Industry-Academia Partnership for Employability

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Abstract

When a question is asked about problems of developing and underdeveloped countries, poverty caused by unemployment always stands at the top. No matter how efficient may be the government's effort to remove the problem of unemployment, there remains the problem of unemployment. Even in the developing countries like India, China and African nations, where the educational institutions doing at their best, the problem of unemployment exists. One of the important characters we can trace in developing countries is, the fast growing economy because of industrialization. Now the question arises, how these developing countries are affected by the problem of unemployment even they are at the stage of industrialization. The MNC's are keen interested in investment in these developing countries. No doubt, this will generate plenty of employment opportunities. But, the problem is that the people of these developing countries are lacking the required skill and efficiency. Their productivity is not up to the expectation of MNC's. This paper aims at identifying the problems generally faced by people, students and the companies. Possible remedies to overcome the problem of inefficiency can be adopted by the co operation of educational institutions and companies. The paper also includes opinions of 50 students about their expectations. Out of 50 students 20 students are from city area who have completed their primary and secondary education in English medium. Remaining 30 students are from rural background.

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Introduction

Universities and industry, which for long have been operating in separate domains, are rapidly inching closer to each other to create synergies. The constantly changing management paradigms, in response to growing complexity of the business environment today have necessitated these two to come closer. Higher education institutions not only contribute skilled human resources to business, but also influence business in various intangible ways. The intersecting needs and mutually interdependent relationships require identifying means of further strengthening academia-industry partnerships.

This paper attempts to explore how business schools can work closely with industry, study the dimensions of academia-industry partnership, and identify possible areas where industry's contribution to academia would be most effective.

Objective of the study

The objective of this paper is to discuss various aspects of employability, problems in developing employability skill etc. This paper also focuses on the feasibility of consultation with industries by the academia in framing syllabus.

Scope of the Study

This paper is based on secondary information obtained from web and books. The paper includes the opinion pooled out of the interaction with 50 student respondents. The opinion pooling is not backed by the support of statistics. Along with the information obtained from web and books, the opinions formed on the basis of discussions with the noted personalities in the field are also included this paper.

Challenges

It is widely held that, knowledge, skills and resourcefulness of people are critical to sustain development, economic and social activity in a knowledge society. Given the current high-paced growth and dynamic investment climate in India, the demand for knowledge workers with high levels of technical and soft skills is bound to increase. With expansion taking place across various sectors such as banking and financial services, retail, manufacturing, pharma, SMBs, outsourcing companies, service providers etc there already exists a large need for IT talent. It is also estimated that India would require a workforce of 3.2 million employees in the IT and IT- enabled service sectors by 2014. However, over the past 15 years, India has produced 1.6 million professionals and faces the uphill task of producing another 0.8 million in the next two years.

In this demand-supply scenario, according to the All India Council of Technical Education a look at the Indian education system will reveal that the number of technical schools in India, including engineering colleges, has actually more than trebled in the last decade. One of the reasons for the skills gap is that only a small percentage of India's young go to higher education. Not more than 7 percent of Indians aged 18-25 go to college according to official statistics. Even a more fundamental level of education is proving difficult with nearly 40 percent of people over the age 15 being illiterate. Ironically, it is becoming even harder to create a robust and continuous pipeline of talent. The University systems of few countries would be able to keep up with such demand and India is certainly having trouble. The best and most selective Universities generate too a few graduates and new private colleges are producing graduates of uneven quality.

Further, Universities and educational institutions have been unable to

update their syllabus in tune with the high speed changes taking place in the world of technology. Hence, the students churned out are not equipped to meet the current industrial requirements and often companies have to incur additional expenses (time and monetary) to train new hires. Besides the technology aspect industries also evaluate competencies with regard to soft skills, team building, overall attitude and values.

Need for Academia-Industry Interface

Academia- Industry Interface could be defined as interactive and collaborative arrangements between academic institutions and business corporations for the achievement of certain mutually inclusive goals and objectives. Traditionally, business schools were looking for placements and internships for their students and the industry for fresh recruits who are well trained and equipped with the right KSA (Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes) to be able to contribute to organization's growth. Bisoux (2003) has explored the relationship between academic and industry. He says that corporations are placing growing emphasis on finding the 'right person'. It forces the business schools to think more carefully on whom they hire and therefore the role of industry in the entire business school model becomes important.

Today, the business schools have realized the importance of 'working closely with employers' for the following reasons:

- Increasing complexity in academic and business world and constantly changing needs of the industry.
- Increasing criticality of human competence in creating and sustaining competitiveness of the organizations.
- Shift in management paradigm of business schools from earlier academic models to revenue based models.
- Growing pressure from industry to make their fresh inductees

> productive from day one to reduce the subsequent training costs.

- • Increasing interdependence between academia and industry to satisfy need for sustenance and innovation in their respective areas.

Modes of Interface

For the above reasons, industry rather than just being customers of business school output today have become stakeholders and partners in progress. Industry on the other hand has also discovered the advantages of collaborative learning opportunities. Corporations seek to play increasingly important role in activities of academic institutions to incubate the talent they need. The shift towards the short-term performance metrics and shareholders interest has led to a number of changes in the conduct of business, which has translated its effect on business schools.

There are number of avenues, through which business schools collaborate with industry. Some of the commonly used avenues are:

1. Guest lectures by industry representatives.
2. Suggestions in curriculum and content designing.
3. Executive education and management development programmes.
4. Joint seminars by academia and industry both for executives and students.
5. Consulting on management and related issues by academia.
6. Academia generating ideas and acting as incubators to new business.
7. Inclusion of industry experts in governing councils and other board of studies.
8. Industry providing financial and infrastructure support to

business schools for their development.

9. Funding for academic and applied research.

Industry- Academia Partnership

These days many IT companies are partnering with engineering colleges and universities. Infosys has launched a program called 'Campus Connect' to align the education being given at various engineering colleges, with the requirements of the industry. Wipro has also started a program called 'Wipro Academy of Software Excellence', in association with BITS to prepare fresh graduates for careers in software programming and provide them with the necessary skills.

Many multinationals have also established alliances with academic institutions on specific initiatives covering faculty upgradation, internships, curriculum revision workshops, research incubation etc aggregating the architects of the new global economy. Recently, a new article mentioned that Tech Mahindra (a joint venture of Mahindra group and British Telecom), has found a unique way to address the manpower shortage and wage inflation problems by getting into the education business itself. The company has decided to setup and engineering college, Mahindra College of Engineering, that will equip engineers with the skills required in a 'Fast Changing Global Scenario'.

The Cisco Networking Academy (NetAcad) is also aimed as timely response to these challenges. The curriculum incorporates hands-on experience when teaching students about computer networks. The NetAcad program offers various curriculum viz , CCNA, CCNP, Network Security, fundamentals of wireless LAN, which cover the principles and practice of designing, building and maintaining networks capable of supporting national and global organizations.

The Networking Academy is in line with the needs of Indian colleges and features project-driven training in high-demand job skills.

Currently there are over 160 Cisco Academies (across 26 states and union territories) with 7600 plus students currently enrolled in the program and 4900 plus professionals have already graduated in CCNA. In India today there are over 67000 Cisco certified professionals. In addition to imparting IT knowledge and networking skills, NetAcad also aim to bridge the 'digital divide' as it takes technical education to rural India including technologically backward states like Kashmir, Orissa and Tripura. Cisco has also tied up exclusively with all women institutes to encourage girls to learn networking which has been always considered as a male bastion. Coinciding with its 10th anniversary, NetAcad is also updating its CCNA curriculum to accommodate a broader spectrum of students skill levels and help increase enrollment rates. Cisco has also launched its entry level certification (CCENT-Cisco Certified Entry Network Technician) to enable students from technical schools viz, polytechnic's and ITI's to equip themselves for growing industry needs. NetAcad is also working on localizing the curriculum and certification exams to meet the growing Indian demand for networking skills.

Its high time now for us to reboot the Indian education system. Joint initiatives by the industry and academia will play an important part in plugging the talent gap in the years to come. Training individuals for the jobs of the future and allowing them to visualize what it is possible today will not only make a difference in their lives but also enrich our communities now and for the future.

Opinion Pooling

While preparing this paper, opinions have been collected from

students regarding industry-academia partnership, as they are the real beneficiaries from this kind of partnership. We have approached 50 students; out of them 20 students are from city area who have completed their primary and secondary education in English medium. Remaining 30 students are from rural background and Kannada medium.

Following are the opinions of students:

1. Out of 20 students 18 students (90 percent) believe that their English communication has improved and is good as they did their primary and secondary education in English medium.

2. Out of 30 students from rural area that have completed their primary education in Kannada medium, 50 percent have the opinion that medium of education does not make any difference in the communication skills.

3. More than 60 percent students say that students often fail in interview due to lack of proper communication skill and interview mannerism.

4. 50 percent students have the opinion that the present syllabus plays an average role regarding employability and skill development and rest of the students say that it is not useful at all for employability and skill development.

5. More than 95 percent students have the opinion that a future oriented syllabus which enriches the employability of the students can be developed by a joint committee comprising university and industry experts.

6. 60 percent students strongly believes that industry and university participation gives best outcome in designing syllabus and 32 percent students believes that industry and university participation is highly required to conduct training and development program.

7. 97 percent students stress the need for industry oriented training which should be included in actual time table of the educational institute.

Conclusion and Recommendation

• It is imperative for business schools to bring Academia and Industry closer and build a strong collaborative relationship;

• Each business school needs to identify the areas where they can build an effective academic-industry relationship. They need to revisit mission and academic model to be able to identify the right Interface mix;

• It is not a must that all modes of partnership are equally beneficial to every business school. They have to work on 'differential relationship' mechanism;

• Academia and industry need to build organic relationships, with long term strategic intent contributing to the growth and development of both the entities;

• Business schools essentially have collaborated with corporate to provide training and internships to students. Two months internships are integral part of business curriculum in India with certain credit assigned. This is seen as one of the best methods of giving students both the theoretical concepts and their applications and enhancing their ability to relate the two for decision making purpose.

• Executive education and management development programmes are the two important areas where Indian Business Schools are foraying. These initiatives on the part of business schools trigger industries interests to collaborate by assisting them in development and training of their human capital, hence increasing the mind-share and enhancing the

image of the business school. This kind of partnership model is still in the initial stage in India. There is also a need to work on appropriate strategy for mutual benefit.

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