

Moroccan Higher Education Teachers' Perceptions of the Most Important Soft Skills for Employability



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ABSTRACT: Soft skills are career traits that individuals need to possess in order to be employable. These attributes include communication, problem solving, time management, teamwork, and ethics, to mention a few. The Moroccan Ministry of Higher Education has made different reforms in order to ensure the implementation and the development of soft skills and Bachelor Degree Reform of 2019 (BDR) is one of them. However, this reform was cancelled and the new minister of the Moroccan Higher Education and Scientific Research introduced a modified version of the LMD (Licence, Master, Doctorat) system to ensure the implementation of soft skills (Miraoui, 2022). Such modifications were made in order to ease the strain of the transition of Moroccan graduates into the job market. The purpose of this paper is to ascertain educators' perceptions of the critical nature of soft skills for employability in both Ben Msik's faculty of letters and humanities and Faculty of science. Ben Msik faculties' educators were surveyed to assess the importance of specific soft skills and how these skills affect success in the workforce. Forty five educators from Ben Msik's department of Letters and Humanities and Ben Msik's faculty of Sciences in the Casablanca-Settat region of Morocco participated in this study. The data collection instrument was an online questionnaire. Results show that the majority of teachers deem the integration of soft skills in the higher education curriculum important for employability. Educators identified general communication, oral communication, problem solving and critical thinking, teamwork and professionalism and strong work ethic as the top five important soft skills to be integrated in the Moroccan higher education curriculum. General communication, problem solving and critical thinking, teamwork, presentation skills and responsibility were ranked as the top five most important soft skills for employability.

KEYWORDS: Soft skills, Moroccan higher education, integration, curriculum, employability

INTRODUCTION

The term "soft skill" is gaining traction on a global scale and is beginning to compete with academic abilities in the current world of work. Soft skills have become far more important to education, business and professional settings than have been previously recognized. So as to be prepared for employment, university graduates have to be equipped with necessary soft skills along with hard skills in order to land suitable jobs. However, Higher Education Institutions place great emphasis on hard skills and tend to ignore integrating soft skills. According to Chamorro-Premuzic et al. (2010), it is important to implement ".....a set of non-academic attribute, such as the ability to cooperate, communicate and solve problems, often referred to as generic or soft skills in higher education". They further contend that, "unlike academic or disciplinary knowledge, which is subject-based content-specific and formally-assessed, soft skills comprise a range of competencies that are independent of, albeit often developed by, formal curricula and rarely-assessed explicitly" (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2010). This quote clarifies that soft skills are considered as important and indispensable for students to possess as hard skills, however; these skills are hardly included in the Higher Education curricula and are hardly assessed.

The integration and application of soft skills in tertiary Education is a critical and interdisciplinary issue. Prior to beginning professional jobs, soft skills can help students become aware of potential challenges and prepare them to deal with them in the future, making it critical to incorporate them at the university level. In Higher Education, the role of educators is important as they are the ones responsible for integrating soft skills in their lesson plans. As the new introduced modified version of the LMD (Licence, Master, Doctorat) involves the integration of soft skills in the curriculum, Moroccan higher education teachers' perceptions about important soft skills for employability and the importance of the integration of such skills in the curriculum are to be investigated in this paper. Investigating the most important soft skills for employability helps in the process of inculcating such skills in Moroccan Higher Education and ensuring that students are well equipped with these skills as teachers are an important stakeholder in this process.

1. How important is the integration of soft skills in the Moroccan higher education curriculum?

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2. What are the most important soft skills that educators deem important to be integrated in the Moroccan higher education curriculum?
3. What are the most important soft skills that educators regard as essential for employability?
4. Is there a difference between educators' perceptions of the soft skills to be integrated in the Moroccan higher education curriculum based on their gender?
5. Is there a difference between educators' perceptions of the most important soft skills for employability based on their gender?

1 THE IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS

1.1 Employability

The accumulation of research on soft skills has revealed that they are far more important in education, business, and professional settings than had previously been realized. It has been demonstrated that soft skills proficiency is an important criterion in employers' hiring decisions. Additionally, soft skills proficiency plays an important role in the workplace setting because they are generally considered to be determinants of the success of businesses in the modern world. Employers benefit from employees who have soft skills because they can improve their own level of expertise, interact effectively with others, and share ideas with others rather than protect and withhold them (Hawkins & Winter, 2006).

Although soft skills are a new concept in Vietnamese education and the business workplace, according to Truong (2016), the majority of respondents (73 percent) were aware of the concept and understood its significance for the business workplace. They were defined as "graduates' possession" of a specified skill level and attitude required in order to look for and hold a job by some respondents. The value of soft skills was acknowledged by respondents, despite the fact that they used alternative terminology and were unable to use the exact definitions and terminology. When asked about the relevance of soft skills in the workplace, every respondent stated that they are extremely important for employees in all occupations, regardless of their position. As for the relative importance of soft skills versus hard skills, more than half of those who answered the survey said that soft skills played a more important role than hard skills, particularly in the business field.

Many soft skills are regarded as equally significant as hard skills by recruiters in many jobs who believe that they are equally crucial for employability, the success of the business, and the success of the individual. The soft skills component of an individual's success can account for as much as 70% to 85% of his or her overall performance, whereas the hard skills or technical skills component accounts for the remaining 15% to 30% (Hommrichhausen, 2002; Klaus et al., 2007; Watts & Watts, 2008). Employers and recruiters, on the other hand, according to other studies, place similar importance on employees' soft abilities as they do on hard skills when evaluating candidates (Pittenger et al., 2004; Nealy, 2005). Furthermore, according to Pritchard (2013), 75 percent of employers surveyed agreed that soft skills were just as important as hard skills in landing entry-level jobs, and they further assert that having soft skills predicts success, salaries, graduation rates, and home ownership more than having hard skills.

Employers recognize soft skills as a significant predictor of job selection criteria in virtually all sorts of businesses. The work of Wilhelm (2004) and Sutton (2002) confirms that soft skills are increasingly being recognized as critical to achieving success in a variety of workplace settings. Using data from four major metropolitan regions in the United States, including Boston, Atlanta, Detroit, and Los Angeles, Harry Holzer, an economist at Michigan State University (as cited in Conrad & Leigh, 1999), conducted a survey. He discovered that more than half of entry-level employment demand social and interpersonal abilities in addition to technical skills. According to another study conducted at the University of Massachusetts by other economists, 86 percent of employers nationwide consider soft skills to be among their most important hiring criteria when making hiring decisions (cited in Leigh & Conrad, 1999).

Employers' perceptions of the relevance of soft skills in their recruiting decisions were explored by Majid et al. (2019) who utilized a 5-point agreement/disagreement scale to assess their beliefs. The findings revealed that there was considerable agreement on the statement "you would hire those applicants who have weak technical skills but high soft skills," according to the findings. The statements "soft skills play an essential role in the employment of fresh graduates" and "occasionally you have a dilemma whether to hire a fresh graduate with great technical skills but lack soft skills" received moderate agreement as well. According to the findings, having soft skills appears to be a significant element in businesses' hiring decisions when it comes to new hires.

Other studies have found that employers that lack soft skills are less successful in obtaining and maintaining employment (Blaszczynski & Green, 2012). In the same vein, Glenn (2008) cites research that demonstrates that firms that hire individuals who exhibit soft skills have a high likelihood of strengthening their competitive edge. Hemby & Crews (2005) discovered that candidates with a strong foundation of soft skills are the most likely to be hired by employers, according to their findings. Soft skills are clearly necessary for securing acceptable positions, as evidenced by the findings of these researches, which show that companies place a high value on their acquisition when making recruiting decisions.

A number of studies have demonstrated the importance of soft skills as drivers of long-term employment outcomes in the workplace. In order to demonstrate the importance of soft skills in the workplace, it is necessary to examine polls of employers to see how they value soft skills in the workplace. Rao (2014) investigates the career prospects of recent graduates. The findings reveal that, while some graduates are successful in finding employment after graduation, many others struggle to find work due to a lack

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of soft skills. Furthermore, because fresh graduates are not typically well-versed in soft skills, they will likely struggle in the corporate sector. When it comes to choosing degrees and career options, students who lack soft skills tend to gravitate toward positions that do not need competency in soft skills. However, soft skills competency is required for the majority of occupations.

Furthermore, a number of studies have demonstrated the importance of soft skills as predictors of long-term labour market results and have estimated the economic rewards associated with these skills. It is necessary to look at some surveys in order to understand how much employers appreciate soft skills in the workplace. For example, a survey of over 400 companies in the United States was done in order to rank the desired skill set required for new entrants' employment preparation (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). Following the results of this poll, it was determined that the most significant soft skills are oral communication, cooperation or collaboration, professionalism or work ethic, and critical thinking or problem solving. More than 90 percent of the employers stated that these abilities were "very important." Writing, mathematics, physics, and history/geography, on the other hand, were ranked 6th, 15th, 16th, and 19th, respectively, out of a total of 21 competencies.

These rankings may appear odd at first glance, however most occupations place a high value on having soft skills in their hiring procedures. As only a few occupations rely on the academic knowledge of their employees, soft skills and their integration into higher education, and even early stages of schooling, are becoming increasingly important. In light of the fact that companies place a high value on soft skills and that students in general do not possess these skills, there is already a mismatch between the needs of employers and the soft skills that graduates possess. Higher education must revise its policies, and professors at the university level must take into consideration the inculcation of such skills in their curriculum, as well as the value of such skills in the lives of students.

In summation, most studies have demonstrated that the soft skills required by today's expanding global market are becoming increasingly important. In this globalized human resource area, there is a shift toward valuing soft skill proficiency over hard skill quality, which is being facilitated by advancements in technology and information (Wats & Wats, 2009). Higher education and primary and secondary schools place an overwhelming emphasis on academics and hard skills while neglecting the teaching and integration of soft skills, resulting in a gap between the needs of the labour market and the potential of graduates. In the Moroccan context, the Moroccan Higher Education system has initiated some educational reforms that intend to assist students in making the transition from Higher Education to the labour market, with the inculcation of soft skills being one of the first stages towards achieving this goal. The Bachelor system (2019) was the first step towards the implementation of soft skills education in Moroccan Higher education (Ministry of National Education, Higher Education, Cadre Formation, and Scientific Research, 2019). However, the new Moroccan minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Abdellatif Miraoui, postponed the introduction of the Bachelor system and reverted to the LMD (licence, Master, and Doctorate) system with flagrant alterations. This comprises practicum, coaching, and service learning (Miraoui, 2022). Teachers are the ones who will inculcate such skills in their lesson plans and their perceptions about the most important soft skills for employability are essential.

2 EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS

It is critical to investigate educators' perceptions of the value of soft skills for employability. Mitchell (2008) surveyed Alabama business and marketing educators to determine the most critical soft skills for success in the twenty-first century workforce. A research survey instrument was utilized to ascertain Alabama business and marketing educators' perceptions of the relative value of eleven specific soft skills. The majority of respondents (75.2 percent) identified general ethics as a critical soft skill for students. Additionally, respondents (73.2 percent) rated general communication abilities as critical, while (57 percent) rated written communication as critical and (56.4 percent) rated time management and organization skills as critical. Despite their recognition of the value of numerous soft skills, teachers rarely integrate all of them on a consistent basis, lowering students' chances of getting acceptable professions. The emphasis in the classroom is on hard skills rather than soft ones.

Truong (2016) conducted a study in Vietnam to ascertain employers' and educators' perceptions of the value of soft skills. Quantitative data were gathered by the distribution of 786 questionnaires to business educators. The questionnaires examined the value of soft skills, the types of soft skills required of business graduates in Vietnam, and strategies for developing soft skills in tertiary business education. On a scale of "not important" to "extremely important", nearly all business instructors emphasized the importance of soft skills, with more than a quarter (27%) selecting "important" and nearly three-quarters (72%) selecting "very important" in all sites.

Educators were asked to rank the necessary soft skills from a list of 19 on a scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." In general, the findings were favourable, with nearly all respondents selecting "agree." Communication and accountability were ranked as the most important. They were followed by the same methods for teamwork, time management, self-discipline, presentation, critical thinking, and good attitudes. Market research and analysis, marketing, leadership, and customer service all received less favourable ratings.

In terms of tactics for developing soft skills, respondents believed that integrating soft skills into business school curricula and maintaining regular contact with employers were the most successful. Another technique for developing soft skills is through soft skill training. The majority of business educators felt that training must incorporate both theory and practice. In terms of soft skills

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training, respondents agreed that initiatives such as internships, simulated workplaces, and international placement should be incorporated.

Free (2017) conducted a study on the perceptions of Alabama's agricultural secondary school teachers regarding the importance of integrating soft skills into the concepts, techniques, and activities used by teachers in their programs, as well as the most critical soft skills that contribute to workplace success. Teachers were asked to rate the following soft skills on their perceived importance: oral communication, general communication, written communication, general ethics, diversity, time management, teamwork, problem solving/critical thinking, organization, leadership, dependability, adaptability, conflict resolution, and business etiquette. General ethics (80%), reliability (72%), general communication (71.2%), problem solving / conflict resolution (68.8%), and time management (66.4%) were ranked as the most critical soft skills determining the success of the twenty-first century workforce by Alabama agricultural teachers. Another portion of the questionnaire asked teachers to rate their programs' frequency of using specific soft skill principles. Alabama agricultural teachers had the highest percentages of daily soft skill integration in general communication (67.2 percent), oral communication (65.6 percent), time management (56.8 percent), teamwork (55.2 percent), and general ethics (55.2 percent) (53.6 percent).

Tribble (2009) discovered that 100% of teachers rated "communicates clearly verbally" as an important or highly important soft skill. 100% of instructors rated "communicates clearly in writing" as an important or extremely important soft skill. 100% of teachers rated "reads and comprehends instructions accurately" and "listens effectively" as important soft skills. Each instructor rated "understands and practices proper telephone etiquette" as important or extremely important. Nearly 81% of instructors rated "the ability to compose a formal business letter" as important or extremely important.

Moreover, data indicated that all teachers rated "is self-motivated" and "demonstrates creative problem solving" as important or extremely important. Additionally, both teachers rated "adapts to changes easily" as critical or extremely critical. 93.3 percent of teachers considered "demonstrates leadership among peers" to be a critical or extremely critical soft skill. Instructors rated the soft skill "work as a team player" as important or extremely important. Instructors rated "exhibit self-confidence" as an important or extremely important soft skill. Concerning the soft skill "demonstrates good manners," 100 percent of instructors rated it as important. The soft skill "demonstrates a high degree of energy" was rated as important or extremely important by 88.3 percent of 93.8 percent of instructors. 93.8 percent rated "performs well under pressure" important or extremely important.

Mansour and Dean (2016) discovered that faculty members in human resource development and management programs viewed communication skills as a critical employability skill for entry-level positions in the United States and internationally. Ancel (2016) discovered that nursing faculty place a high premium on problem-solving abilities for determining, practicing, and assessing nursing care in order to assure high-quality health care for sick and healthy patients. In another study, Bedwell et al. (2014) discovered that instructors in the program recognized the need of soft skills such as connection building, communication, and trust in order to promote collaboration in business. Ellis et al. (2014) discovered that teachers at South Carolina community colleges emphasized the importance of soft skills (communication, teamwork, self-management, and social skills) required for entry-level office work roles. Jagger and Volkman (2014) discovered that business school teachers valued work ethic in the workplace because they taught students how to build their integrity and accept accountability.

Valenzuela (2020) reports that four out of four educators interviewed emphasized the critical nature of communication skills for professional success. Educators place a higher premium on teamwork, leadership, collaboration, and critical thinking than students or businesses do. Teamwork was identified as a critical quality by all four educators. Leadership and teamwork were identified as critical soft skills by two of the four instructors. Rao (2014) discovered that educators in management and engineering programs valued social interaction for job success, while Mai et al. (2014) discovered that instructors in physical therapy programs valued communication skills (verbal and nonverbal) when interacting with colleagues, patients, and families. Zheng et al. (2015) discovered that educators in information technology programs recognized the importance of soft skills such as time management, communication, planning, teamwork, and motivation in the hiring and career development of information technology professionals.

In the Moroccan context, Birrou et al. (2021) have explored professors' views on officially integrating soft skills (BDR) within the academic program for the first time in Moroccan Higher Education. In order to collect data, they used a qualitative questionnaire with open-ended sent via email to twenty professors affiliated to public and private universities in various Moroccan cities. The vast majority of university professors interviewed indicated favourable attitudes and optimistic views toward the introduction of Life Skills in Moroccan higher education for the first time.

The overall findings indicate that the majority of academics have extremely favourable opinions toward the new policy requiring the inclusion of Life Skills modules in university courses. When asked about the possible influence of Life Skills education on Moroccan undergraduate students, A few professors discussed the novelty of the policy and the creative character of these courses, which they believe makes it difficult to analyse their potential impact appropriately. Indeed, they stated that a comprehensive assessment of the Life Skills impact should be available five to six years after these courses are offered.

When asked about the content of these new courses, professors deemed some Life Skills as important and that they should be taught. The Life Skills module should cover the following topics: conflict resolution, negotiation, arbitration, developing loyalty (respect for the rules) and fair play (respect for others), confronting moral dilemmas (alternatives to which no satisfactory term

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exists). Also, elements of Moroccan general culture need to be included like, history, contemporary artists and writers. Other Life Skills involve capacity for leadership, interpersonal abilities, communication abilities, and self-esteem abilities. Life Skills like, work-space management abilities, public speaking abilities, and creative/critical/divergent thinking abilities, ethics hierarchical relationships, commitment, knowledge value, team relations were regarded as important in the new module.

The results show that most teachers deem soft skills indispensable for graduates to land suitable jobs and maintain employability; however, according to some reviewed studies, educators hardly integrate soft skills in their programs on a daily basis. This shows that there is a mismatch between the perceptions and the reality. Little research is done in the Moroccan context examining teachers' perceptions about the most important soft skills for employability and the skills that need to be integrated in the curriculum. Thus, examining those perceptions is of paramount importance. Teachers' perceptions of soft skills need to be investigated as they are part of the learning process and they help to prepare graduates to become future employees.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Using a quantitative approach, this study explored teachers' perceptions of the most essential soft skills for employability and their integration into the higher education curriculum. In quantitative research, data are numerical and certain qualitative features (such as individual differences in degrees of motivation, language proficiency, or attitudes) are measured using a scale. Statistical analysis is frequently employed in quantitative research to address research concerns. Quantitative researchers typically observe "from the outside" and write in an impersonal tone while gathering and analysing data and reporting a study.(Phakiti et al., 2018)

3.2 Research Instrument

A questionnaire is one of the most prevalent and pervasive data gathering techniques in the social sciences and applied linguistics. It is a common and helpful tool for gathering survey data, as it provides organised, frequently numerical data, may be administered without the researcher's presence, and is frequently relatively simple to analyse(Cohen et al., 2018) . To this goal, a questionnaire was designed to analyse the perceptions of Moroccan higher education instructors in both Ben Msik's faculties of letters and science regarding the most important soft skills for employment. The first component of the questionnaire consisted of three personal information questions (gender, highest degree, and faculty). Two questions comprised the second segment. Using a scale ranging from extremely important to not important, the first question asked how teachers viewed the incorporation of soft skills into the curriculum of Moroccan higher education in general. The second question concerned the importance of including specific soft skills into the higher education curriculum in Morocco. The third part of the questionnaire addressed teachers' perceptions of the most essential soft skills for employability.

3.3 Sampling

In the Casablanca-Settat region, 45 Moroccan instructors of higher education from the Ben Msik faculties of letters and humanities and science participated in the study. Participants in the survey were selected using the technique of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling, also known as incidental or opportunity sampling, is selecting the nearest individuals to act as responders and repeating this process until the needed sample size is achieved from those who are available and accessible at the moment(Cohen et al., 2018). Because these faculties are close to the researcher, it was simple to disseminate the questionnaires on the faculties' Whatsapp groups and obtain additional instructors' emails, convenience sampling was employed.

3.4 Reliability of the Scales

Cronbach's Alpha, often known as the alpha coefficient of inter-item correlations, is a measurement of the internal consistency among the items (not the individuals/cases) and is utilised for multi-item scales (Cohen et al., 2018). A construct is considered reliable if the alpha value is greater than 0.70. Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results revealed that the integration of soft skills scale with eighteen items ($\alpha= 0.969$) and the soft skills for employability scale with eighteen items ($\alpha=0.973$) were found very highly reliable. According to Cohen et al. (2018) , an instrument is considered very highly reliable if the Alpha value is >0.90 . Reliability results are summarised in table 1.

Table 1. Scale Reliability Statistics

Constructs	Number of Items	Alpha α
Integration of Soft Skills	18	0.969
Soft Skills For Employability	18	0.973

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

Following a pilot research with eight professors from each faculty in order to collect useful and appropriate input on the items' application and comprehension, the questionnaire was created. After incorporating their feedback into the amended version of the questionnaire, actual data collection was the following stage. Participants were approached via social networks (Faculty Whatsapp

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groups/teachers' emails) and provided with links to questionnaires. The questionnaire was translated into two languages (Arabic and French) so that teachers in both the faculties of letters and science could readily comprehend it. The poll lasted from May through late August of 2022, a span of four months. IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 22 was used to analyse the questionnaire.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Personal Information of Participants

The gender of the instructors is the first variable analysed. The majority of study participants (80%) are male, whereas only 20% are female. 55.5 percent of participants were members of the department of letters and humanities, while 44.4 percent were members of the faculty of science. As for the highest degree held by the participants, 57.7% had a PhD, 37.7% a post-doctoral degree, and just 4.4% a master's degree. (See tables 1, 2, 3)

Table 1. Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	36	80.000	80.000	80.000
Female	9	20.000	20.000	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	45	100.000		

Table 2. The highest degree held

Degree	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Master	2	4.444	4.444	4.444
Doctorate	26	57.778	57.778	62.222
Post-doctorate	17	37.778	37.778	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	45	100.000		

Table 3. Faculty

Faculty	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Faculty of Letters and Humanities	25	55.556	55.556	55.556
Faculty of Sciences	20	44.444	44.444	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	45	100.000		

4.2 Integration of Soft Skills in the Curriculum

On a scale from "extremely important" to "not important", participants were asked to rate the significance of including soft skills into the curriculum of higher education. The purpose was to determine whether teachers consider the incorporation of soft skills into the curriculum for higher education in Morocco to be essential. Sixty-eight percent of the forty-five participants view the integration as extremely important, 17.7 percent as important, 8.8 percent as moderately important, and 4.4% as slightly important. However, not a single participant considered the incorporation of soft skills to be "not important" (see table 4).

The literature review resulted in the compilation of a list of 18 soft skills. A five-point likert scale was utilised to further investigate instructors' perceptions of the most essential soft skills to incorporate into the curriculum. On a scale ranging from "very important" to "not important," participants were asked to assess the relative significance of 18 soft skills compiled from previous research. Incorporating General Communication (mean 4.77), Oral Communication (4.77), Problem Solving and Critical Thinking (4.75), Teamwork (4.73), Professionalism and Strong Work Ethic (4.73), Presentation Skills (4.73), and Time Management/Organization (4.71), were the seven most important soft skills to be incorporated into the higher education curriculum in Morocco. Other soft skills, such as general ethics (4.68), positive attitudes (4.68), responsibility (4.68), flexibility and adaptability (4.68), and negotiation (4.66), were also ranked highly (see table 5).

Table 4. The integration of soft skills in the higher education curriculum for employability

Integration	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Slightly important	2	4.444	4.444	4.444
Moderately important	4	8.889	8.889	13.333
Important	8	17.778	17.778	31.111
Extremely important	31	68.889	68.889	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	45	100.000		

Table 5. The integration of soft skills in the Moroccan Higher Education Curriculum

Soft Skills	Valid	Missing	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. General Communication	45	0	4.778	0.517
2. Oral Communication	45	0	4.778	0.517
3. Written Communication	45	0	4.644	0.712
4. General Ethics	45	0	4.689	0.668
5. Diversity	45	0	4.622	0.650
6. Teamwork	45	0	4.733	0.618
7. Time Management/Organization	45	0	4.711	0.549
8. Problem Solving/Critical Thinking	45	0	4.756	0.529
9. Leadership skills	45	0	4.511	0.727
10. Business etiquette	45	0	4.533	0.757
11. Networking	45	0	4.422	0.723
12. Professionalism and strong work ethic	45	0	4.733	0.654
13. Positive attitudes	45	0	4.689	0.668
14. Negotiation	45	0	4.667	0.707
15. Presentation skills	45	0	4.733	0.654
16. Responsibility	45	0	4.689	0.701
17. Flexibility and adaptability	45	0	4.689	0.596
18. Self discipline	45	0	4.644	0.712

4.3 Important Soft Skills to Integrate the Job Market

A five point likert scale was used in order to further examine teachers' perceptions of the most important soft skills for employability. On a scale ranging from "extremely important" to "not important," participants were asked to assess the relative importance of 18 soft skills compiled from previous research. General Communication (4.77), problem-solving and critical thinking (4.77), teamwork (4.73), presentation skills (4.73), responsibility (4.73), oral communication (4.71), and time management/organization (4.71) ranked as the seven most crucial soft skills for job market integration. Similarly, other soft skills like, positive attitude (4.71), flexibility and adaptability (4.71), professionalism and strong work ethic (4.89), self-discipline (4.89), negotiation (4.66), written communication (4.64), networking (4.64), diversity (4.62) and general ethics (4.60) were rated highly. Table 6 provides the results obtained.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics

	Valid	Missing	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. General Communication	45	0	4.778	0.599
2. Oral Communication	45	0	4.711	0.589
3. Written Communication	45	0	4.644	0.712
4. General Ethics	45	0	4.600	0.688

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	Valid	Missing	Mean	Std. Deviation
5. Diversity	45	0	4.622	0.684
6. Teamwork	45	0	4.733	0.580
7. TimeManagement/Organization	45	0	4.711	0.626
8. Problem Solving /Critical Thinking	45	0	4.778	0.560
9. Leadership skills	45	0	4.556	0.755
10. Business etiquette	45	0	4.578	0.723
11. Networking	45	0	4.644	0.645
12. Professionalism and strong work ethic	45	0	4.689	0.701
13. Positive attitudes	45	0	4.711	0.695
14. Negotiation	45	0	4.667	0.640
15. Presentation skills	45	0	4.733	0.654
16. Responsibility	45	0	4.733	0.654
17. Flexibility and adaptability	45	0	4.711	0.661
18. Self discipline	45	0	4.689	0.668

4.4 Normality Distribution

Before using appropriate statistical tests, it is important to know whether the data is normally distributed or not. In order to undertake a comprehensive examination of the normality of the distribution, the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests can be used (available in SPSS, and many researchers prefer the Shapiro-Wilk test here as being more reliable). If the distributions are too far off a normal distribution curve, it may be undesirable to employ parametric data statistics; instead, non-parametric data statistics should be used (Cohen et al., 2018). In this research, Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was employed and p value is significant < .001 (less than 0.05). This shows a significant deviation from normal distribution, thus; normal distribution is not assumed.

Table 7. Shapiro-Wilk test

Constructs	Number of Items	P-value of Shapiro-Wilk
Importance of soft skill integration in the curriculum	1	< .001
Integration of Soft Skills	18	< .001
Soft Skills For Employability	18	18
		< .001

< .001

4.5 Gender and Important Soft Skills in the Curriculum

Since our data is not normally distributed the non-parametric statistical test that can be used is the Man Whitney U test. This test is used to compare the means of two independent groups. It is the non-parametric counterpart of the statistical significance test for the parametric independent t-test. It replaces the independent t-test when the score distribution contradicts the two major requirements of parametric tests, namely normality and variance equivalence (Riazi, 2016) The Man-Whitney U test was used to evaluate the differences between the perceptions of male and female educators regarding the significance of including various soft skills into the Moroccan higher education curriculum. In short, there were significant differences between educators with different gender on their response to the importance of six soft skills (general ethics, diversity, problem-solving/critical thinking, professionalism and strong work ethic, responsibility and flexibility and adaptability p 0 less than 0.05) to integrate in the Moroccan higher education curriculum (see Table 8).

4.6 Gender and Important Soft Skills for Employability

In order to evaluate the difference between male and females perceptions regarding the most important soft skills for employability, the Man-Whitney U test was used. Results of the test showed that there was a significant difference between the respondents from different gender on four of the skills, teamwork, problem solving/critical thinking, presentation skills and responsibility as the p equals 0 as shown in Table 9.

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Table 8. Mann-Whitney U test

	W	df	p
1. General Communication	169.000		0.781
2. Oral Communication	147.500		0.550
3. Written Communication	140.000		0.417
4. General Ethics	NaN ^a		
5. Diversity	NaN ^b		
6. Teamwork	143.000		0.451
7. Time Management/Organization	134.000		0.297
8. Problem Solving/Critical Thinking	NaN ^c		
9. Leadership skills	188.000		0.399
10. Business etiquette	174.500		0.682
11. Networking	108.500		0.092
12. Professionalism and strong work ethic	NaN ^d		
13. Positive attitudes	159.000		0.922
14. Negotiation	137.500		0.348
15. Presentation skills	150.500		0.639
16. Responsibility	NaN ^e		
17. Flexibility and adaptability	NaN ^f		
18. Self- discipline	153.500		0.763

Note. Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 9. Mann-Whitney U test

	W	df	p
1.General Communication	152.000		0.669
2.Oral Communication	178.500		0.543
3.Written Communication	153.500		0.763
4.General Ethics	162.000		1.000
5.Diversity	130.500		0.268
6.Teamwork	NaN ^a		
7.TimeManagement/Organization	138.500		0.367
8.Problem Solving/CriticalThinking	NaN ^b		
9.Leadership skills	159.000		0.931
10.Business etiquette	126.000		0.216
11.Networking	131.000		0.274
12.Professionalism and strong work ethic	146.000		0.528
13.Positive attitudes	150.000		0.624
14.Negotiation	129.500		0.239
15.Presentation skills	NaN ^c		
16.Responsibility	NaN ^d		
17. Flexibility and adaptability	163.500		0.968
18. Self discipline	138.000		0.358

Note. Mann-Whitney U test.

5 DISCUSSION

Higher education is the final step before entering the workforce and is intended to meet students' needs. To this end, higher education institutions should undertake surveys to gather information on the perceptions of instructors who prepare students to enter

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the workforce. To this end, the purpose of this research was to find out the important soft skills for employability in both faculties of letters and science in the Casablanca-Settat region. After analysing the data, findings are consistent with those of previous studies and have added to the existing literature as it was set in Ben Msik's faculties and discussed both the important soft skills to integrate in the Moroccan higher education curriculum of Ben Msik's faculties and the most important employability skills.

To assure the adoption of soft skills, the new minister of Moroccan Higher Education and Scientific Research introduced a modified version of the LMD (License, Master, Doctorate) system (Miraoui, 2022). Thus, it is essential to analyse the most essential soft skills to include in the curriculum of Moroccan higher education. Results show that most teachers advocate the inclusion of soft skills in the Moroccan higher education curriculum. Also, the top five soft skills identified by educators were general communication, oral communication, problem solving and critical thinking, teamwork, professionalism, and a strong work ethic. Furthermore, general communication, problem solving and critical thinking, teamwork, presentation skills and responsibility were rated as the top five most important soft skills for employability. Results demonstrate that nearly identical soft skills are valued for employment and curricular integration.

The findings of this study are congruent with those of previous studies. In Truong (2016), teachers rated communication, teamwork, presentation responsibility as the most important soft skills for employability. Similarly, Mitchell (2008) surveyed business and marketing educators in Alabama to determine the most important soft skills for success in the twenty-first century workforce. A survey research instrument was used to determine the perceptions of business and marketing educators in Alabama regarding the relative importance of eleven specific soft skills. The majority of respondents cited general ethics, written communication, general communication, and time management and organisation skills as an essential soft skill for students. According to Tribble (2009), 100% of teachers rated oral communication, written communication, reading and comprehending instructions, listening effectively as essential soft skills. In the same vein, Valenzuela (2020) interviewed four educators who underlined the importance of communication skills for professional achievement. Also, educators value teamwork, leadership, collaboration, and critical thinking more than either students or corporations. All four educators agreed that teamwork is a crucial characteristic. Two of the four teachers named leadership and teamwork as crucial soft skills.

In the Moroccan context, Birrou et al. (2021) investigated academics' perceptions of the official incorporation of soft skills into the academic curriculum for the first time in Moroccan Higher Education. When asked about the content of these new courses, professors identified certain Life Skills as essential and recommended that they be covered. The Life Skills module should address the following: conflict resolution, negotiation, arbitration, fostering loyalty (respect for the rules) and fair play (respect for others), and facing moral difficulties (alternatives to which no satisfactory term exists). Additionally, components of Moroccan culture must be incorporated, such as history, modern artists, and writers. Other Life Skills include leadership ability, interpersonal skills, communication skills, and self-esteem skills. In the new module, Life Skills such as work-space management skills, public speaking skills, and creative/critical/diverse thinking skills, ethics hierarchical connections, commitment, knowledge value, and team relations were deemed essential.

6 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aims to identify the most significant soft skills to include in the curriculum of Moroccan higher education and for employability. Based on the quantitative analysis, it appears that professors at Ben Msik are aware of the significance of including soft skills into the curriculum of Moroccan higher education.

Educators also include general communication, oral communication, problem solving and critical thinking, teamwork, professionalism, and a strong work ethic as the top five soft skills. In addition, general communication, problem solving and critical thinking, teamwork, presentation skills, and accountability were ranked as the top five soft skills for employment. Despite the fact that new modified version of the LMD reform advocates the inclusion of soft skills into the Moroccan higher education curriculum, there is lack of clarity around the skills that teachers deem important for employability and the incorporation measures of such skills. Even though this study was conducted and limited to Ben Msik's faculties of letters and science, its findings shed light on how educators perceive the importance of soft skills for curricular integration and employability. It generally indicates that participants have positive attitudes toward the value of soft skills.

It is suggested that the essential soft skills for employment be introduced into the formal curriculum of both faculties as a required course, so that students become well-versed in their application. Despite this, the benefits of this study greatly exceed its drawbacks, as it is the first to identify the important soft skills for employability and curricular integration in both Faculties of Ben Msik. In conclusion, it is obvious that there is consensus about the promotion and incorporation of these essential Soft Skills tools into the formal Moroccan curriculum. Future study may focus on techniques to enhance the development of soft skills. In addition, future research may employ a larger random sample in a broader context that includes all areas of Morocco. Lastly, but certainly not least, researching employers' perceptions of the most essential soft skills in different job areas remains an intriguing research topic.

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