CSC290: Critical Review Sample

In order to survive the constant change in the software industry, IT workers must make themselves versatile and well-rounded. The research presented in "The Requisite Variety of Skills for IT Professionals" [1] demonstrates the new set of skills that are highly sought after today, and therefore, it will be appropriate for IT professionals to develop these skills in order to secure their job position, and move up the ranks. While the article goes to a far extent to demonstrate the importance of the new set of skills for an IT professional based on the research, the research itself could be enriched by additional methods of research.

The researchers interviewed 104 senior IT managers in 94 non-IT firms, and their findings illustrate the focus shift to non-technical skills in the new hires. As a matter of fact, foundational (technical) skills, such as programming, are only sough in entry level new hires. The article states that the main purpose of foundational skills for an IT worker is to gain foothold in the firm – companies seek new hires with strong foundational skills in order to mold them into essential employees. Once hired, it is crucial for an IT worker to start developing "critical in-house" skills, key skills that are specific to the firm practices, in order to become an invaluable employee, and thus establishing job security.

The choice and size of sample space is appropriate. Its large size eliminates selection bias, or any other unintentional bias. Since it is the senior IT managers that are responsible for hiring new staff, interviewing them gives an insight into how new hires are selected; from senior IT managers, researchers are able to gather vital research information, such as skills that are highly sought after, or skills that can be easily outsourced, and therefore are not considered. The article goes in depth explaining all six skill categories (Foundational, Operational, Essential, Project Management, Problem/Opportunity, Relationship), and their importance to IT workers. It demonstrates that some skills, such as Project Management skills, are highly sought after, while others, such as Operational skills, are usually outsourced. Such insight is crucial for young and aspiring IT professionals, for it enables them to assess themselves, and it tells them exactly what areas they must focus on and improve in order to gain employment. This change is beneficial for ambitious employees – the skills that will secure them employment will also enable them to move up the ranks faster. According to McCurry [2], many of the skills mentioned (such as Relationship) in the research are also essential in multiple fields, in multiple countries, thus giving the IT professional that possesses such skills the freedom of choice.

Yet, the research could be enriched by considering other data. For example, the article does not look at terminated employees. After all, by analyzing these past workers, perhaps some pattern could be established. If this pattern is to be found, and it supports the conclusion of the research, then the conclusion will be reinforced further. On the other hand, if it was to contradict the conclusion, then further research would be required in order to come to a decisive conclusion. While Gallagher et al. [1] state that "IT professionals who possess skills in all six categories (Foundational, Operational, Essential, Project Management, Problem/Opportunity, Relationship) will be best prepared not only to survive but to prosper in a turbulent IT environment", the article does not tackle the problem head first.

The data presented in "The Requisite Variety of Skills for IT Professionals" is critical for aspiring IT professionals, and it is adequately researched and substantiated. Nevertheless, improvements could be made to the research methods, such as analyzing information on terminated IT employees.

References
[1] Kevin P. Gallagher, Kate M. Kaiser, Judith C. Simon, Cynthia M. Beath, and Tim Goles. 2010. The requisite variety of skills for IT professionals. Communications of the ACM 53, 6 (January 2010), 144.
[2] Doug Mccurry. 2003. Notions of generic and work-related skills: essential, core, necessary and key skills and competencies. International Journal of Training Research 1, 1 (2003), 83–98.

1. How well does the student summarize the text?

2. How well does the student analyze the text?

3. How well does the student select, summarize, and/or paraphrase supporting evidence from the text to demonstrate and support analysis?

4. Does the review contain an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion?

5. Does each paragraph focus on a single issue?

6. Does the student use transitional expressions effectively?

7. Are the sentences clear and concise?

8. Are there many grammar errors?