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COMPARISON OF CURRENT SCENARIO OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN THE STATE OF PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

It is essential to design teaching and learning processes in professional education for the 21st century to meet global standards. The gap between the capability of graduates and the needs of the worldwide market seems to be increasing. A sample comprised of 174 teaching faculty and 1058 students. A comparative analysis among Private and Government Universities and Institutes of Higher Education in selected region wise from eleven districts of Punjab, and Chandigarh was conducted with the objectives to assess the relevance/ appropriateness of the curriculum suitable to global market needs and efficiency aspects of the respondents in terms of employability. The results indicate that the lower employability of undergraduates might be due to the lack of linkage between industry and internship. The problem of mismatch arises when candidates do not possess essential skills what employers are searching in the candidates. The results show that the decline in the placements in case of Government Institutions during the last three sessions. The trend showed fluctuations in the rate of placements concerning Private Universities.

KEYWORDS: Employability Skills, Global Market Needs, Curriculum, Industry Requirements, Efficiency

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is a crucial strategy for economic development as it has a longstanding commitment to the global economy. In the past two decades, technical and professional education in India has been transforming significantly with a spectacular rise in the demand for employability skills needed for the job market.

The definition of employability Skills by Yorke and Knight (2004) fit in today's scenario in which employability Skills which clearly states that the set of knowledge, attributes and skills that are necessary to be successful in their vocation and defined as the set of achievements- understandings, skills and personal details. Employers give more importance to skills that are helpful throughout life and make them productive while recruiting graduates (Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2009).

The curriculum should be designed to provide hands-on experiences to students in specialized areas. Resnick and Klopfer (1989) pointed out that content and process are indistinguishably linked with one another, and students should be assessed in such a way to determine the mastery of the content. A Curriculum should be able to connect learning with skills and consistent with the knowledge structure (Marin, Mintzes and Clavin, 2000). Barnett calls University as the Ecological University, which reflect a strong connection with industry and the communities committed to serving the needs of society (Dewar, 2017).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to the National Employability Report (2019), Almost 60% of candidates feel that focus on practical applications by faculty is significantly less. One of the primary skill areas were scientific and solving problems, team working, and self-learning (Ellis, Klumpner, Leka, Philips, Sharp, & Wooldridge, 2004). The disparity between demand and the supply of workers with high qualification in labour market leads to a reduction in wage premium (Chevalier, 2003; McGuinness, 2006).

A large number of previous studies revealed that mismatch occurred due to the lack of usage of soft skills in their employment attained by the students at graduation level in education institutions (Cranmer, 2006; Ejiwale, 2014; Hagmann and Almekinders, 2003). Little (2003) in the study reported that employers are not satisfied with the performance of graduates often complaints regarding skill shortage.

Tulsi and Poonia (2015) found there are different employability skill requirements for other sectors reported to be low.

Employability not only depends on the fulfilment of the requirements of specific jobs but all within the hierarchy of job seekers (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). Today's fast globalizing economy is highly the function of the quality of higher education and practical training (Schwab, 2010). Recent surveys reported that employers were looking for graduates with soft skills and a flexible approach to work in teams (Ellis, Klumpner, Leka, Philips, Sharp, & Wooldridge, 2004).

Youth aspiration study revealed a mismatch between job opportunities and ambitions of graduates. However, the linkage with the industry is found to be a weak link (Reddy, 2014). Gaps in the workforce seriously affect the efficiency and quality of the working environment in any organization (Fournier, 2017; Srivathsani and Vasantha, 2018; Richardson 2007).

Murti and Bino (2014) explore the phenomenon of skill shortage and found that Indian companies are hard to fill vacancies. As a result of recruitment pressure, recruiters are recruiting people with limited skills (Rheeder, 2017). Bremner (2018), conducted a study using qualitative and quantitative

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methods stressed more on digital skills to close the gap between the degree outcomes and skills needed for the job market. 80% of engineers are found unfit for any job, which indicates the system has failed Indian graduates to get a job in the job market (National Employability Report, 2019). Only 46.21% of students were found employable in 2019, as compared with 47.38 per cent in 2018 (India Skills Report 2020).

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1) To assess the relevance of curriculum suitable to global market needs.
2) To assess the efficiency aspects of the respondents concerning employability.

Method and Instruments

In the present study, the technique used was both incidental and purposive in nature.

Field of Investigation

The sample was selected from private and government universities and institutes of higher education, selected region wise from eleven districts of Punjab, and also from the Union Territory of Chandigarh. Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Patiala, Ropar, Mohali, Ludhiana, Fatehgarh Sahib, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Nawanshahr and Chandigarh.

Sampling Framework

Sample of the Students and Teachers

There were a total of 1058 final year students taken from 594 from Private, and 464 from Government Universities, representing the field of Management, Pharmacy, Architecture, and ICT and Engineering. It comprised a total of 174 teachers: 94 teachers from Private and 80 teachers from Government Universities who formed the sample for the present study.

Brief Description of Data Gathering Instruments Used for Collection of Data

Data collected from the Students and Teachers

The respondents of the study comprised of the final year students in the field of their specialization personally from each discipline/subject/department with the help of questionnaires. The data collected from the Teachers mainly involved interactive/interview sessions held individually with them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the study

1) **To assess the relevance of curriculum suitable to global market needs:** Because of the present scenario, to find out whether the courses offered to the students of professional and technical students are preparing students to be work-ready, a question was framed accordingly. The responses have been tabulated vide table 1.

Table 1. Suitability of courses to Global Market Needs

Response	Private		Government		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	108	18.18	56	12.07	164	15.50
No	486	81.81	408	87.93	894	84.49
Total	594	100.0	464	99.99	1058	100.0

Source: IDC Survey Data, 2018, Punjab

The relevance and suitability of professional courses offered in professional and technical courses according to the global market requirement are limited to 15.50% only, which is a cause of concern. It explains further the unemployability of technical and professional graduates. The lacuna in the curriculum as pointed out by the students in the table: 2.

Table 2. Drawbacks in the Curriculum

Drawbacks	Private		Government		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
More theory, less practical, no research	41	17.90	76	41.99	117	28.54
Outdated curriculum/Labs	19	8.30	17	939	36	8.78
Limited course options	6	2.62	4	2.21	10	2.44
Lack of guidance, less exposure/industrial visits	7	3.06	7	3.87	14	3.41
Lack of trained teachers and new technology	3	1.31	3	1.66	6	1.46
Lack of quality, overcrowding, no flexibility	4	1.75	1	0.55	5	1.22
Multiple responses	149	65.06	73	40.33	222	54.15
Total	229	100.0	181	100.0	410	100.0

Source: IDC Survey Data, 2018, Punjab

2) **To assess the efficiency aspects of the respondents in terms of employability in the world of work:** To assess whether students can interact with the experts efficiently, they were asked the question. The responses are recorded in table 3.

Table 3. Able to Interact Efficiently with Experts

Response	Private		Government		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	381	64.14	227	48.92	608	57.47
No	119	20.03	114	24.57	233	22.02
No response	94	15.82	123	26.50	217	20.51
Total	594	99.99	464	99.99	1058	100.0

Source: IDC Survey Data, 2018, Punjab

UGC Care Listed Journal
ISSN No: 2278-7925

Based on the data, it reflects that 57.47% of students are in a position to interact efficiently with experts.

Rate of Placement of Students in Higher Technical and Professional Education

Employability/placement of students in the world of work is an indication of the efficiency and productivity of professional and technical education being provided in Institutes of Higher Education and, Universities. To assess the rate of employment in the respective disciplines of the students rating scale was presented to them to mark. The responses to this effect have been submitted in the table 4.

Table 4. Rate of Placement

Percentage of Employment	Private		Government		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very good (Above 50%)	83	13.97	45	9.70	128	12.09
Good (21 to 50%)	81	13.64	51	10.99	132	12.48
Low (11-20%)	55	9.26	52	11.21	107	10.11
Very low (Below 10%)	42	7.07	50	10.78	92	8.69
No placement	18	3.03	11	2.37	29	2.74
Don't know	13	2.19	13	2.80	26	2.46
No response	302	50.84	242	52.15	544	51.42
Total	594	100.00	464	100.00	1058	99.99

Source: IDC Survey Data, 2018, Punjab

Whatever data provided by the students regarding the rate of placement in their respective fields, it reveals that the students have not acquired the skills required in the area of their disciplines.

Placements: Subject by Session by Institutions: The data are presented in table 5.

Table 5. Subject by Session-wise Placement of Private and Government University Students

Institution/ N/Percent	Subjects/Session 2017-18										
	CSE	Mech.	ECE	EEE	IT	Civil	MBA	Hotel MGT.	Arch.	Pharma	Total
Total Placement	728	280	332	193	105	194	187	33	28	38	2143
Private N	144	162	29	106	5	52	48	29	28	38	641
%	19.78	57.86	8.73	59.92	4.76	26.80	25.67	87.88	100.0	100.0	29.91
Government N	584	118	303	87	100	142	139	4	0	25	1502
%	80.22	42.14	91.26	45.08	95.24	73.19	74.33	12.12	0	39.68	70.09
Session 2016-17											
Total Placement	791	303	422	92	115	354	123	21	34	25	2280
Private N	184	122	68	31	8	181	65	12	34	25	730
%	23.26	40.26	16.11	33.70	60.96	51.13	52.84	57.14	100.0	100.0	32.01
Government N	607	181	354	61	107	173	58	9	0	0	1550
%	76.74	59.73	83.89	66.30	93.04	48.89	47.15	42.86	0	0	67.98
Session 2015-16											
Total Placement	788	333	406	77	77	311	260	93	102	104	2551
Private N	167	101	85	4	20	80	47	60	35	22	621
%	21.19	30.93	20.93	15.19	25.97	25.72	18.08	64.52	34.31	21.15	24.34
Government N	621	232	321	73	57	231	213	33	67	82	1980
%	78.81	69.67	79.06	94.80	74.03	74.28	81.92	35.48	6569	78.8	75.65

Source: AICTE Website; Website of the Institutions; office Records.

Note: IDC Survey Data.

During the last three academic sessions, the percentage of placement in technical and professional courses was higher in Government Universities as compared to the percentage of placements in Private Universities/Institutes.

The lower employability of technical and professional graduates may be due to the lack of linkage between industry and internship. The numbers of internship seekers are high, and opportunities are a handful: demand is 84% supply 37%.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The relevance and suitability of professional courses offered in professional and technical courses according to the global market requirement are limited to 15.50% only, which is a cause of concern. It explains further the unemployability of technical and professional graduates. 41.99% Students from Government University Departments were concerned about laying more emphasis on theory, less focus on practical and research, coupled with the outdated curriculum in their respective subjects, which hinders in achieving their targets

UGC Care Listed Journal
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and objectives in their pursuits.

A study conducted by Tulsi & Poonia, (2012) and Mangla, (2018) found that teaching-learning and evaluation have to be redesigned to provide practical experience and to develop skills needed for job market enhance the employability of technical graduates Based on the data, it reflects that 57.47% students are in a position to interact efficiently with experts.

Further review of the literature supports that skill requirements of industries are increasing, and graduates are not prepared by institutions to meet the needs of the industry, which results in low employability (World Economic Forum, 2010). Thus, there is an urgent requirement to redesign the instructional process, which should include emphasis more on experiential learning (Harvey, 2007). A survey conducted by Report by Federation of Indian Chambers and Industry (2010), also supports the findings which revealed that most of the graduates are not employable as they lack aptitude and skills needed for the job market. Results also showed that two primary reasons responsible are outdated curriculum and lack of industry-oriented skills in students.

Studies conducted by Ejiwale (2014), Bremner(2018), Srivathsani and Vasantha (2018) also found a mismatch between skills needed for the job market and designing of curriculum and instructional process. And this mismatch continues to exist until training institutions prepare students for market needs, and certification should be provided for acquired skills, the employability mismatch will continue.

CONCLUSION

There exits mismatch between qualifications and the skills required for the job by employers and what candidates possess. In designing the curriculum, the need of the day is to focus more on practical knowledge, hands-on experience; industrial visits, and industry-linked internship programmes. The focus is less on hands-on experience, more on theory and limited options to choose from. The curriculum has little if at all, provision for imparting training in essential hard and soft skills to the graduates in their respective fields. Consequently, there is an urge to redesign the curriculum to develop the abilities required to meet the needs of industry and acquired skills needed for the job market. Because of the limited opportunities to be employable in the global market, there is a need to strengthen the connection between the skills and aptitudes of the graduates, with that of the requirements of the industry. Institutions should emphasize enhancing the linkage between industry and academia and adopt the latest methods of the instructional process to provide experiential learning to students.

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