21.7	2.10
Entry-level digital skills	1.7	10.5	22.3	46.3	19.2	2.91
Creativity	2.0	15.9	35.9	40.1	6.1	2.14
Decision Making	3.9	11.5	27.0	48.6	9.0	2.57
Subject related skills	7.5	14.6	43.1	30.4	4.4	2.40
Goal Oriented	4.5	10.9	17.3	49.9	17.4	2.71
Saudi Arabia						
Organizational Skills	0.0	2.6	30.5	50.7	16.9	3.81
Entry-level digital skills	1.9	10.2	26.9	38.5	22.5	3.64
Problem solving	2.2	5.4	13.0	48.4	31.0	3.41
Goal Oriented	3.8	10.5	25.4	41.7	18.4	2.99
Team work	1.1	12.5	34.3	37.2	14.9	2.10
Decision Making	0.9	8.1	31.7	45.2	15.0	2.89
Subject-related	8.8	18.5	30.8	40.4	1.5	2.35
Creativity	2.1	18.6	39.5	30.8	9.0	2.20

Note: Table 1 shows the employability skills that human resource managers from each country considered "little required", "somewhat required", "required", and "highly required". Skills with computed rating of (not required, little required, and somewhat required) > 65% are not included in Table 1.

Table 2. Common Employability Skills.

Employability Skills	Overall Rating
Entry-level digital skills	3.58
Problem solving	3.48
Organizational skills	2.90
Goal Oriented	2.81
Decision Making	2.56

Table 3. Learning/Teaching Techniques and Employability Skills.

Teaching/Learning Techniques Employability Skills	Case Study	Simulations	Role-play	Group Work	Class Presentation	Managing Projects	Videos Shown in Class	Conventional Lectures by Instructor	Individual Research Work	Classroom Discussions	Text Book Reading	Guest Speaker	Computerized Learning Assignments
Australia													
Entry-level digital skills	1.21	2.03	3.74	1.67	1.81	1.74	2.14	1.96	2.61	2.80	2.09	1.94	1.92
Problem solving	3.72	2.26	2.87	1.56	1.45	2.17	1.79	1.74	1.91	3.1	2.99	2.05	2.14
Decision Making	3.16	1.72	2.87	2.06	1.94	2.43	1.97	2.09	2.44	2.66	2.57	1.7	2.03
Goal Oriented	1.96	1.9	2.88	1.54	2.13	2.15	1.38	2.19	3.44	1.83	1.98	2.11	1.92
Organizational skills	2.82	1.41	2.73	2.24	2.01	2.03	1.49	2.11	2.16	3.06	2.96	2.14	1.49
China													
Entry-level digital skills	1.9	3.54	1.81	2.05	2.01	1.98	2.65	2.84	2.2	2.10	2.40	1.91	3.67
Problem solving	3.77	2.58	2.09	2.04	3.01	2.14	2.10	2.55	2.07	2.09	2.01	2.10	2.77
Decision Making	2.19	3.14	1.31	2.17	2.00	2.73	1.98	2.88	2.41	1.55	2.00	1.8	2.68
Goal Oriented	1.42	2.84	2.00	2.16	2.01	2.11	2.10	2.94	2.00	2.14	2.05	2.30	2.78
Organizational skills	2.05	3.17	2.15	2.10	1.77	2.04	2.11	3.55	2.10	2.11	2.18	2.44	2.19
Pakistan													
Entry-level digital skills	2.01	3.24	2.11	2.10	2.55	1.98	2.09	3.66	2.00	2.14	2.21	2.34	3.55
Teaching/Learning Techniques Employability Skills	Case Study	Simulations	Role-play	Group work	Class presentation	Managing projects	Videos shown in class	Conventional lectures by instructor	Individual research work	Classroom discussions	Text Book reading	Guest Speaker	Computerized learning assignments
Problem solving	3.47	2.12	2.84	2.64	2.91	2.17	2.67	2.40	2.87	3.57	2.38	2.00	2.08
Decision Making	2.67	2.09	3.11	2.11	2.14	2.19	1.8	1.93	2.57	2.06	2.11	3.07	2.88
Goal Oriented	2.04	2.84	3.20	2.02	1.88	1.99	2.01	2.11	2.70	2.55	1.89	2.14	2.05

Table 3. Cont.

Teaching/Learning Techniques Employability Skills	Case Study	Simulations	Role-play	Group work	Class presentation	Managing projects	Videos shown in class	Conventional lectures by instructor	Individual research work	Classroom discussions	Text Book reading	Guest Speaker	Computerized learning assignments
Organizational skills	2.11	3.21	2.71	2.14	3.01	2.05	2.65	2.44	2.01	2.96	2.00	2.40	1.99
Saudi Arabia													
Entry-level digital skills	2.14	3.16	2.21	2.11	2.17	2.11	2.85	2.99	2.11	2.14	1.94	2.00	2.95
Problem solving	3.25	2.97	2.05	2.01	2.91	2.03	2.07	2.89	2.01	1.94	2.12	2.16	2.77
Decision Making	2.14	2.88	1.93	2.03	2.80	2.06	1.87	2.14	2.13	2.15	1.58	2.00	3.11
Goal Oriented	2.00	2.15	2.05	2.16	2.84	2.01	2.75	3.44	2.14	2.17	2.17	3.14	2.40
Organizational skills	2.14	3.08	2.55	2.18	2.01	2.11	3.54	2.96	1.81	1.68	1.90	2.59	2.21

Note: Ratings are computed on the average of: little effective = 1; somewhat effective = 2; effective = 3; highly effective = 4. Based on past studies, 20 skills were identified and categorized into two categories. Skills that individuals developed during professional life such as market analysis, leadership etc. were excluded from the list because the focus of this study was to explore only those skills that can be developed through higher education and training. Above average results are in bold.

Table 4. Effective Teaching/Learning Techniques for Common Employability Skills.

Common Employability Skills	Teaching/Learning Techniques	Overall Rating
Entry level digital skills	Computerized learning assignments	3.02
	Simulations	2.99
Problem solving	Conventional lecture by instructor	2.86
	Case Studies	3.55
	Classroom discussion	2.67
	Class presentation	2.57
	Case Studies	2.67
Decision Making	Computerize learning	2.64
	Individual research work	2.55
Goal Oriented	Conventional Lecture	2.67
	Individual research work	2.57
Organizational Skills	Simulations	2.76
	Conventional Lecture	2.71
	Role-play	2.53

Note: Teaching/learning techniques with less than average < 2.50 were excluded from Table 4.

3. Results

In phase one, a total of 200 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to human resource managers based on 50 from each country (Australia, China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia). A total 158 (79%) completed questionnaire were returned (Australia = 34 (68%), China = 39 (78%), Pakistan = 42 (84%), and Saudi Arabia = 43 (86%)) and used in data analysis. Table 1 presents the overall response from human resource managers in each country in terms of percentage for important employability skills and in terms of the average of the response. To compute the average rating, not required weighed as one, little required weighed as two, somewhat required as three, required as four, and highly required as five. As presented in Table 1, entry-level digital skills are highly required skills in Australia which is rated as above required (3.99), followed by problem-solving (3.34), organizational skill (3.19), decision making (2.99), and goal-oriented (2.74). Similarly, entry-level digital skill is also a highly required skill in China which is rated as above required (3.84), followed by problem-solving (3.68), Organizational skills (3.11) goal-oriented (3.00), and decision-making skills (2.97). In contrast, problem-solving is a highly required skill in Pakistan which is rated as above required (3.51), followed by organizational skills (3.21), entry-level digital skills (2.91), goal-oriented (2.71), and decision making (2.57). Lastly, organizational skill is a highly required skill in Saudi Arabia which is rated as above required (3.81), followed by entry-level digital skills (3.64), problem-solving skills (3.41), goal-oriented (2.99), and decision making (2.89).

In phase two, common skills were identified in each country and further computed as presented in Table 2. A total of five common skills were identified and ranked with an overall rating that indicated that overall entry-level digital skills are highly rated skills (3.58), followed by problem-solving (3.48), organizational skills (2.90), goal-oriented (2.81), and decision making (2.56) as presented in Table 2.

In phase three, a total of 200 self-administered questionnaires was distributed to faculty members in different universities of Australia, China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia (50 faculty members from each country). A total of 169 (84.5%) completed questionnaire were returned (Australia = 38 (76%), China = 42 (84%), Pakistan = 45 (90%) and Saudi Arabia = 44 (88%)) and used in data analysis. Table 3 presents the overall response from faculty members involved in teaching business graduates in these countries. To compute the average rating of different teaching/learning techniques against five common employability skills (entry-level digital skills, problem-solving, organizational skills, goal-oriented, and decision making) not effective weighs as one, little effective as two, somewhat effective as three, effective as four, and highly effective as five.

Results, as presented in Table 3, indicate that in Australia, role-play (3.74) is a highly rated teaching/learning technique to equip the students with entry-level digital skills,

followed by classroom discussions (2.80), and individual research work (2.61), whereas case study (3.72) is a highly rated teaching/learning technique to develop problem-solving skills of students, followed by classroom discussions (3.10), textbook reading (2.99), and role-play (2.87). Similarly, case study (3.16) is also considered an important teaching/learning technique to improve the decision-making skills of students in Australia, followed by role-play (2.87), classroom discussions (2.66), and textbook reading (2.57). In contrast, individual research work is a highly rated (3.44) teaching/learning technique to improve goal-oriented skills of students in Australia followed by role-play (2.88). Finally, classroom discussion (3.06) is a highly rated teaching/learning technique to develop organizational skills among students, followed by textbook reading (2.96), case studies (2.82), and role-play (2.73) in Australia.

Concerning China, computerized learning assignments (3.67) are highly rated teaching/learning techniques to equip the students with entry-level digital skills, followed by simulations (3.54), conventional lectures by the instructor (2.84), and video shown in class (2.65), whereas case study (3.77) is a highly rated teaching/learning technique to develop problem-solving skills of students, followed by class presentations (3.01), computerized learning assignments (2.77), simulations (2.58), and conventional lectures by the instructor (2.55). In contrast, simulations (3.14) are considered important teaching/learning techniques to improve the decision-making skills of students in China, followed by conventional lectures by the instructor (2.88), managing projects (2.73), and computerized learning assignments (2.68). In addition, conventional lectures by the instructor (2.94) are highly rated teaching/learning techniques to improve the goal-oriented skills of students in China, followed by simulations (2.84) and computerized learning assignments (2.78). Similarly, conventional lectures by the instructor (3.55) are highly rated teaching/learning techniques to develop organizational skills among students, followed by simulations (3.17) in China.

Results, as presented in Table 3, indicated that in Pakistan, conventional lectures by instructors are highly rated (3.66) teaching/learning techniques to equip students with entry-level digital skills, followed by computerized learning assignments (3.55), simulations (3.24), and class presentations (2.55), whereas classroom discussion (3.57) is a highly rated teaching/learning technique to develop problem-solving skills of students, followed by case study (3.47), class presentations (2.91), individual research work (2.87), role-play (2.84), videos shown in class (2.67) and group work (2.64). In contrast, role-play (3.11) is considered an important teaching/learning technique to improve decision-making skills of students in Pakistan followed by a guest speaker (3.07), computerized learning (2.88), case study (2.67), and individual research work (2.57). Similarly, role-play is also (3.20) a highly rated teaching/learning technique to improve the goal-oriented skills of students in Pakistan, followed by simulations (2.84), individual research work (2.70), and classroom discussion (2.55). In contrast, simulation (3.21) is a highly rated teaching/learning technique to develop organizational skills among students, followed by classroom presentations (3.01), classroom discussions (2.96), role-play (2.71), and videos shown in class (2.65).

Finally, results also indicated that simulations are highly rated (3.16) teaching/learning techniques to equip the students with entry-level digital skills in Saudi Arabia, followed by conventional lectures by the instructor (2.99), computerized learning assignments (2.95), and videos shown in class (2.85), whereas case studies (3.27) are highly rated teaching/learning techniques to develop the problem-solving skills of students, followed by simulations (2.97), conventional lectures by instructors (2.89), and computerized learning assignment (2.77). In contrast, computerized learning assignments (3.11) are considered important teaching/learning techniques to improve decision-making skills of students in Saudi Arabia, followed by simulations (2.88) and classroom presentations (2.80). In addition, conventional lectures (3.44) are highly rated teaching/learning techniques to improve the goal-oriented skills of students in Saudi Arabia, followed by a guest speaker (3.14), class presentations (2.84), and videos shown in class (2.75). In contrast, videos shown in class (3.54) is highly rated teaching/learning technique to develop organizational skills

among students in Saudi Arabia, followed by simulations (3.08), conventional lectures (2.96), guest speakers (2.59), and role-play (2.55).

In phase four, all teaching/learning techniques were computed against five common employability skills (entry-level digital skills, problem-solving, decision making, goal oriented, and organizational skills). As presented in Table 4, overall simulation is rated as above effective teaching/learning technique (3.12) to acquire entry-level digital skills followed by computerized learning assignments (2.92), whereas overall case studies are rated as above effective (3.13) teaching/learning technique to acquire problem-solving skills, followed by individual research work (3.07) and managing projects (3.05). Similarly, case studies are also rated as above effective (3.04) teaching/learning technique to improve students' decision-making skills, followed by role-play (2.89) and individual research work (2.54). Furthermore, individual research work is rated as above effective (2.92) teaching/learning technique to acquire goal-oriented skills, followed by case studies (2.51). Finally, managing projects (2.92) is rated as above effective teaching/learning technique to equip students with organizational skills, followed by classroom discussions (2.89) and textbook reading (2.54).

4. Discussion

Individuals require multiple skills to perform different tasks, and culture may influence how that specific task needs to be performed in a particular country/culture. Considering this fact, organizations often try to attract and retain individuals who carry a certain set of skills required to perform different tasks in the culture in which they are operating. Researchers also believe that employability skills are culture-specific and vary from country to country [2,3,11]. The findings of the current study partially support past researchers' viewpoints and explain that not all employability skills are cultural-specific and that few employability skills required by many organizations are the same across cultures. The current study indicates that Australia, China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia display different cultures on Hofstede's (1984) [1] cultural dimensions and that few employability skills such as entry-level digital skills, problem-solving, organizational skills, goal-oriented, and decision-making skills can be considered universal.

Although these skills are common among four respondent countries, industry professionals ranked these skills differently in each country. possible due to cultural differences. Considering [1] cultural dimension, China and Saudi Arabia scored high in power distance and low in uncertainty avoidance, but entry-level digital skills ranked as the most important skills in China, whereas organizational skills were ranked first by professionals in Saudi organizations. In contrast, Pakistan scores intermediate on power distance and high on uncertainty avoidance, but problem-solving skills are highly rated skills by industry professionals. Other than cultural differences, one possible reason might be due to lack of sufficient digital infrastructure; organizations in Pakistan are less inclined to use digital technology, whereas in Australia organizations rapidly adopt digital technologies, thus requiring their employees to possess these skills.

Considering [10] third cultural dimension, "long term orientation", Australia and Saudi Arabia both are normative in their thinking, but other than five common employability skills, many employability skills were rated differently in both countries, For example, industry professionals in Australia ranked self-management skills, learning process, and multicultural and diversity skills above average, whereas teamwork, subjected related, and creativity skills ranked above average in Saudi Arabia. One possible reason might be that Saudi Arabia scores low in uncertainty avoidance which required teamwork to achieve set goals, whereas Australia scores high in uncertainty avoidance in which teamwork may not be that important. Similarly, Pakistan's score intermediate on uncertainty avoidance, and teamwork is rated as above average as well. In contrast, multicultural and diversity skills are common between Australia and China and ranked above average even both countries score differently on power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. In comparison, Pakistan scores high on power distance, the same as China, but multicultural

and diversity skills rank below average in Pakistan. One possible reason might be because Australian and Chinese organizations have more cultural diversity and operate around the world compared to Pakistani organizations. Thus, Australian and Chinese organizations require their employees to possess multicultural and diversity skills to adjust and perform in a multicultural environment. These findings conclude that culture is not always the main factor in influencing employability skills, but there could be a few other factors such as nature or organizational operation, vision and mission, etc., as well. Therefore, these findings do not fully support the argument of past researchers [2,3,11] that employability skills are culturally sensitive and vary from country to country. In addition, [10] cultural dimensions might not be completely reliable to determine which types of employability skills are required in a specific culture.

Past research findings [7,8] have indicated that cultural differences influence teaching/learning techniques, and students from countries/cultures with high power distance and low uncertainty avoidance prefer passive learning/teaching techniques such as conventional lectures, simulations, reading textbooks, managing projects, etc. In contrast, students from countries/cultures with low power distance and high uncertainty avoidance prefer active teaching/learning techniques such as case studies, role-play, classroom discussion, etc. The findings of the current study partially support the past research findings and indicate that not all teaching/learning techniques are culturally sensitive and differ based on country/culture. For example, Australia scores low on power distance and high on uncertainty avoidance with normative thinking, whereas China scores high in power distance and low on uncertainty with pragmatic thinking, but both countries' case studies are ranked highly effective teaching/learning techniques to develop problem-solving skills. Past studies [23,25] suggested that case studies are active-like techniques, and individuals from those countries who score low on power distance and high in uncertainty avoidance prefer active-like teaching/learning techniques. One possible reason behind these findings could be that faculty members engaged in teaching business graduates in countries such as China and Saudi Arabia provide structured guidelines to students explaining what exactly they are required to do with case studies and how they need to solve these case studies, ultimately changing the nature of teaching/learning technique. Ref. [8] highlighted a similar point and explained that active-like teaching/learning techniques could be converted to passive-like by providing structure and details of the tasks.

Based on Ref. [10], Chinese culture is considered pragmatic, whereas culture in Saudi Arabia is normative. However, when it comes to ranking the teaching/learning techniques to equip students with entry-level digital skills, both countries rank simulations and computerized learning assignments as highly effective teaching/learning techniques. Similarly, Pakistan scores 50 on long-term orientation and declared as a mixture of normative/pragmatic culture. Faculty members in Pakistan ranked conventional lectures as a highly effective teaching/learning technique, followed by simulations and computerized learning assignments. Based on overall evaluation, simulations and computerized learning assignments are highly ranked teaching/learning techniques in normative, pragmatic, and mixed cultures. These findings explain that regardless of cultural difference (normative or pragmatic) some passive teaching/learning techniques are considered effective. One possible reason behind these findings could be the type of skills because these digital skills could be better learned through simulations or computerized learning assignments as compared to group work or a guest speaker.

Other important findings from the current study indicate that faculty members in China and Saudi Arabia rank conventional lectures as effective teaching/learning techniques to equip students with employability skills such as decision making, problem-solving, goal-oriented, entry-level digital skills, and organizational skills. One possible reason could be that faculty members believe that explaining any concept and making students understand the basics are important before getting them involved in the practical task. Another possible reason could be the education system in these countries requires faculty members to deliver lectures, and students feel that learning activities are incomplete

without conventional lectures, expecting instructors to deliver lectures. Similar findings are also reported by Ref. [8] who highlighted that conventional lectures are the most popular learning/teaching techniques among Asian students.

Findings of this study also explain that regardless of cultural differences, few teaching/learning techniques are highly ranked by the faculty members. As case studies, role-play, computerized learning assignments, simulations, conventional lectures, and individual research work are highly ranked teaching/learning techniques to equip the students with common employability skills such as entry-level digital skills, problem-solving, organizational skills, goal-oriented, and decision making. Although culture influences these teaching/learning techniques up to a certain extent, overall, these techniques could be useful in almost every culture/country. The reason behind these findings could be due to cultural awareness among individuals since we are living in the twenty-first century where the world has become a global village and individuals frequently share their cultures, values, beliefs, and system across countries/cultures. For example, instructors often teach in other countries that can be similar to or different from the instructor's home country culture and exchange cultural values and beliefs with host country individuals including other instructors and students. Similarly, students often travel to other countries for educational purposes and share their cultural values, beliefs, and norms that may reshape their home country's culture to a certain extent. These could be the reasons why in-country cultures that score high on power distance and low on uncertainty avoidance such as China and Saudi Arabia rated active teaching/learning techniques such as case studies highly effective instead of passive teaching/learning techniques such as book reading. Current study findings also indicate that [10] cultural dimensions may not be completely valid to explain the type of teaching/learning techniques required among different cultures.

When faculty members obtained their education from those countries that score low on power distance and high on uncertainty avoidance such as the UK, USA, and Australia, they might get used to activities such as teaching/learning techniques. Upon returning to their home country where country culture scores high on power distance and low on uncertainty avoidance, they might try to apply the same active teaching/learning techniques, whereas passive teaching/learning techniques is required in these countries as explained by Ref. [10]. These faculty members might believe that active learning/teaching techniques are more effective compared to passive teaching/learning techniques, and students might get used to active learning/teaching techniques similar to the way faculty members get used to them while studying in other countries such as the UK, USA or Australia. Therefore, future research should explore students' perspectives as well as seek to better understand what type of teaching/learning techniques they prefer or consider effective and what their perceived employability skills are?

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