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"A Study on Employability challenges: has different academic endeavors and skill gaps to develop"

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Abstract - The academic system is expected to provide readily deployable graduates and post graduates to the Industry. Over the years there have been many studies that have tried to bring out the skill gaps that make a majority of the graduates and post graduates unemployable from the perspective of the Industry. These mainly include; communication, team work, problem solving, creativity and analytical ability.

The industry has been highlighting over the years that academics need to address these gaps effectively. On the other hand, there has been a lot of effort from the academic side to have a industry-academic dialogue or collaboration to alleviate this problem. Still there seems to be a lot of work to do to reduce this gap to a manageable level, so that the industry requirements can be fulfilled to the maximum. This paper uses secondary data to try and find out some possible causes for the still existing gap and tries to suggest and recommend some possible solutions.

We live in a world where growth is mandatory. For all types of organizations quick response to changing market requirements is essential for survival and anticipating and changing is necessary for growth. Employees form a very critical and vital part of this process. Organizations will like to hire employees having skills that aid growth at a minimum possible cost. Fresh graduates and post graduates form an essential part of this endeavor. Even in the case where a graduate or a post graduate will like to be self employed the employability skills are necessary.

Keywords: Employability, Skill Gap, Industry, Challenges.

1. Introduction-

There have been many studies to ascertain the skill gaps i.e. what the prospective employee possesses and that required by the Industry. The lack of the skills that keep the graduates and post graduates unemployed have been found. The main skills that are found lacking are; Communication Skills - Written communication, Design & conduct experiments and analyze and interpret data, Reading, Communication in English, and Core Employability Skills - Integrity, Self-discipline, Reliability, Self-motivated, Entrepreneurship Skills, Teamwork, Willingness to learn.

The Universities on the other hand also upgrade the syllabus to be in line with what the Industry requires. They have industry experts on the panel upgrading the syllabus. Thus the Industry experts give their inputs and the academic experts use these inputs to refine the syllabus to make it more elaborate, useful and in line with the demands of the Industry.

Even with all these endeavors studies suggest that the employability of the graduates and the post graduates in India is still very low. This paper tries to summarize what additionally can be done to reduce this gap and increase the employability of the graduates and post graduates.

2. **The Significance of the Study**- Industries require the basic 4 resources to operate, viz., Money, Man, Machine and Material. Out of these manpower is a very critical resource. In the current very competitive environment acquiring and maintaining manpower with required skills and at an optimum cost is highly essential.

Thus the academics by and large knows what skills are lacking that need to be imparted and developed by the students. Institutes have taken a lot of initiatives to bridge these gaps. Trainings for soft skills are conducted for the students. Also there are guest lectures by renowned industry experts to the students so that they can understand what is expected from them.

They can thus get ready for the same. Mock interviews are conducted so that the students get acquainted with answering the questions in an effective manner so that the interviewer gets to know their skills thereby increasing their chance of getting selected and recruited.

3. The Scope of the study-

A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.

About a couple of decades ago, the definition of employability was led by the demand for skill sets required by the industries. Currently due to the intense competition faced by both the employees and the employers, the basic technical, subject specific and operational skills are assumed. Further employers look for skills that are person centered e.g. qualities of a person, attitude, approach, etc.

4. Objectives of the study -

i. **To aware about the Employability and its challenges in the education Society.**
ii. **To find out the challenges the academic endeavors and skill gaps to minimize and develop.**

5. Research Methodology-

i. **Area of the study**- Institutions in Pune Municipal Corporation area.
ii. The study is based on the collected Secondary Data.
iii. Collected Data- Secondary Data of different sources.
iv. Limitation-Secondary Data of different sources only. Primary has not collected.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation-

The data are analyzed based on the collected Secondary Data from different sources from different Schools, Institutions and various bulletin published by the government. Data also collected various international research papers and articles. Data has extracted from different Statements a, theory and models.

The Higher Education Academy, UK provides for a definition and a brief history of Employability as stated below. The current concept of employability has been defined by Knight and Yorke, 2003 as:

Knight and Yorke developed the USEM (Understanding, Skillful practices, Efficacy beliefs, Metacognition) model of employability in 2003, which proposes four inter-related components of employability. The model provides a framework for embedding employability into the curriculum and acknowledges the need to consider stakeholder views.

In 2007, Dacre Pool and Sewell developed the CareerEDGE model. This model can be used to explain the concept of employability for the beginners. It can used to develop a path of evaluating employability at different stages and with different groups of people.

Recently, the publication Future fit: Preparing graduates for the world of work (CBI and Universities UK 2009) moved from focusing primarily on skills towards an emphasis on graduate attributes and attitude, also highlighting the importance of enterprise education.

Also in 2009, Ruth Bridgstock proposed a conceptual model of graduate attributes for employability which stressed the importance of career management skills. She argued that, in a rapidly changing and competitive economy, graduates must also be able to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process.

In 2011, the CBI and NUS published Working towards your future: making the most of your time in higher education. This was aimed at engaging students with employability and encouraging them to take ownership of their employability development from the start of their university journey. It highlighted the relevance of employability and practical ways in which students could enhance this. As well as outlining the range of skills, attributes and knowledge that employability incorporated, it also stressed the importance of a positive attitude which underpins, and is at the centre of, employability.

Various studies about employability skills

There have been various studies on the employability per se and also the reasons why it is low, in India and abroad. Here we look at some the studies in India and abroad.

Aspiring Minds

Aspiring Minds is an Indian organization working in the area of employability of Indian students. Their research report on the employability of MBA graduates in India tells a lot about the deficiencies that need to be addressed for enhancing the employability of the MBA graduates in India.

7. Major findings of the study-

1. Employability of management graduates in functional domains remains below 10%. Whereas employability for management students ranges between 10–20% for roles involving client interaction, it remains below 10% for any functional role in the field of HR, Marketing or Finance. For instance, only 7.69% MBA-finance students are employable in the BFSI sector, which has created a very large number of jobs in the last decade. Whereas 32% management graduates lose out because of lack of English and Cognitive skills, at least 50% students are not employable in functional domains for lack of knowledge and conceptual understanding of the domain. Given that the fundamental idea of management education is to impart functional skills to students, this calls for an urgent intervention.

2. Gender ratio in Indian management schools compares to that in top management schools across the world

The male-to-female ratio in business schools in India is 1.64, this is similar to the male–female ratio in global top management schools. Within the discipline of management, highest proportion of women are in the HR (MFR: 0.36) domain and least in marketing (MFR: 5.97). Even though the employability of males and females is similar, females have a dismal representation of 23% (MFR: 3.76) in business in India.

3. English and Finance constitute the hardest skills to attain for MBA students

For students in tier II and tier III cities, a large gap is observed in English language skills (35 score points as compared to colleges in tier I cities) and Finance (45 score points). Even if candidates from non-metro cities pursue their education in MBA schools in metros, their disadvantage in English and Finance is not completely eradicated. The gap in other modules pretty much closes. It is also observed that Finance is the hardest-to-attain skill for non-specialists (those in HR and Marketing domain). Also, the importance of English in the job market cannot be overemphasized. On the other hand, given the importance of finance education for job in the BFSI industry and the general need of financial literacy for better management of personal money, lack of finance education is certainly a big concern. We recommend that intervention in both English and Finance education be done early in the career of candidates.

4. At least 40% of employable management graduates are invisible to enterprises

Out of 3300 management schools in the country, more than 40–55% employable candidates study beyond the top 1000 campuses. Given a total of 1.5 lakh management students, at least 48% employable candidates are in the latter 2300 campuses. Given that no corporation has a

campus recruitment plan beyond the top campuses, these candidates form an 'invisible pool'. Corporations should build mechanisms to tap into this un-tapped talent pool to fulfill their ever increasing talent requirements. Not only would that improve the quality of employees in companies, but also would provide a healing touch to this disadvantaged group, leading to trickle-down effects.

World bank - Policy Research Paper
The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) provided technical and implementation support of the survey. The National Project Implementation Unit under the Ministry of Human Resource Development provided administrative support of the survey. The employer survey was made possible with the help of the FICCI's member companies that responded to the survey.

The paper by Blom and Saeki addresses the gap in knowledge by presenting the results of an employer survey aimed at answering three questions: Which skills do employers consider important when hiring new engineering graduates? How satisfied are employers with the skills of engineering graduates? And in which important skills are the engineers falling short?

Conducted in 2009 across sectors and regions in India, the survey asked 157 employers to rate their satisfaction with new engineering hires with respect to 25 skills. The results confirm a widespread dissatisfaction with current engineering graduates: 64 percent of employers hiring fresh engineering graduates are only somewhat satisfied or worse with the quality of the new hires.

Similarly, the survey asked the employers to rate the level of importance of those 25 skills. Using factor analysis, Blom and Saeki classify the skills into three categories: core employability skills, communication skills, and professional skills. While the survey results show that all three skill sets are considered important, the authors find that employers perceive soft skills (core employability skills and communication skills) as the most important.

The authors' findings suggest that engineering schools should seek to improve the skill set of graduates and recognize the importance of soft skills. They also suggest a need to shift the focus of assessments, the teaching-learning process, and curricula away from lower-order thinking skills and toward higher-order skills and creativity. And they point to a need for institutions to interact more with employers in different sectors and regions to understand their particular demands for skills.

8. Conclusions-

There has been a lot of work already initiated and ongoing between the Industry and academics for enhancing the employability of the graduate and post graduate students. However we have still not attained respectable employability figures.

Soft skills/Core Employability skills is a major area that needs improvement. These skills need a concentrated long term effort, involvement and commitment to be acquired. The trainings and interventions provided by the Institutes and Industry need to be effective. There needs to be some mechanism for assessment of the effectiveness of these trainings for providing inputs for further improvement. Also these interventions need to begin as early as possible as these may involve behavioral changes which take a long time to imbibe.

The inputs from the Industry regarding the expectations and requirements need to be as specific as possible in order to achieve them. For example, in the IT Industry a fresh graduate will normally work as a developer, hence if he knows how a project is acquired, how it is staffed, what are the normal roles and responsibilities of each role, what is a project plan, what is a quality plan, how are the interactions with the customer and the process of software delivery, this will help him to get ready to face the real practical situation.

Any role in the Industry requires professional skills and behavioral skills. Whereas professional skills can be acquired with some effort, the behavioral skills take a long time, effort and commitment. Hence this clarity regarding roles helps the students to get ready and increase their employability.

9. Suggestions -

a) There is a need for scientific evaluation of the different interventions by the Institutes and the industry in order to improve and make the employability enhancement more effective.

b) The details of different typical roles each industry can be ascertained and shared with the graduate and post graduate students so that they can choose their best fit and work towards it effectively.

c) The interventions regarding the enhancement of employability need to begin as early as possible during the student's college tenure, especially for the soft skills or the core employability skills.

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