**Promoting Employability Skills among the Graduates through the Courses of Humanities to Bridge the Gap between Industry and Academia in India**

by

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**Introduction**

According to a survey conducted by BridgeLabz and published in Business Insider (2019), more than 75% of Engineering Graduates lack the skills expected by employers for the consideration the jobs. Having effective Employability Skills is an indispensable skill to survive in this fast-growing professional world. Industry, Academic Institutes & Universities, Employers, and other professional and private bodies strongly believe that time demands development professionals who are highly skilled and ready to face the challenges of globalization. We need graduates who are skilled and responsive to economic, social, cultural, technical and environmental (Mesharam, 2015) change and can work flexibly and intelligently across business contexts and work effectively in their roles. Many Government and Non-government employability reports confirm that there is a wide gap between the Employability skill-sets of the graduates and the skills required by the industry in the global organizational context. This research paper explores the skills and competencies of graduates for employability in the Indian higher education context. The paper also seeks to inform, motivate and explore the innovations in teaching-learning of Employability Skills.

**The Need for Employability Skills**

Innovation, imagination and intuition are part of Employability. A successful graduate career depends more or less on Employability Skills. Graduates are often hired as trainee managers and need influence and responsibility for others to make their team run well. Employability Skills are all about how you take the lead and get the best from people. If you can take the pressure, make sense of your situation and step up with a solution, you'll stand a better chance. Teamwork has been identified by business lobbying organizations in which one can collaborate, influence and compromise. Effective communication is essential for a well-run business (MC, 2014). For a graduate, it is about learning to listen, understand and deliver words and information that keep things moving. Knowing when and where to direct your efforts can be crucial for graduate hires. Self-management and the ability to work independently mean that you can look ahead and handle a heavy workload without losing control. Every graduate employer knows that customer satisfaction is an investment in their business. Graduates need to give clients and customers the same care and attention they would give their boss (Target Jobs, 2013).

Flux Report by Right Management (Cited in Kent, 2015) states that the most sought skills by employers for the next five years will be as follows:

* Leadership skills 62%;
* Management skills 62%;
* Interpersonal skills 53%;
* Innovation and creativity 45%;
* Resilience 43%;
* Technical/specialist skills 40%;
* IT skills 40%;
* Sales/marketing skills 32%;
* Client management skills 24%;
* Other/none of the above 4%.

The data mentioned above clearly indicates the skills are in demand to meet up challenges of the contemporary business world.

**Skill Gap: Employability Skills Vs Indian Graduates**

According to Hindu (2016), *the graduates who are stepping stones to the employment market hold no good in the present as the employment report claims that 47 of Indian graduates are not having enough skills to make them employable for any industry role.* The inefficiency of English language knowledge and cognitive skills were identified as the major obstacles to their suitability in the job market. The report of Aspiring Minds (2013) *entitled ‘National Employability Report', is a national audit of the employability of three-year Bachelor's Degree graduates. 60, 000 students were surveyed across the various institutes of India*. The report states that for an analyst’s role, 84% of graduates do not have adequate cognitive skills and 90% of graduates do not possess proficiency in English communication (The Hindu, 2013). Each year 50 Lacs of India Graduates passes out from Universities. For them, it is not easy to enter into boardroom from the classroom as they possess poor English language skills, computer training and analytical ability, decision-making power, leadership and problem-solving skills. (NDTV, 2013) Findings of the report strongly point toward the need for a renewed focus on vocational training and specific targeted intervention in areas of computer and English skills. The fact that less than 25% of students can apply concepts to problems shows that our higher education system needs to lay more significant stress on the application of concepts and discourage rote learning. (Aspiring Minds, 2013). Even if candidates from non-metro cities pursue their education in MBA schools in metros, their disadvantage in English and Finance is not entirely eradicated (National Employability Report, 2013).

**Bridging the Gap**

India Skills Report (2014) mentions that the Indian Education system is perhaps the most criticized in this world. Not only is the curriculum termed, but the method of teaching has also been deemed ineffective. Even the Prime Minister has raised concern stating that “We must recognize that too many of our higher educational institutions are not up to the mark. Too many of them have simply not kept abreast with the rapid changes that have taken place in the world around us in recent years, still producing graduates in subjects that the job market no longer requires. These rankings might be dismissed based on the parameters used, but they indeed reflect the quality of education that is being imparted at our Temples of Learning. Some people believe it is the lack of accountability of the educational institutes towards Government and Society. Educational institutes are an essential part of our skill landscape. Thus it becomes imperative to understand their viewpoints on the Indian Job Market. These steps are needed to ensure matchmaking between supply and demand and how should they be implemented. To promote economic and industrial development in a state, the essential requirement is the capacity to develop skilled human resources of good quality. Apart from this, the Government has embarked on various initiatives to augment capacity in higher and technical education along with improving the quality of education and focusing on the employability of youth. Engaging the private sector more actively in both formal and non-formal modes of education is a key initiative considering the financial constraints for Government expenditure on education. Attracting Private Investments into Education, Promoting Industrial Participation in Education and Training, Introducing a Flexible Curriculum, Improving the Employability of Students etc. will help build the bridge between academia and Industry. The government has initiated promotional schemes through the Center for Entrepreneurship Development aimed at increasing private participation in vocational education. The Government currently undertakes schemes for setting up extension centres/Skill Up-gradation Centers at GIDC estates, ITI premises, industrial clusters, industrial parks, SEZs, investment regions, and Specialized Skill Development Centers, providing financial assistance towards capital expenditure. Apart from initiatives to provide skill-based training to employees, State has also implemented measures to provide flexibility in curriculum selection for students across levels of higher education Initiatives like Choice Based Credit System in vocational education, Active Learning Methodology with practical learning approach etc. have been introduced to increase the quality of education that is being imparted. The government has also ensured a particular focus on improving accessibility of education and training for disadvantaged sections on a regional, social and gender basis. Special training programs for girls in schools through Gujarat Knowledge Society in collaboration with training partners like IL&FS, NIIT and HCL. The government started to support research activities in various areas, encourage cooperation amongst institutes, to create a sustainable model of skill development. With such focused initiatives to develop skills and at the same time, the market, in action, Gujarat seems to be moving in the right direction. (India Skills Report,2014)

**Courses of Humanities to Enhance the Employability Skills**

Though considering the skill demand gap that exists in the country, much more initiatives are required by the Government Bodies, Industries, and Academic Organizations. In bridging this gap, academic institutes can play a vital role. Need-based courses of humanities in the areas of

* English language
* Communication Skills
* Professional Communication
* Soft Skills
* Leadership
* Managerial Skills
* Life Skills
* Foreign Languages
* Personality Development
* Creativity
* Philosophy
* Professional Ethics and many more

can be offered to the students as credit courses, bridge courses, and remedial courses. These courses will provide significant scope to young graduates to work on their skill defects concerning the industrial requirement. Activity-based pedagogy will motivate students to practice their skill set and remedy the errors in different skills. Government Bodies, Industries, and Academic Organizations should understand the role of courses in humanities and promote them by giving them the utmost importance.

The following innovative steps should be taken to bridge the gap between academic and Industry:

* Organizing communication & soft skills enhancement activities
* Promoting debate, discussion, and group communication activities
* Organizing workshops/seminars/ with the collaboration of Industry
* Offering Special Soft Skills Training Programs to the students
* Industry demand related Projects and Internship Programs
* Deciding graduate attributes as per the required skill sets for the industry and revolutionising the curriculum
* Task-Based/Project Based/Collaborative teaching-learning process
* Encouraging students for Entrepreneurship
* Organizing training programs for the faculty members at Industry
* Providing scope to faculty members for the research activities at Industry
* Motivating students for the research work and innovation

New initiatives and approaches in teaching-learning and curricula following the required employability skills will be beneficial to young minds of India in getting the right opportunity for a bright career.

**Conclusion**

Thus, concrete initiatives must be taken to bridge the skill gap and nurture students to make them ready for global challenges. The role of the courses of the humanities will be a crucial one to encourage and motivate Indian talents to fill their pockets with the bundle of skills to make India develop with their skills, innovations and creativity.

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