



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor (RJIF): 5.2
IJAR 2018; 4(10): 511-515
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 03-09-2018
Accepted: 13-10-2018

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A conceptual study on skill development of students at graduation level

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Abstract

Industrial expectations from fresh graduates from premier reputed institutes are increasing day to day. As trends in employment change, new skill sets are recognized and demanded. It is observed in the years that every year lakhs of graduates pass out of the institutes, but not everyone fits into the industry. This create huge employment gap. Very often people(candidates) remain unprepared to face competitions and hence they miserably fail in finding right employment and start up their respective careers. This study totally considers in throwing light on role of institutions in reducing skill and employment gaps and also the necessary practices initiated by them to put forward excellent practices to impart quality education to our youths which is in par with present industrial expectations.

Keywords: Premier, unprepared, miserably, practices and expectations

Introduction

Our 21st century is deeply connected about the management of all knowledge and information which we have obtained and the other value additions which we inculcate to improve and upgrade our competency levels which will enable candidates to have a firm stand in the industry. Learning from the vast sea of knowledge must be continuous, it must come across development of skill, focus on growth, recognition of inner talents and strengths and must enable student to live at present in this competitive world.

Technology has a very wide role to play when it comes to skill development and making candidate fit to the real-life situations. Industry basically expect three important things from a fresh college passed out candidate they are

- 1) Ability to pick up and willing to learn new things.
- 2) Punctuality and humbleness.
- 3) Creativity and deeper focus.

Passionate learners and enthusiast candidates can really grow faster if they are made up with proper base and directions are imparted from the institution levels. It is up to the institutions to to recruit right human resource to study and understand present industry expectations and to see that there is hardly any gap between corporate or industry expectations and institutional focus on imparting quality education.

What is skill development?

Skill development is the process of improving specific skills to be more efficient and effective when you perform a task. In the workplace, you'll find three main types of skill development:

1. **Upskilling:** Improving your skills in your current role
2. **Cross-skilling:** Learn new skills for your current role
3. **Reskilling:** Learning new skills so you can move to a new role

However, you don't have to be part of a workplace program to develop your skills further. You might be a college student working towards a degree, unhappy with your current job, wanting to apply to a new company, or desiring a promotion. You can also develop your skills for personal reasons, such as improving your confidence or a hobby you enjoy.

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Need and necessity of skill development in higher education We survive in economy which is knowledge driven, here industries are strong, progressive and evaluates progress of each resource from time to time in its own methods. Our country has close to one third of the population that are young, proficient, tech savvy and passionate to learn. But real strength of our country depends not on the size and density of its population but the scientific and technological capacities of the people which is nurtured only at good institutes. World class institutes people the industrial development. These institutes can and have built in the past competent leaders in engineering, industry, trade and commerce. But most of institutes have remained mediocre performers and just offer degrees to their students. Now it is the time to think out of box and bring in changes and reforms. This is possible by focusing on the following core areas

- 1) MOU (Memorandum of understanding) with industrial training institutes, providing training from industry experts.
- 2) Teaching new courses essential for industry.
- 3) Enriching their communication skills, soft and inter personal skills, permutation skills etc.
- 4) Industrial visits on regular basis to be in touch with industrial expectations.
- 5) Collection of feedback on time for necessary improvements from students.

Institutions initiatives for skill developments

There is lot of interface between industry and institutes, both are interdependent on one another. On one side institute supply human capital addressing the problems of industries, if these problems are not addressed properly, industries are forced to import technology from abroad with heavy cost. If institution provide quality candidates capable of performing up to industries expected standards, they can intake local talents and train them. To kick start initiatives and provide solution to these burning issues following are the excellent practices taken up by prestigious institutions till now

- 1) Focus on basic skill development which includes improving their hold on language and communication, better people handling skills, living skills, negotiating and bargaining skills, problem analysis and solving skills etc. This is the basic expectation of the industry today at root levels. Somebody who can very well interact with outside customers and get the deal for the industry.
- 2) Use of e-learning: E-learning resources are available easily today and most of them are technological literates. Access to technology can reduce knowledge gap, skill gap and dependency on others. Instant solutions are found on internet and the same can be used for learning. Access to you tube videos, etc. can help to recollect better. Recorded e-lectures from college faculties on different subjects can be listened again and again, in case if student gets absent on a day or is assigned any other work, other than studies he/she can listen any number of times so that they will not lose grip over the subject. Useful videos relating to courses, empowerment, startups and other areas imparting knowledge can be watched from time to time.
- 3) Certificate course: These are additional supplements provided to the students as a learning platform where students are free to choose any subject/area other than

what they study at their regular curriculums. The basic idea behind this is getting a clear cut exposure on their interested area and making them grow in the same. These are options provided in different certificate courses to the students.

- 4) Research culture has to be promoted from base level, continuous search for knowledge, working on new area getting into deeper taught, focusing on new innovations, better taught and thoroughly become part of solution to the societies problem is clearly possible when there is a research culture. Research culture requires funding to some extent and well equipped resources such as library, laboratory etc. which is the present focus of institution.
- 5) Providing specialization courses in their area is practiced presently at university levels, specialization may be from within or outside their regular streams. For example commerce student will get a chance to study a paper in physics and viceversa. This is to impart student basic knowledge of inter disciplinary area. This specialized is purely credit based and is a part of curriculum.
- 6) Interaction with industry owners and entrepreneurs through guest lectures help students to analyze real expectations of industry professionals. Moreover, students can think over which industry stands suitable to them in future days.
- 7) Internship courses or program is one of the effective tools which can effectively bridge a gap between industry and academics effectively. It is an opportunity to apply knowledge whatever learnt in classrooms. This will improve their interpersonal skills, make them more confident and also remain better prepared for their futures (careers). Internship program is not luxury, but necessary in all degrees today.
- 8) MOU with startups (established and new ones) will make students strong leaders and not strong followers as they can better understand the crux of the real industry problems. It will also give boost to high tech, high income employment for younger minds. Basic hallmark of idea starts with colleges and universities. This will improve local talent utilization and will help in reducing the migration of local talents to outside the country.
- 9) Innovative methods adapted such as student teacher series TED talks on subject matters and contemporary issues, video talks, student faculties where senior student take class for juniors, faculty exchange programs, where faculties come from different colleges run by same institutions, provide them with different ideas, will bring out changes in educational system. Providing coaching (additional) for competitive exams at various national and state level government jobs etc. can improve performance and skills of students as well as awareness level of various departments and unfilled vacancies for various different parts can also be focused.

Review of literature

Literature is collected from books, newspapers and related sites. Ideas of various authors on same or different idea are taken from various magazines. Summary of literature review is as follows:

According to Bala V Balachandran all of us have special skills and when we use our skills to the optimum, we will get benefit, no matter how indigenously we do it. Playing with our strengths and adding to your core competencies has very instrumental role in climbing the ladder of success. Cultivating core competencies help to have an edge over others and strongly make a mark on ones field of interest.

Source: The Hindu July 10, 2017.

According to Naik B M Indian universities lack academic culture and mindset in favor of professors, especially their growth opportunities. It is the professors who bring name to an institution and hence they need to be enabled to excel to reach global standards.

According to Nagendra Parshar B Seducation in India, in particular technical education has been criticized for not being able to cater to the needs of the industry or country as a whole. Universities have been trying to revise the curricula and course contents in order to make them more purposeful and relevant to industry. Nevertheless, most of these efforts have not resulted in any widespread change in making the student globally competitive or industry ready. One of the several reasons is that those who were trying to reexamine and refine the courses were unable to make themselves free from the traditional way of thinking that improvements can be brought only in classroom education. They have a strong feeling that anything and everything can be (or should be) taught inside the classroom. And thus often they were unable to think in the direction of revising program structures and discard portions of the course contents which could be avoided or which deserved less attention. Hence, though our education system today is being constantly reshuffled, there is a complete absence of meaningful innovation. Whatsoever, the claims made by the institutions, it is all old wine kept in new bottle.

According to Hegde S N for 'make in India' to be a reality, 'skill India' is the alchemy. About 45% of our work-free engaged in agriculture in unskilled and less productive. Only about 2% of our work-free is trained in formal skills. The corresponding figures are 96% in South Korea, 80% in Japan, 75% in Germany, 68% in UK, 64% in Singapore and 52% in USA. Our system of education is indeed large comprising lakhs of schools, thousands of colleges and hundreds of universities. Traditionally, education is imparted to provide knowledge- basic to begin with and advanced later on.

According to economic survey of Karnataka report (2016) the growth of government degree colleges has changed the scenario of higher education in Karnataka and led to the reduction in the inequality by making higher education affordable and performance of these government degree colleges is proving the public sector institutions if properly guided, financed and empowered can not only survive the competition from private sector, but can also create new niche in their way towards social and economic inclusion in higher education at graduation level. Unplanned expansion of postgraduate courses in government first grade colleges may prove fatal, not only for the quality but also for the survival of public sector universities.

Radermacher & Walia (2013) finds that the development of skills among students at the graduation level is a critical area of concern for both educators and employers. A review of the existing literature reveals significant gaps between the expectations of industries and the competencies possessed by graduates, highlighting the need for curriculum

adjustments to better align educational outcomes with market demands.

Smith and Brown (2018) ^[5] emphasize the crucial role of skill development in ensuring academic and career success. They argue that essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication significantly impact students' future job performance and career trajectories.

Research by Martin & Roberts (2017) ^[6] shows that curricula designed with a focus on skill development, including project-based learning and internships, significantly improve students' competencies.

Jones, Smith, and Lee (2015) ^[7] advocate for a holistic approach to education that integrates both technical and soft skills. They suggest that such an approach not only enhances employability but also contributes to personal development and lifelong learning.

Williams (2016) ^[8] explores the growing importance of soft skills, such as teamwork, leadership, and communication. These skills are critical for workplace success and are increasingly valued by employers alongside technical competencies.

Martin and Roberts (2017) ^[6] discuss the impact of curriculum design on skill development. They suggest that curricula focusing on skill-building through project-based learning, collaborative activities, and real-world applications lead to more effective skill acquisition.

Brown and Green (2015) ^[9] examine the benefits of active learning strategies, such as group projects and experiential learning, in enhancing students' skills. They argue that these methods encourage deeper engagement and practical application of knowledge.

Taylor, Nguyen, and Patel (2016) ^[10] address the limitations of traditional exams in assessing students' skills. They advocate for alternative assessment methods that include practical tasks and real-world scenarios to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of students' abilities.

Anderson and Nguyen (2017) ^[11] highlight the role of regular feedback and self-assessment in skill development. They suggest that continuous feedback helps students identify strengths and areas for improvement, thereby supporting their growth and skill refinement. Research also point out that gaps in the curriculum can impede skill development. Areas not directly related to students' major fields of study may be underemphasized, leading to incomplete skill sets.

Johnson (2016) ^[12] discusses the impact of limited resources on skill development. Insufficient access to practical experiences and learning opportunities can hinder students' ability to develop and apply skills effectively.

Methodology Used

This study is purely descriptive in nature and is also a source study. Only secondary data is used in this study and no primary data is collected. Opinions of various authors from respective journals are taken out and expressed in clear cut words. Whatever is presently felt to be taught at this moment for making students competent, enterprising, creative, vision oriented & completely focused is the total taught for the hour. Indian higher education must be transformed & made acceptable by our industries, failing which top education itself can become a ground for underemployment.

Objectives of study

- 1) To understand expectations of students and faculty in the higher education;
- 2) To study the important areas which can be included at regular curriculum; and
- 3) To give necessary suggestions for further improvements

Scope of higher study

Talents are born as well as developed; this should be in par with skills acquired in curriculum. Since today's industry focus complex challenges, it needs human capital that can manage intense challenges through wide exposures. Careers should be started at early ages along with learning. In other words learning and earning should go on hand in hand. A study can be initiated by taking out present important metrics underlying in both industry and academics. A survey can be made taking selected audience (students or faculties) and can find situations to current burning issues in higher education.

Porter's Five Forces Model

Michael Porter of Harvard University developed a tool to analyze macro environment of the industry in which it will operate. There are various forces in the environment which affect the business and this tool helps in determining the impact of these forces. The five forces identified in this tool are – supplier power, buyer power, threat of new entrant, threat of substitutes, and competitiveness among industry players.

Bargaining Power of Supplier

For the business schools aspiring graduates who want to obtain a degree in management are the source. These aspirants could be fresh pass outs with no work experience while there could be aspirants with some significant period of work experience. Attracting students to enroll for the management program is a big challenge for business schools. Thus bargaining power of aspirants is high as they finally decide whether they wish to join particular business school or not. Skill Development program can create positive image and attract more students to enroll.

Bargaining Power of Buyer

Organizations which hire management graduates are the buyers for the business schools. Business schools need to create interest for these organizations to visit their campus and give employment offers to their students. Bargaining power of organizations is high and if they do not find the required skilled students they might not visit the college in future. Thus skill development can help in creating a positive image for business schools and increase the rate of number of graduates who are given employment offer.

Threat of New Entry

Any new entrant which enters into the industry will have to struggle in creating their image. Already there are various business schools in the industry which are offering management courses and they are struggling in getting required number of students to enroll in their college. Also with the aspect of skill development new entrants will face challenges of hiring quality trainers and setting up infrastructure could also be costly. Thus threat of new entrants for business schools is low.

Threat of Substitution

Skill development program which business schools provide could be given by various public and private companies. There are companies which provide skill development training and make the management graduates ready to be employable. Even the government is making significant investments and helping these companies to impart skills to students. Business schools need to offer good pay to quality trainers so that they work for them. With companies purely focused towards skill development threat to attract and retain quality trainers is high for business schools.

Competitive Rivalry

Even though number of aspirants willing to enroll for management program is high still the rivalry within the industry is intense. With effective implementation of skill development number of students joining business schools could be spread evenly. This will help in reducing the intensity of rivalry among business schools and help in creating higher number of skilled labor who ensure economic growth and development of nation (Bhattacharyya, R., Ritwika, R., & Runma, B 2017) ^[13].

Suggestions

The following are the suggestions worth implementing for further improvements.

- 1) Our present education system aims only at imparting technical courses, system completely should be geared up to supply skillful technical people desperately needed for the industry. Employment gap should be reduced.
- 2) Skill oriented and skill development courses should be compulsorily taught at free of cost without any burden on additional charges to all students and prepare them to be fit for the industry.
- 3) Institutes and universities should concentrate not only on building infrastructure, focus should be on appointing quality professors and changing academic culture which is extremely necessary to be world class.
- 4) To make our nation and regions prosperous we need people with latest knowledge, ideas and are having quest for innovations in various fields. These people are produced initially from the skills taught by institutions and universities. Therefore it is necessary to strengthen our institutes and universities.
- 5) Inculcating research culture and practices among faculties and also proving them with required financial budget from time to time and also with other necessary assistance.
- 6) What is very urgently needed for our universities and institutes is a faculty with enterprising culture, autonomy, growth and innovation opportunities. Teaching and research both should go together for better upcoming practices. Faculties should become innovative and not teaching in routine manner. Due to routine methods of teaching some of our brilliant students can lack in creativity and thinking skills.
- 7) The prime role of our universities should be lack idea generators. Their growth and prospects can continue larger only when they give birth to new knowledge, new technology and spin off hi-tech startups in new technology.

Concluding remarks

In developed countries where area and geography is small we today find world class universities. These universities offer upgraded courses that are fit for the purpose (employment) and where students find a wealth of opportunities to learn, excel in any fields they opt after their degrees along with their academics. After coming across discussions we must be very clear with the fact that there is no fault with our students who are brilliant enough, faculties who are dedicated and committed and infrastructure of campus that is fairly good. Focus should be totally on skill development and up gradation and not on old traditional methods. Rules and regulations designed by the management should be such that it must emphasize control on students to some extent in order to make them learn, faculties should be empowered and autonomy should be provided to a certain extent and the learning culture of the campus should be totally changed. Only then we can achieve the goal of skill development, zero unemployment, better prosperity and progress and our better civilized society.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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