EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

An Empirical Study On Select Engineering Colleges

In Greater Hyderabad City

ABSTRACT

The supply of intellectually equipped and technically qualified manpower in the form of software engineers, scientists and other professional graduates to the global market is a good sign of the country. With regard to higher education, most of the graduates used to perceive the higher education is a stepping stone for their good employment. A major challenge for higher education and research is to build a learning environment that is conducive to acquire and develop new skills to fit the global competitive business environment. It is obvious that the learning environment is to be aimed for the acquisition of productive knowledge, competent learning and innovative thinking skills. Globalization is a dynamic environment where the graduates have to work in a cross-cultural environment. There is an urgent need to explore the skills and competencies of graduates who intend to gain full employment domestically and in the cross-cultural context. Many researchers confirmed that there is a wide gap between skill-sets of the graduates and the skills required by the employers in the global environment. The challenge of new graduates is not completed by merely getting a job; the challenge continues even after entering into the job. Hence, a number of skills and competencies are required for new graduates. In general, there are two types of skills; technical skills and soft skills.

The alarming rates of unemployment and under employment of the technical graduates are indicating the nightmare situation in the country. The educated youth without proper employment, attracting towards antisocial activities using technology, becomes a threat to the society in the long run. Hence, insisting on skill development and
enforcing quality standards at academic institutions is the need of the hour. Hence, the current study is focused on assessing the causes and lapses in imparting the employability skills among the technical institutions in the greater Hyderabad city.

The primary aim of the study is to find out the reasons for the lack of employability skills among the technical graduates and its relationship with the various dimensions of the personal and institutional reasons. Based on the same, suggestions can be drafted for the effective utilization of infrastructure and to improve the employability skills of the engineering graduates.

The study covers the engineering colleges affiliated to JNTUH, Osmania University and some of them are autonomous. The study is restricted to engineering colleges in and around the greater Hyderabad city and covers 125 colleges, which have 10 years of existence and 5 branches of study. It helps the students in analyzing the skills needed to get employment, which includes demographic factors, environmental factors, organizational factors, teaching and learning variables, Soft skills etc. How far, evaluation and improvement practices can help the people in getting employment.

Descriptive research methodology is adopted in the study. The present work is focused on studying the role of environment and academic and administrative factors in the employability of the engineering graduates from Hyderabad city. For the purpose of the study, selected students from the engineering colleges in the city are drawn as a sample using a judgment sample method. The study is descriptive and exploratory in nature. The students participated in the survey are final years and appearing for the campus placements and few of them are placed. The sample size for the study is fixed at 500 and the final analysis is done with 442 samples.
The study results show that,

i. The environmental variables affecting the learning and employability of the engineering graduates are awareness and adoption of the ICT learning, climate provided at college, learning environment, learning habits of the friends/peer group and availability, affordability and accessibility of technology to learn.

ii. The Organizational variables affecting the employability of the engineering students are the availability of classrooms and its facilities, comfort in seating and hearing from the teacher, the degree of involvement of teachers in the delivery of subjects, the accessibility of technology for learning (practical equipment) and accessibility of teachers to clarify doubts.

iii. Professionally qualified parents can guide the children towards employability and guide them in a proper manner. This can help in employability skill development and thereby employability level of the engineering graduates. For other students it is necessary to observe and get the suggestions from career counsellors in the college can help a lot, this can be done through career counselling cell of a college from time to time. This can create awareness and employability skills among the students.

iv. It is observed that practical sessions, a combination of teaching methods, usage of ICT in teaching, industrial visits and training programs, learning clubs on the basis of subject interest, talent search contests, group assignments can enhance the learning scope and depth among the students. This also helps in improving the overall personality and employability of the students at large.

v. Frequent assignments, continuous learning practices, true and fair evaluation, failure analysis practices, counselling, and guidance, enrolling for value added courses, presentations and participation in exhibitions, soft skills evaluation and modification counselling are the primary evaluation practices influencing learning and employability of the engineering graduates in the sample. Hence, higher educational institutions should focus on more practical, application-oriented, expressive and communication-oriented activities in the process of learning and
evaluation system. An open-minded true and fair evaluation and opportunity to improve and present can boost the confidence level of the students.

vi. Primary suggestions to improve the learning and employability of the engineering graduates are customized pedagogy, conducive learning environment, design and development of coursework based on the industry requirements and up gradation, dedicated teaching and support staff, knowledge delivery systems and mechanism, fair evaluation, continuous learning and development practices, training for skill development and up gradation, number of practical courses in the curriculum.

Hence, it is concluded, that the role of independent variables on employability is inseparable. However, the degree of influence may vary from variable to variable. Hence, the combined efforts to modify the of the learning environment and organizational environment in terms of career-oriented culture and learning behaviour inculcating, the learning could happen in a better way and thereby the level of employability can be increased in the years to come.