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ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

Education

KEYWORDS :

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ABSTRACT

Today, many educated young are in a race to grab jobs immediately after their education. Choosing a right career has become a great challenge for them. The opportunities are increased heavily due to the Technological Advancement. But even today the Policy Makers worried about the employability of the young students, whether the youth are rightly directed towards getting employable skills. According to WEF, Technological changes and rapid product and service changes requires individuals with ability to adapt these changes. Employability through lifelong education is an alternative strategy in which individuals, corporate business, education system and government need to place concerted effort. The employability practices in India are focused on depositing skill sets in individuals, and need to be enhanced with helping the individuals to 'learn how to learn'.

Employability skills, while categorized in many different ways, are generally divided into three skill sets: (i) basic academic skills, (b) higher order thinking skills and (c) personal qualities. The basic skills are necessary for getting, keeping and doing well on a job. Application of higher order thinking skills in the use of technology, instruments, tools and information systems takes these higher order skills to a new level, making the employee even more valuable. Employees with good personal skills practice good personal habits, come to work as scheduled, on time and dressed appropriately, and are agreeable to change when necessary.

Universities and higher education institutions have commissioned to take the benefit of NPTEL to the academic Community delivers high quality web and video resources. Curriculum, Technological skill development, Industry familiarization and Soft skills are the focus areas to make the young graduates employable. Apart from Technological skill development, there is a major stress on improving the Soft skills of the students.

In this paper, the authors discussed various factors regarding employability and how to redesigning the content orientation towards employability and how important to induct the training modules from industry inter face mode and how it will be sustained through the e-learning practices, etc.,

INTRODUCTION

Today, many educated young are in a race to grab jobs immediately after their education. Choosing a right career has become a great challenge for them. It depends on varied factors like their own strengths, education, knowledge, abilities and technical skills updating themselves through training or learning and finally committement and passion about what one would like to do (The Hindu 29.09.10). The opportunities are increased due to the Technological Advancement. Though the seeds of Employable skills has being showed in the young minds, even today the Policy Makers worried about the employability of the young students, whether the youth are rightly directed towards getting employability.

The WEF report said that the workforces of India and Brazil will grow by more than 200 million people over the next decades. The global population of 60 years and older will exceed that of 15 years old or younger for the first time in history by 2050. But the talent crises will start much sooner. The Indian National skills Development Corporation is aiming for 500 million skilled Indians by 2022.

Many educated graduates are now compelled to work in an area unrelated to their education, interests and abilities. Finding and choosing a right career path that utilizes their core strengths and provides them with personal satisfaction is a valuable skill that they need to learn.

According to WEF Technological changes and rapid product and service changes requires individuals with ability to adapt these changes. Employability through lifelong education is an alternative strategy in which individuals, corporate business, education system and government need to place concerted effort. The employability practices in India are focused on depositing skill sets in individuals, and need to be enhanced with helping the individuals to 'learn how to learn'.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping and doing well on a job. These are the skills, attitudes and actions that enable workers to get along with their fellow workers and supervisors and to make sound, critical decisions. Unlike occupational or technical skills, employability skills are generic in nature rather than job specific and cut across all industry types, business sizes, and job levels from the entry level worker to the senior most position.

According to Jacquelyn P. Robinson (2000) Employability skills, while categorized in many different ways, are generally divided into three skill sets: (a) basic academic skills, (b) higher-order thinking skills and (c) personal qualities.

Although the academic skill level required by some entry-level jobs may be low, basic academic skills are still essential for high job performance.

Perhaps even more important to job success is having good higher-order thinking skills. The ability to think, reason, and make sound decisions is crucial for employees desiring to do well and advance. A person who can think critically, act logically, and evaluate situations to make decisions and solve problems, is a valuable asset. Application of higher order thinking skills in the use of technology, instruments, tools and information systems takes these higher order skills to a new level making the employee even more valuable. Employers will usually try to help valued employees seek and get more advanced training, thus widening the gap between those with higher order skills and those possessing basic academic skills alone (Jacquelyn P. Robinson (2000)).

Entry-level employees with good personal skills have confidence in themselves and deal with others honestly and openly, displaying respect for themselves, their co-workers, and their supervisors regardless of other people's diversity and individual differences. They view themselves as a part of a team and are willing to work within the culture of the group. They have a positive attitude and take the initiative to learn new things to get the job done.

According to Needleman,E.C.(1995) deficiencies on employability may be corrected by the following ways:

Employability skills are teachable skills and may be taught in both school and employment settings. Goals and objectives for teaching employability skills should be set. Instruction should be designed to ensure those goals and objectives are reached.

Parents need to be involved in goal setting and modeling bahaviour for in-school youth.

Teach employability skills using a democratic approach so that student's awareness of values, attitudes, and worker responsibilities is increased.

Supervisors, trainers and teachers should set good examples of the desired behavior. Students should have the opportunity to observe the type of work place behaviour that is being required of them.

When possible, classrooms should replicate the features of real work settings.

Set and communicate high expectations and hold students responsible for their behaviour.

ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS

Organisational skills can be explained 'as prioritizing, scheduling and performing. In other words, 'organising' the various activities of the day, in an effective way. They help you extract time from your busy schedule, to pursue hobbies, relax or learn. They constitute techniques to execute routine takes in a better way. More importantly, they serve to reduce stress and improve focus. The skills are essential in every walks of life.

Prioritizing give you control on the work-flow. It makes it easy to identify mistakes, correct them, and alter the execution strategy if necessary, while keeping the damages to the minimum.

Scheduling is about deciding on how you would perform the different tasks on your list. It helps you to figure out when to do what. You learn to distinguish between the urgent and the important.

Once you are ready with an action plan, it is time for execution. At the execution stage, organizational skills are about time management and ways to deal with adverse conditions. As you gain expertise at them, you become more productive and successful.

LIFE SKILLS

The World Health Organization defines life skills as 'abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life'. Life skills include critical thinking skills, self-esteem and confidence-building skills, self-awareness skills, goal setting skills, self-evaluation skills, anger management skills, time management skills, positive thinking skills, interpersonal communication skills, and so on.

SOFT SKILLS

Whereas, soft skills is a sociological term relating to a person's emotional quotient (EQ), the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TOWARDS ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY

The governments both the Central as well as the State, have started focusing on revising the syllabus to suit the changes that are expected in the society over the next decade.

The school syllabus is becoming more activity – oriented and interactive. Technology advancement make the classrooms even more interactive. Presently, language labs and math labs are becoming popular. Schools should now add one more lab: personality development lab. This will help the students and teachers get first-hand information about what makes a good personality.

Personality development may mean the various actions initiated for the development of an organized pattern of behavior, attitude, character, traits, habits, etiquette and manners that will make a person unique and distinctive. It should focus on some of the life skills such as: Communication and Public Speaking, Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonel Relationship, Norms for Social Behaviour such as manners and etiquette, Fitness of the mind and body through yoga and meditation, Problem-Solving and Thinking skills, Assertiveness, Leadership and team working, Self-empowerment and time management. Similarly, other life skills should be honed in the personality development labs.

According to available data, only 20 to 25 per cent of the engineering graduates passing out annually are directly employable and the large pool of unemployed graduates keeps increasing every year. Apart from Technological skill development, there is a major stress on improving the soft skills of the students.

Universities and Higher Education Institutions are committed to work on redesigning pedagogical approaches to meet present days' challenges. Curriculum, Technological skill development, industry familiarization and soft skills are the focus areas to make engineering and other graduates employable.

*Look for on the job training or opportunities to do projects that develop new skills.

* Some carrier skills can be acquired by volunteering or doing an internship.

*Many firms and organizations turn to their intern pools to recruit for entry-level positions.

*Group discussion and group tasks are tools used to evaluate a candidate's leadership profile'.

*Bringing Finishing School concept. The Finishing School would bring in specialists to prepare students through a three-month module. This would include training in the state-of-the-art language lab and mock interviews to stimulate the actual environment that would exist during the campus placements.

*Harvard Business School has come up with a technique known as 'case method of learning', or 'experiential learning'. Here, the students are exposed to real-life situations where they themselves are required to find the answers, of course, with the help of facilitators. Because of the complexity of this method, only the top business schools have adopted this method

* Setting up of an institution-industry interface in the col-

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leges and help students meet and interact with people from the industry so that they could 'imbibe the confidence', critical for a successful career.

TRAINING MODULES

While engineering colleges are working on innovative ventures and tie-ups with industries, majority levels for the industries to play a pro-active role in student training. The arts colleges do not have constant interaction with the industry to align their curriculum to industry needs. A transformational change is not possible in classroom training, whereas the training given to fresh recruits is a long-term and larger investment, say industry experts.

Making students employable, identifying their skills and aptitude before they set foot into the industry, will go a long way in cutting the cost spent by the industries. All India Management Association (AIMA) has introduced a national-level entrance test called the Management Aptitude and Skills Test (MAST). The test facilitates individuals and organizations realize the employees' optimum potential. It has been designed to evaluate crucial aspects of a candidate's ability like critical thinking, competence in the chosen discipline, cross-functional competence, technological competence, communication skills, key personality traits and cultural awareness.

Training higher education teachers on the latest changes in communication and technology that are required by the industry. These teachers of engineering and arts and science colleges will act as resource persons and in turn impart the skill-sets to students.

The teachers are sent by the institutions and university for training. The Faculty Development Programmes are conducted by leading corporate trainers, renowned academicians and industry practitioners. NASCOM have discussions on improving industry-institute interaction and developing ways to prepare industry-relevant output.

IT majors 'Evolve' various training modules for soft skills and personality development for students. They are trained to fall in line with the industry expectations. The training programme focuses on making students culturally aligned to the industry and work environment, improving leadership skills, decision-making skills, project management abilities, interview skills and softskills.

E – LEARNING PRACTICES

Online training is less intimidating than instructor-led courses. Students taking an online course enter a risk-free environment in which they can try new things and make mistakes without exposing themselves. This characteristic is particularly valuable when trying to learn soft skills. A good learning program shows the consequences of students' actions and where/why they went wrong. After a failure, students can go back and try again. This type of learning experience eliminates the embarrassment of failure in front of a group. Learning the best right from the desktop – one doesn't need to go anywhere to learn from proven leading companies or experts. More up-to-date information is available than traditional training. One can learn at comfortable pace, further increasing skill retention.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, various factors has been discussed regarding employability and how to redesigning the content orientation towards employability and how important to induct the training modules from industry inter face mode and how it will be sustained through the e-learning practices, etc.,

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