



Expectation-Achievement Gap Analysis of Students' Generic Competences

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ABSTRACT

Purpose Quality of education depends upon teachers' competence which may have direct impact on students' generic competence. The present study was carried out to analyse the gap between the expected and the achieved generic competences among the 1st year students of Bachelor of Education. **Methodology** The sample of the study was collected from 10 universities of the Punjab (Pakistan). 1st year students of Bachelor of Education were selected as the respondents of the study. Competence scale was used to collect data from the students. The scale, which included 19 competences, was adopted from the Reflex Project (an international project).

Findings: The reliability of the scale was 0.81. Expectation-achievement gap was not observed in 12 out of 19 competences; but the gap was found in the rest i.e. the seven competences including writing and speaking in a foreign language, mobilizing others' capacity, performing well under pressure, using computers and the internet, readiness to new opportunities, and acquiring new knowledge rapidly. **Implication to Research and Practice:** This study revealed that both indicators (i.e. expectation-achievement) were less than the optimal level. The study also predicted that comprehensibly, sensitization and reorganization of the learning experiences might narrow gap between students' expectation and their achievement of generic competences.

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Introduction

The notion of competence is beyond just gaining knowledge and skills as it refers to the mobilisation of knowledge, skills, behaviour, attitudes and ethics (Fernandez et al., 2012; Hoskins & Crick, 2010). According to Boritz and Carnaghan (2003) competences are derived from a more vocational approach to education. Definitions of what constitutes a competence-based approach vary but a communal thread is the focus on outcomes in terms of the workplace situation. Competence is the ability to perform any work task to a defined standard. Capabilities, on the other side, are related to knowledge, competences and personal characteristics needed to perform particular tasks. The interchange of terms in the related literature has blurred the understanding of the nature of skill development. In this regard knowledge of differing perceptions of skill requirements can offer insights into the outcomes of the shift in educational emphasis towards employability.

Mayer (1998) rearranged the work skills into nine categories namely; 1) reading, writing and mathematical skills, 2) effective communication skills, 3) critical thinking skills, 4) group interactions, 5) personal development skills, 6) computer skills, 7) technical systems, 8) leadership skills and 9) team work. The subsequent skills were stated frequently such as: knowing how to learn, competence in reading, writing and arithmetic, listening and oral communication skills, adaptability by creative thinking and problem-solving skills, personal management skills with strong self-esteem and initiative, interpersonal skills, teamwork, leadership skills and basic technological skills. Furthermore, Sherehiy et al. (2007) concluded that work skills with high demand are skills for knowledge work (new ideas, designs, innovation, marketing, accountability and management), soft skills (conflict resolution skills, effective leadership skills, team-building skills and workplace communication skills), literacy skills, and numeracy skills. Baker and Henson (2010) addressed only three areas of work skills i.e. generic skills, career management skills and career sector knowledge. Additionally, Le Deist and Winterton (2005) linked employee's competences with cognitive, functional and social competence.

Commonly, there are two types of competences, the competence which are related to one job and the competences which are general and linked with all the jobs. The competences are known as specific competences and general competences respectively. Context bound competences are called specific competences. These competences are important for their specificity, which are situation specific, discipline specific and job specific. The distinctive feature of this broader division of competences is 'particularity'. For instance, a physician must have abilities (and skills) to be regarded as a physicist; a student must know with the attributes (and ethics) of learning, and a teacher should be equipped with pedagogical skills (sufficient) to be a teacher. The specific competences are the abilities to perform the job well and sometimes known as 'hard skills'. They may be included as: technical abilities, knowledge and qualifications. Specific competences have utmost importance in the world of work. These skills are of critical significance in some fields i.e. medicine, surgery, space sciences, vocational skills etc.

The specific competences are again subdivided. One such categorization given by Paradeise and Thoenig (2013) has three categories: 1. Specific to organization (specificity regarding organization); 2. Specific to tasks (specificity regarding tasks); and 3. Specific to economic sector (specificity regarding industry). Another classification is presented based

on the 3D concept of competence: 1. Person specific (student or professional); 2. Situation specific (educational setting or world of work); 3. Institution specific (educational institute or professional organization).

On the other hand, generic competences are not context bound competences. Generality is the main characteristic of these type of competences. For example, a university teacher and the public relation officer are expected to possess these types of competences. Generic competences (which may ensure the transferability of professional skills) by identifying the meta skills (which works on the other competences) have almost completed the ever-developing universe of competence.

Mayer (1998) defined the key competences with relation to employability skills. The committee termed these competences necessary for patterns of work emerging in the current scenario. Implementation of knowledge and skills in a comprehensible way in work related situation was focused in these competences. This suggests that key competences are generic in the sense that they are applicable to work generally instead of being specific in a particular profession or industry. This characteristic implies that the major competences are necessary for participation in work as well as effective participation in future education and more generally in adult life.

In addition to specific competences, the generic competences are the additional advantage of the school years. These types of competences are learnt by an individual from the outside of formal education system and these are equally important in various practical situations. Barrie (2006) advocates that the generic competences cannot be applicable in isolation but in relation with other generic competences. In spite of their importance, the generic competences are very difficult to define. There is a long debate that show these competences are generic. Literally, it can be assumed that generic competences are discipline-free or discipline-neutral competences. Furthermore, the generic competences of science and arts students are indistinguishable; but we cannot apply this rule on all the generic competences. An example of written communication may help to clear the situation easily. The creative voice that is appreciated in numerous arts disciplines is quite different from the style common in sciences. Due to this reason behind it, many people use the name as transferable competences instead of generic competences, developed in one area and it serves as the base for further improvement in the other area. Generic competences also differ in nomenclature around the globe. In few countries they are specific to profession whereas in some other countries mostly placed them in their social relevance.

The present focus in this study is on the generic competences related to employability skills. In the last few years, there is an increase in the significance of generic competences which have been developed in higher education system. The maintenance or enhancement in the learning outcomes of study programs of higher education institutions is one of the most important reasons behind the development of the research into higher education students' competences that are developed in many study programs. However, since the early 1990s, generic competences can be considered as transferable, multidimensional knowledge, skills and attitudes which could be learnt and developed in numerous ways and learning environments. These competences may be applied across a diversity of job and life contexts. The employers from the market/industry are the chief cause behind the urgency in developing generic competences during the present years. This is due to fast

transitions in technology and international level competition motivate the employers to look for the workforce who possess cooperation, teamwork, flexibility, ability to take initiative, work in team and ability to undertake many different tasks and information.

Generic competences are also cognitive, societal and attitudinal traits which refine and upgrade the professional behaviour. These competences may not call for the professional life, but can be a source of addition to the candidates' human capital by contributing their development in the professional life. Moreover, the concept of globalization, the speedy change in technology and the emergence of new and novel economies have brought about the increased demand level of the competence for workers. The competences are also reputed as basic competences, professional competences, life-long competences, soft skills, workability competences, and analytical competences (Tuononen, 2019). The graduates perceived that in terms of generic competences, the major emphasis was given firstly to written communication, followed by team working skills, interpersonal skills and oral expressions. Bridgstock (2009) has mentioned that the conventional definition of the term generic competence is too narrow and teachers should be taking into account the need for broader career management skills. The emphasis in this context is on building lifelong learning skills that permit the graduates to adapt to the changing requirements of job markets that will occur over their working life. This raises the issue of what is actually meant by the term 'employable (generic) competence'.

The employers working at global labour markets are expected from the workers possessing multi-purpose and wide range of generic competences. So, it is the dire need of work place to perform as per requirement or the expectations of the employers (Chinoracký & Čorejová, 2019; Cunha et al., 2019; Rawlings et al., 2005). In rapid economic change of the current era, the most important issue in graduate employment is the hiring of the *right* graduate for the *right* job in a very competitive market. Since the 1990s, due to the vast expansion of higher education, main graduate recruiters still experience the problems getting the right-quality graduates they need. Every year many graduates being produced by the government and private institutions over the globe, which means that there is strong competition for jobs among newly graduates within the country. Marvelous change in the technological developments and globalization has formed substantial impact on the nature of work where advanced usage of technology is a necessity in order to compete in the global era (Singh & Singh, 2008). Therefore, a flexible workforce with well-developed generic competence such as creative thinking skills, problem solving skills and analytical abilities, is greatly needed by employers in different industries in order to meet the challenges faced by businesses. Employers are also increasingly looking for graduates to be recruited with a wide range of competences apart from those linked directly with their area of studies (Rawlings et al., 2005).

Many tasks, now-a-days, are becoming more interdependent and employers are seeking the graduates who possess a combination of technical and human relation skills. The employers preferred the graduates who display fundamental, higher-order thinking and affective skills. The employers require graduates with more intrinsically humanistic skills rather academic or technical skills. The success in graduate labor market is typically defined as graduates securing employment in jobs that make appropriate use of the skills and knowledge developed in the course of their university studies. A key element of the government rationale for higher

education expansion is the economic and organizational restructuring associated with the “knowledge-based economy” and the perceived necessity of enhancing the supply of high-skilled labor to ensure national competitiveness (Wilton, 2008).

Kavanagh and Drennan (2008) narrate that the students need to be aware that employers have many expectations of skills and competences possessed by the graduates of in terms of effective communication, analytical ability, professionalism, cooperation, come up with new ideas and teamwork. Though employers expect from accounting graduates to have a better understanding of basic accounting skills and strong analytical abilities, awareness about business and knowledge in the real world of work are very much preferred. Analysis of thinking processes and communication skills of accounting graduates are required compared to marks or grades obtained during the study.

Employers have often expressed disappointment over the skills, competences and knowledge of graduates of accounting subjects from universities. This has resulted in a gap in the form of conflicting views between the employers and the students about the competences that must be mastered by university graduates. The expectation gap between the perception of university students and expectation of employers with regard to the important competences needed by graduates arises because the opinion of accounting educators is not in line with perception of employers resulting in varying perceptions of the employers.

The day by day changing nature of higher education market and the structure of graduate labor markets have increased emphasis on employability skills of the university graduates. In all disciplines especially professional degree programs recognized the increased complications and rapid change in the professional role of the graduates has emphasized the need for graduates with higher level competences. It has been believed that students are not adequately prepared for employment in the modern business world via their academic experiences. The traditional university curricula have been challenged as it is not adequately preparing university graduates for employment. It is argued that in producing graduates for the employment, the curriculum should integrate various technical and generic competences (Mathews et al., 1990).

Increasingly, there has been a recognition that technical skills essential to be accompanied by non-accounting skills in a professional accountant, includes making a successful use of the knowledge obtained through education. Employers have also been advocated a move away from more procedural approaches to teaching in professional degrees and are no longer prepared to accept graduates who are only able to demonstrate the technical competences. Prior research depicts that the university graduates particularly accounting graduates need to enable them to demonstrate an ability to present their views in writing, and ability to articulate and describe their opinion in a convincing verbal communication. Within the universities an attempt has been made to clear that the nature of the education offered to the students and then the potential contribution of graduates to the society. This has been reflected in the enunciation of descriptions of the employability competences of graduates (also known as generic competences or graduate abilities). These employability competences have come to be known as the skills, knowledge and abilities of graduates, other than disciplinary content knowledge, which are implementable in a wide range of contexts acquired as a result of degree completion (Bowden, 2004).

The higher education policies have clearly articulated a great emphasis on employability skills. The Australian universities have introduced requirements that university graduates should complete a 'generally accepted' set of traits typically embedded within degree courses across each university. These types of university policies reveal the desire of universities to promote the development of graduate capabilities that encompass lifelong learning, technical training, oral, written and interpersonal skills, as well as exposure to organizational skills and technology generally known as generic competences. As a result, numerous professional degree programs, including accounting, have received criticisms from employers, students and teachers due to their inability to produce the graduates that meet the needs of their profession. Such criticism persists despite extensive efforts to align the curricula with market demand, and the various assurances of learning and accreditation processes that have become defacto industry standards in higher education.

Over the last two decades, government, industry owners and employers have also criticized the willingness to work of university students from various discipline areas. Particular criticisms stress upon graduates' less 'employability', or 'generic' competence. The less appropriately prepared graduates, and the pressure from employers to alleviate this shortage of skills, has impact in professional university degree programs considerably. It is broadly accepted that university degree programs which focused on profession should prepare graduates to enter into the profession of their own choice. Professional degrees, have historically emphasized upon development of technical skills and knowledge within a student's disciplinary domain, because these types of skills were seen essential to the overall success of graduates as professionals. However, due to advancements in technology and organizational changes in contemporary workplaces, technical skills no longer represent the crucial skill requirements of the graduates (Mitchell et al., 2010). Instead, "softer" interpersonal and professional skills have become the key success driver in the careers of graduates professionally.

There is gap in the expectation of employers and the performance of university graduates. This expectation gap is also seen in perception differences in the expectations of teachers and employers regarding the competences that should be achieved by the students for their career development (it reflects the differences in the expectations of university teachers and employers). Expectation gap is also seen in the perception differences of teachers and employers regarding the competences that should be achieved by the students for their career development (reflecting differences in the expectations of teachers and employers).

The learning outcomes connected with generic competences have typically been developed in various courses through case studies, group discussions, problem solving skills, debates, group assignments, and simulated decision-making in complex and vague situations. The term 'employment abilities' in this study was identified as the technical and non-technical skill set essential for graduates. Given the demands of universities and professional bodies, there has been continuous criticism that professional programs, particularly accounting programs fail to equip graduates with an appropriate set of employable capabilities to meet the demands of a rapidly changing business environment (Hoskins & Crick, 2010; Howieson, 2003). This perceived mismatch between abilities which employers expect of fresh accounting graduates gives rise to what Bui and Porter (2010) stated as 'expectation-performance gap'.

Employers also expect from the graduates to perform numerous competences at various levels at their workplace. Unfortunately, the students with professional degrees do not meet the employers' expectations. The literature on employer expectations and graduates' performance suggests that there is an overall expectation-performance gap. Though it may be unrealistic to expect fresh graduates to immediately meet the requirements of employers, there is evidence that the expectations of employers needed a greatest level of attention to be given to the graduate employment abilities being incorporated and delivered in the courses. Employers also appear to focus on what may be termed as higher order personal and interpersonal skills including ability to engage customers, negotiate effectively and act deliberately (Anderson & Jap, 2005).

Many researchers have been investigating the expectation and achievement gap for promoting interest in generic competence for achieving the goal of employability. Rahman (2015), for instance, examined the gap in expectation and achievement in developing the generic competences among students. The results of the study revealed that the students' achievement of generic competences was not to the employers' expectation while being at their workplace. In his study, he found a gap in expectation and achievement of generic competences among students. Bui and Porter (2010), too, have highlighted the expectation and achievement gap in accounting education. They viewed that the gap exists between the competences expected by a workplace from the students and the actual competences attained by the students. Higher education institutions are indeed struggling hard to develop competences among students to enhance probability of their employability; which in fact is an addition to the human capital of an institution.

A very limited number of studies have assessed the perceptions of various stakeholders about development of employment abilities that are distinct feature of graduate employability. For instance, Awayiga et al. (2010) conducted a study about perception of student and employer regarding skill development. They explored that there were some agreements between the two groups regarding skills required for success in an accounting career i.e. analysis skills, problem solving skills, written and oral communication skills and teamwork. Although, there was a difference in the views of how each group ranked the significance of these skills. The university programs were giving very much emphasize on written communication skills while the employers were keen to hire the graduates with work experience that empowered them to successfully perform an immediate role within the business industry.

Metilda and Neena (2016) investigated the skills (competences) expected by the employers from students of Business Education at various levels of organization and found that there was a gap between actual and expected competences among students. Ironically, such a gap was surprising for all business related educational programs. Hakim and Bizri (2015) also explored the expectation and achievement gap in the context of the Lebanese workplace. A noticeable expectation and achievement gap was identified in Lebanon's accounting education students. Competences presented by students upon employment, were not as per standards of the employment or workplace. An expectation and achievement gap was investigated by Hedberg and Von Malmberg (2003) and formulated the guidelines of Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).

In fact, different stakeholders have different expectations for student competences regarding their better performance in the field. These expectations are because of increasing pressure of competition, day by day innovations in technology and rapidly

varying global environment. Consequently, to compete with the changing workplace situations the higher education and the market expected students' readiness for work at par at international level (Hall et al., 2011). Likewise, Low et al. (2016) stated that the *expectation gap* happens between the competences students achieve from the institutions and the competences expected by the employers from the new hires.

Multiple reasons have been put forward to explain this gap including differences in perceptions regarding the capabilities which accounting graduates should have and the appropriateness of accounting programs to develop these capabilities. The aforementioned literature review has addressed numerous perceptions of graduates, employers and teachers of employment capabilities. This review suggests possible reasons why there exists the gap in expectation and performance.

The *expectation gap* had not been evidenced previously in the literature. Besides, a research gap between employers' expectation from newly hired graduates' generic competences and graduates' actual level has been vastly felt. There is also no research conducted on *students*. Briefly speaking, there is no ample literature available that can examine the gap between students' expectation and their achievement of generic competences. Hence, there was a need to investigate the expectation and achievement gap among students who are studying accounting at the Department of Education. This provides the rationale for present study. This study was conducted in the context of phasing out of BEd-1st year programme.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to:

- find out the gap between expectation and achievement of generic competences as perceived by the students of BEd-1st year program
- analyse the gap between optimal and expectation level of generic competences as perceived by the students of BEd-1st year program
- analyse the gap between optimal and achievement level of generic competences as perceived by the students of BEd-1st year program

Methods

- *Research design*

A quantitative correlation study method was adopted to conduct this study. Quantitative research method was employed to collect the data from 10 national universities of Pakistan.

- *Sampling and population*

All 16 public sector universities of Punjab having Department of Education constituted the population for this study. The researchers selected 200 graduates of BEd-1st year program from MEd and MPhil programs purposively from 10 universities.

- *Research Instruments*

An adopted competence scale was used to execute the present study. The scale having 19 generic competences had in fact been developed for the Reflex Project. The project was

of an international level executed in 14 European countries and Japan as well. The nineteen competences included in the scale were: (1) Writing and speaking in a foreign language, (2) Mobilizing others' capacity, (3) Performing well under pressure, (4) Presenting products, ideas or reports, (5) Using computers and the internet, (6) Readiness to new opportunities, (7) Acquiring new knowledge rapidly, (8) Writing reports, memos or documents, (9) Thinking analytically, (10) Other fields' knowledge, (11) Negotiating effectively, (12) Asserting authority, (13) Coordinating activities, (14) Using time efficiently, (15) Own field mastery, (16) Coming up with new ideas and solutions, (17) Making meaning clear to others, (18) Working with others, (19) Willingness to questioning.

Salas Velasco (2014) used this scale in France and later on under his supervision, Sahibzada (2012) validated it at university level in Pakistani context. The reliability of the scale was calculated through Cronbach Alpha test, which was 0.81.

Results

Table 1 reflects the difference between expectation and achievement of students regarding generic competences. Data in the table show that overall the significant difference was not observed between expectation and achievement of students regarding generic competences as indicated by mean difference (0.18) at 0.05 level of significance. It was revealed that students achieved the level of generic competences, they expected from the programme.

Table 1

Difference between expected and achieved level of competences

Competences	\bar{X}_E	\bar{X}_A	\bar{X}_{E-A}	t
1. Writing and speaking in a foreign language	4.70 (1.55)	4.97 (1.29)	0.27	0.77
2. Mobilizing others' capacity	4.77 (1.99)	4.37 (1.32)	0.40	1.56
3. Performing well under pressure	4.93 (1.14)	4.50 (1.48)	0.43	1.29
4. Presenting products, ideas or reports	5.20 (0.96)	4.73 (1.11)	0.47	2.08*
5. Using computers and the internet	4.83 (1.08)	4.43 (1.43)	0.40	1.29
6. Readiness to new opportunities	4.83 (1.59)	4.17 (1.55)	0.66	2.56*
7. Acquiring new knowledge rapidly	5.03 (1.12)	4.53 (1.07)	0.50	2.28*
8. Writing reports, memos or documents	5.17 (1.08)	4.83 (1.23)	0.34	1.38
9. Thinking analytically	4.53 (1.25)	4.20 (1.58)	0.33	1.03
10. Other fields' knowledge	5.23 (1.25)	5.07 (1.20)	0.16	0.53
11. Negotiating effectively	4.90 (1.15)	4.23 (1.33)	0.67	2.08*
12. Asserting authority	5.10 (1.51)	4.93 (1.25)	0.17	0.72
13. Coordinating activities	5.07 (1.48)	4.67 (1.47)	0.40	1.41
14. Using time efficiently	5.33 (1.39)	4.80 (1.69)	0.53	2.23*
15. Own field mastery	5.33 (1.44)	5.13 (1.19)	0.20	0.64
16. Coming up with new ideas and solutions	5.03 (1.40)	4.97 (0.92)	0.06	0.23
17. Making meaning clear to others	5.07 (1.20)	4.47 (1.47)	0.60	2.04*
18. Working with others	4.90 (1.32)	4.43 (1.43)	0.47	1.32
19. Willingness to questioning	5.03 (1.88)	4.07 (1.70)	0.96	2.68*
Overall	4.78 (0.72)	4.60 (0.64)	0.18	1.32

\bar{X}_E is Mean of Expected Level; \bar{X}_A is Mean of Achieved Level; \bar{X}_{E-A} is the difference of (Expected - Achieved) Mean Values; values in parentheses are the standard deviations; Significance level ≤ 0.05 ; $df=195$; $N=196$

Table 1 also depicts competence-wise significant difference between expectation and achievement of students regarding nineteen generic competences. The significant difference is observed in seven competences, which are ranked in descending order, based on mean difference. The rank order of these competences is given as follows: writing and speaking in a foreign language, mobilizing others' capacity, performing well under pressure, presenting products, ideas or reports, using computers and the internet, readiness to new opportunities, and acquiring new knowledge rapidly. The significant difference in above mentioned competences indicated that students could not achieve the level of generic competences which they were expecting.

The statistically insignificant difference was found between expectation and achievement of students in remaining twelve competences i.e. own field mastery, other fields' knowledge, thinking analytically, negotiating effectively, coordinating activities, using time efficiently, working with others, making meaning clear to others, asserting authority, willingness to questioning, coming up with new ideas and solutions, and presenting products, ideas or reports. This leads to the conclusion that students achieved the level of generic competences which they expected from the programme.

The relationship between expectation and achievement of students regarding generic competences was found through Pearson Correlation. It was found that significantly positive but moderate relationship ($r=0.46$, $p<0.01$) between expectation and achievement of students was existed. It indicated that if the expectation level of students is high then their achievement level will also be high and vice versa. For example, it was evident that in the competences, where students' expectation level was found high their level of achievement, was also high. Whereas, in the competences, where students' expectation level was found low, their level of achievement was also low.

Table 2:

Difference between expected and optimal level (i.e. 7)

Competence Analysis	\bar{X}_E	<i>t</i>
1. Writing and speaking in a foreign language	4.70 (1.55)	8.09*
2. Mobilizing others' capacity	4.77 (1.19)	10.24*
3. Performing well under pressure	4.93 (1.14)	9.90*
4. Presenting products, ideas or reports	5.20 (0.96)	10.25*
5. Using computers and the internet	4.83 (1.08)	10.93*
6. Readiness to new opportunities	4.83 (1.59)	7.42*
7. Acquiring new knowledge rapidly	5.03 (1.12)	9.54*
8. Writing reports, memos or documents	5.17 (1.08)	9.25*
9. Thinking analytically	4.53 (1.25)	10.79*
10. Other fields' knowledge	5.23 (1.25)	7.73*
11. Negotiating effectively	4.90 (1.15)	9.95*
12. Asserting authority	5.10 (1.51)	6.86*
13. Coordinating activities	5.07 (1.48)	7.13*
14. Using time efficiently	5.33 (1.39)	6.53*
15. Own field mastery	5.33 (1.44)	6.31*
16. Coming up with new ideas and solutions	5.03 (1.40)	7.68*
17. Making meaning clear to others	5.07 (1.20)	8.81*
18. Working with others	4.90 (1.32)	8.69*
19. Willingness to questioning	5.03 (1.88)	5.71*
Overall	4.78 (0.72)	16.69*

\bar{X}_E is Mean of Expected Level; values in parentheses are the standard deviations; Test value=7; Significance level ≤ 0.05 ; values in steric shows significant difference; $df=195$; $N=196$

Table 2 reflects the significant difference between expected and optimal level of generic competences of students. Table 2 also indicates that overall and competence-wise, highly significant difference was observed between expected and optimal level of generic competences as p -value (0.00) at 0.05 level of significance. So, it was resulted that students could not expect to achieve the generic competences at their optimal level.

Table 3

Difference between achieved and optimal level (i.e. 7)

Competence Analysis	\bar{X}_A	t
1. Writing and speaking in a foreign language	4.97 (1.29)	8.57*
2. Mobilizing others' capacity	4.37 (1.32)	10.88*
3. Performing well under pressure	4.50 (1.48)	9.25*
4. Presenting products, ideas or reports	4.73 (1.11)	11.16*
5. Using computers and the internet	4.43 (1.43)	9.82*
6. Readiness to new opportunities	4.17 (1.55)	9.97*
7. Acquiring new knowledge rapidly	4.53 (1.07)	12.57*
8. Writing reports, memos or documents	4.83 (1.23)	9.61*
9. Thinking analytically	4.20 (1.58)	9.67*
10. Other fields' knowledge	5.07 (1.20)	8.81*
11. Negotiating effectively	4.23 (1.33)	11.38*
12. Asserting authority	4.93 (1.25)	9.00*
13. Coordinating activities	4.67 (1.47)	8.69*
14. Using time efficiently	4.80 (1.69)	7.13*
15. Own field mastery	5.13 (1.19)	8.55*
16. Coming up with new ideas and solutions	4.97 (0.92)	12.00*
17. Making meaning clear to others	4.47 (1.47)	9.37*
18. Working with others	4.43 (1.43)	9.82*
19. Willingness to questioning	4.07 (1.70)	9.44*
Overall	4.60 (0.64)	20.46*

\bar{X}_A is Mean of Achieved Level; values in parentheses are the standard deviations; Test value=7; Significance level ≤ 0.05 ; values in steric shows significant difference; $df=195$; $N=196$

Table 3 reveals the significant difference between achieved and optimal level of generic competences of students. The values in the table indicate that overall and competence-wise, highly significant difference is found between achieved and optimal level of generic competences as p -value=0.00 at 0.05 level of significance. It leads to the conclusion that students could not achieve generic competences at their optimal level.

Discussion

Expectation gap was found in generic competences of students in present study. This indicated that the students' level of expectation to achieve generic competences was below than that of the optimal i.e. seven. But contrary to that, although (Low et al., 2016), too, witnessed the gap in the accounting graduates in New Zealand, but they highlighted that the touted 'expectation gap' was not so prominently prevalent as previous literature has claimed. Results of present study were similar with that of the study Agus et al. (2011) who

investigated into the graduates' competence in Malaysia. The wider gap was witnessed in some of the competences of the graduates in their employment; and these competences were *decision making, problem solving, communication and interpersonal, critical thinking and work planning*. Achievement gap was observed in generic competences of students in present study. It revealed that the level of generic competences of students was lower than that of the optimal level i.e. seven. These results are consistent with the results of [Fernandez et al. \(2012\)](#). In addition to this, the results of the present study are also found similar to that of the study of [Hall et al. \(2011\)](#) in the Vietnamese context. They had been investigating the related literature on the attributes of the students and expectations of the employers in their meta-analysis.

In present study the expectation and achievement gap were not observed in 12 (out of 19) generic competences. A slight gap was however observed in seven of the 19 competences. A few previous studies too had witnessed this gap ([Hakim & Bizri, 2015](#); [Mathews et al., 1990](#); [Metilda & Neena, 2016](#); [Rawlings et al., 2005](#); [Subramonian, 2008](#)). [Hakim and Bizri \(2015\)](#) showed that the gap existed between employers' expectations about the competences of entry level graduates and the competences actually demonstrated by the graduates. Furthermore, employers stated that new accounting students did not have sufficient decision-making skills which were essential for successful career in accounting. The said gap was indicative of the reality that employers and teachers had less interaction. To minimize this gap, the faculty of accounting should work cooperatively with the members of accounting profession. Employers should have vigorous role in the restructuring of accounting programs. [Metilda and Neena \(2016\)](#) analysed employers' perception of Indian Business graduates; and a clear 'skill (competence) gap' between expectation and achievement was observed. [Rahman \(2015\)](#) noted the presence of reasonable gap between readers and reporters. Likewise, [Parvaiz \(2014\)](#) in his study assessed the gap in expectation and achievement in developing generic competences among students. Higher expectation and achievement gap was found among students in their generic competences. [Jackling and De Lange \(2009\)](#) examined the curriculum of accounting students in Australia to check their competences regarding employability for their success in professional life. The findings reflected that the employers and academics perceived that the gap did exist, particularly, in team work competences and oral communication competences. [Subramonian \(2008\)](#) evidenced the gap among hospitality graduate students in Malaysia. The gap was considered to be the major cause of low employability of the graduates.

Conclusion

The research objective of this study was to examine the gap between expectation and achievement of generic competences as perceived by students of BEd-1st year program in 10 Pakistani universities. The expectation and achievement gap was not observed in 12 competences out of 19. The 12 competences were own field mastery, other fields' knowledge, thinking analytically, negotiating effectively, coordinating activities, using time efficiently, working with others, making meaning clear to others, asserting authority, willingness to questioning, coming up with new ideas and solutions, and presenting products, ideas or reports.

However, only a slight gap was observed in seven out of 19 competences; these competences were writing and speaking in a foreign language, mobilizing others' capacity, performing well under pressure, using computers and the internet, readiness to new opportunities, and acquiring new knowledge rapidly. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that for all 19 generic competences the level of both expectation gap and achievement gap separately was lower than that of their optimal levels i.e. seven in both cases. It was five out of seven in case of expectation; and four out of seven in case of achievement. Probability of achievement level will be higher for those who have high expectations (aspiration). In fact, there is direct correspondence between expectation and achievement. Adversely, negative side of it yields expectation and achievement vicious cycle.

The study recommends to implement sensitization and reorganization of learning experiences which may contribute to narrow the said gaps. Generic competences have greater importance in teaching-learning process, so the teachers should implement novel teaching strategies to inculcate the said competences in the students of the program. The administration of the universities may arrange the training sessions, seminars and conferences for the sensitization and restructuring of learning experiences in the students of the program. Future researchers should find out the strategies to minimize the expectation and achievement gap of generic competences among the students.

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