

## Employability: Problems & Prospects

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Seven years back one of my publisher friend told me to give him a good graduate student to give employment in his book publishing business that he can groom him to a successful career in the book publishing business. For last seven years I am looking for it but I could not find any one whom I can really recommend to my friend for employment. This is not the lone instance, for last two years I am looking for few good supervisors who can work in the logistics field independently and give result. Many of the employers are looking for graduates to give employment in their organization but they could not find employable graduates. Dr Kalam has rightly said that India does not have problem of unemployment but employability. The graduates lack other skills beside the academic or technical skills.

During the 1980s, Indian graduates faced a lot of difficulties to get job due to lack of employment opportunities despite good academics and scholastic abilities. But in 1991, the Economic Reforms have changed the face of Indian job market. Industrialization, growth of public and private sector enterprises etc. boosted employment opportunities as well as better-paid jobs. Today employment opportunities are never like before, companies are mushrooming requirement of skilled manpower is increasing. India is outsourcing products and services to international companies. Obviously, there is no lack of opportunity. On the other hand, there is no shortage of professional degree holders. The number of higher education institutes has gone up. India is the third largest higher education market in the world producing 37 lakh graduates every year. Companies – national and international are afraid to give jobs to Indian graduates. This because sheer lack of job skills and employability. Industry experts opine that even after pursuing 15-16 years of formal education our graduates are still not suitable for a job. They say, giving jobs to such people will destroy their hard earned brand name and reputation. According to Nasscom's report of the 37 lakh graduates coming out every year only 25% of are employable in the IT-BPO sector. Especially when it comes to technical/engineering graduates only 35-40% are readily employable. Further, while the industry is updating itself very fast with the global market requirements our education system is still lacking behind.

According to the **'Metro Man of India' E-Sreedharan** him, we have enough number of engineering colleges producing lakhs of engineers every year. While the best from IITs and RECs are going to universities abroad, the next best lot goes to management – selling soaps and oils. The next lot goes to IT as it is very lucrative. Still we are left with so many engineers who are of low quality. He quotes a survey according which only 12% of the current engineering graduates are employable, 56% can be made useful through further training and the remaining 36% were not even trainable. He emphasized the point that the present curriculum is not in sync with the industry needs, it is not even upgraded frequently to the changing industry needs. He also mentioned that poaching and lack of integrity are two main issues with the current graduates who are doing jobs for the sake of remunerations.

Some of the important issues why our graduates are not employable:

**(i) Impractical syllabus** – Today's academic system is focusing more on theoretical knowledge, not on application of principles. A biology student even after passing intermediate, will not know how to put a tree in a pot, leave growing it. The syllabus is so impractical that it never helps students in being able to do real work.

**(ii) Competition in education business for ranks** – Schools are focused on getting ranks, not on imparting quality education. Students are made to learn by rote. Even though they don't know how to apply it practically, they memorize it thoroughly without understanding anything.

**(iii) Preparation of question papers from guides available in the market** – Forget about text books and reference books, students can easily pass their exams by memorising some questions from guides available in the market.

**(iv) Lenient correction/liberal award of marks** – To pass students, particularly in engineering colleges, the evaluators are very lenient while evaluating the answer paper. They do it to get a good overall percentage in passed students.

Some of the other important reasons why our graduates are not employable are:

- **Poor English language skills** – Many of today's graduates are struggling with English. They are unable to write even a small paragraph without spelling and grammar errors. A recent survey by 'Aspiring Minds' says that around half of today's engineers have grammar skills no better than 7<sup>th</sup> class students. Aware of the situation, IIT Mumbai has made it compulsory for aspiring students to pass English proficiency test before 1<sup>st</sup> semester classes.
- **No computer skills** – Nowadays, having basic computer skills is very important to get/do a job. Unlike earlier when computers and Internet were expensive, almost everybody has relatively easy access to a computer and Internet. Still, many of the students neglect to learn computer/Internet skills.
- **Not interested in hard work** – It is only through hard work, that one can achieve success in life. But, graduates do not realize the importance of hard work. Due to easy corrections and liberal awards of ranks, it was easy for them to get good percentages and degrees. It was easy for them while studying. They are expecting life at workplace also to be easy.
- **Inability to apply subject knowledge in real life situations** – Most of the graduates today have degrees, but no practical knowledge to apply in real life situations. All the concepts, subjects and formulae are memorised before exams without understanding. They can do work only when someone is continuously behind them to tell them what to do and how to do.
- **Cannot work for 8 hours a day** – Management gurus say that it takes around 10k working hours to be a master any field and freshers should cover 3k working hours in the first year itself. Forget about working 3k working hours, today's graduates are struggling to finish the minimum working hours. They often come up with reasons not to work full time. Even if they work for 8 hours, they do it passively; they think they are doing a great favour to the employer. The zeal to 'finish the work today' is missing in them.
- **Lack of big picture mind-set** – Many graduates don't think in a broader way, their focus is too narrow and expect everything to be explained in detail; they expect everything to be spoon feed. They are interested to do more of low end jobs that

involve repetitive things and hourly follow up by bosses. They are neither capable nor are interested in critical thinking.

- **Pro-actively take ownership of the given assignments** – Many of the young graduates are reluctant to work from their heart. They don't want to take ownership and give their 100% effort, time and commitment to the assignment. The energy/enthusiasm to do good work independently is missing.
- **Inability to work without or less supervision** – They require constant guidance or supervision to complete the given task or work. They find it difficult to work without any supervision. They expect their team leader/manager to tell how to do each and every task. They are focused on chit chatting/gossiping, when the boss is not there.
- **Focus on earning, not on learning** – When they get a job, they don't want to put an extra effort in brushing up their skills and neither are they eager to learn something practical from the work environment. All they focus on is how much they are earning. They don't compare their job role with their friends', they compare their pay package.

If colleges want to improve the employability of their graduates, they have to focus on reducing these important skill gaps through improvements in curriculum and teaching methods. The Universities are required to play a significant role for the same so that graduates have to be able to formulate, analyze, and solve a real life problem using standard engineering techniques. Each institution should define the set of skills that a graduate is supposed to have after each semester. Further, colleges need to change pedagogical style from teacher-centric to student-centric, and include more assignments for students to independently analyze and apply tools on real life problems. Only through such changes in the teaching-learning process will the future engineers become more employable.

Educational curriculum needs to be examined from time to time in order to ensure that the education received by students is relevant and up to date. Industrial training received by students need to be looked into and revised in term of its effectiveness to assured that students are clear with their job scopes later on. Besides that, instructors should practice employability skill during teaching and learning session so that it could assist students to understand ways of applying the skills by themselves. Motivators and counselors have to cooperate with institutions in the process of giving guidance and inspirations to students regarding the ways to increase employability skill from time to time in order to be excellent workers. Apart from that, apprentice programs are suggested to be carried out so that students will be able to understand employability skill better. This program will also serve the purpose to make students realized that employability skill is as important as technical skills.