A Comparative Study on Curriculum Profile of Management Graduates in Delhi and Industry Requirements

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Abstratct

The curriculum profile that is required by management graduates in this competitive environment is going under considerable change. Demands and expectations of businesses and corporate are increasing from their potential employees. These expectations can only be fulfilled if desired changes in the curriculum are being done by the universities who are actually entrusted with this responsibility. This paper focuses on determining the competencies that a firm demands from university graduates and determining the curricula that universities follow to educate their students and identify the gap between the two. Questionnaire method will be used for collecting Data from HR managers of different firm and management graduates of different institutes. SPSS will be used for analysis of data. Practical implications: universities can use this information to make desired and demanded changes in curriculum and improve their student's employability. Study revealed that university curriculum failed to match up to the expectations of industry experts. Curriculum needs to be updated to provide more of practical knowledge to students instead of theoretical. Curriculum or teaching methodology should be such so as to enhance students skills in most demanded areas like innovative thinking, flexibility, workplace experience etc.

Keywords:Curriculum, Management Graduates, Employability, Employability enhancement, Industry experts, Self assessment.

Introduction

The curriculum profile that is required by management graduates in this competitive environment is going under considerable change. Demands and expectations of businesses and corporate are increasing from their potential employees. These expectations can only be fulfilled if desired changes in the curriculum are being done by the universities who are actually entrusted with this responsibility.

Teaching old and outdated curriculum can have a very bad impact on the employability of students and will ultimately lead to a failure of attainment of final goal of education i.e making one capable of getting a job.

After doing extensive literature review I have found out that one of the main reason of decreasing employability of management graduated is outdated curriculum and mismatch between industry requirements and university deliverables.

So in this paper first of all we will discuss the meaning of employability and factors leading to employability enhancement which should be a definite part of curriculum which is being taught to the management graduates.

After identifying factors through literature review responses will be seeked by experts which includes HR managers, on the importance of those factors in employability enhancement.

Then on same factors responses will be seeked by students to find out as per their perception how much skills they have gained during their course of study as per curriculum.

Then a comparative study will be done on both the responses to draw conclusions.

Different people look at employability with different perspective. In a general way it could be said that it reflects the possibility of person getting employed or acquiring employment. Various studies have been done till now on different aspects of employability in the past as to how the graduate and post graduate students should enter the labour market Harvey (2001), Knight and Yorke (2004). Overtoom (2000) defined employability as transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills and attitudes required by 21st century workplace necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education. From this point of view, employability is nothing new, it is an essential part of life, as people at all times, have to be dependent on new employment. Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2003), defined employability as 'the relative chance of acquiring and maintaining different kinds of employment'. So in general sense employability refers to our chances of getting employment. Everyone at certain point of time has to consider

their possibilities of finding a new job, whether it is when they first enter the job market or later in life. To feel employable means one's chances of getting employment are good.

Objective of the study:

- 1. To find out employability enhancement factors which should form a definite part of management education curriculum.
- 2. To seek responses from HR managers on the importance of factors short listed as employability enhancement tool and their inclusion in curriculum.
- 3. To seek responses from the students to analyse how much they have learned as per their laid down

curriculum out of shortlisted factors.

- 4. To find the difference between the two sets of data collected.
- 5. To suggest improvements in curriculum.

Research Methodology

In this paper both primary and secondary data is used to study the employability skills of management graduates. Primary data has been collected with help of questionnaire from 60 management graduates of some private institutes of Delhi and 20 HR experts from 10 firms. Research instrument used is self made on the basis of literature review study. Forty skills were identified and classified into six main categories to which researchers have given importance. On same questionnaire responses of students and HR experts were collected on five point likert scale. For experts responses were measured on five point likert scale ranging from

Not At All Necessary (1) Little Bit Necessary (2)Moderately Necessary (3)Necessary (4) Highly Necessary (5) which shows the importance of particular skill in employability of students.

And for students likert scale used ranging from : Very low (1),Low (2),Moderate (3),High (4)Very High (5) which shows skills achieved while pursuing management course as per prescribed curriculum.

Mean of both the data sets were calculated and difference of means were calculated to find out which are the most lacking areas in management curriculum.

Secondary qualitative and quantitative data is used in study. Different published and unpublished resources are used to draw inferences.

Characteristics of sample

Sample of firms consist of four IT firms, two service sector firms and four consultancy's. All these are small firms having less than 20 employees. All HR managers and experts belong to top level and middle level of management.

Regarding students data, all students were studying in final semester of their MBA and about to complete their studies and enter the real world.

Literature review

The literature review provides the theoretical foundation for this research. Many researches done in past has talked about different aspects of employability. Literature review has given many factors which are important for enhancing employability of students but none of the study gives a comprehensive list of factors which will enhance the employability of the students. Some studies has talked about individual skills like importance of E.Q (Suman Mishra and Mohapatra 2010), updated curriculum, more emphasis on, on the job training than classroom teaching (connell and ginnity 1997), Quaid R.W (2006) conducted a study and gave various individual, demand and personal factors, Stoner and margeret (2008) gave employability skills of accounting and finance students, Dr Vicki Belt, research manager Paul Drake (2010) in their policy briefing stated the importance of ICT skills, this view is supported by Johannes G.L (2008).

In this paper we will cover employability as a construct, predictors of employability, beneficiaries of employability, employability challenges and issues and ways to enhance employability.

Employability as a construct

According to Outin (1990) employability incorporates four elements: individual qualities, occupation-specific skills, the labour market situation, and government and employer training policies. This construct includes both supply and demand factors, which are determinant to enhance one's opportunities to become active and remain in the labour market.

Fugate et al. (2004) sees employability as a psycho-social construct with three dimensions: career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital, which alleviates the movement within and between organizations.

The employability concept by Outin is a cross-dimensional construct, while the construct considered by Fugate et al. refers more to person-centered factors and personal attributes.

Personal attributes (adaptability, commitment, reliability, and so on) play a decisive role in getting and maintaining a job. It may be further assumed that these characteristics may have a moderating effect to strengthening the process of transition to employment. That is, on the one hand one tries to 'adapt' the acquired knowledge and skills in a structured resume/CV to requirements of the job characteristics and further to the selection process, facilitating him/her-self to get the job. To achieve this, one should possess a significant level of 'commitment' towards such objectives and being 'confident' that he/she 'can do it'.

On the other hand one again committed and with confidence makes efforts to transfer to work practice the theoretical and practical knowledge acquired in education, by adapting this process from an educational environment to an organizational setting, therefore facilitating the maintenance of the job, and so on.

Factors considered by industry while hiring job applicants.

Effective and efficient recruitment can help an organisation to gain competitive advantage by attracting and retaining the best talent from various sources. The study has come across many facts regarding, which factors effects the intentions of employers while selecting the job applicants and which factors affect the intentions of students while applying for job with that particular organisation. Recruitment is a costly exercise, and in this age of war of talent, it becomes important that the recruitment efforts are able to influence and attract the best of the job seekers who can fit comfortably in an organisation mould. In spite of such high costs, corporate consider campus hiring to be strategically important as campus hirers are more eager to learn, and have been found to socialise more easily into an organisations norms and culture, they generally possess upgraded skills and knowledge. There are many other factors which the corporate take into considerations while hiring and these can be: level of confidence, flexibility, family background, job fit, skills and most importantly value & ethics system of the job applicant. As mentioned by Maheshwari & Malpani (2010) in their study that how Guna's theory of Indian ethics system work in employee selection. Every year the quest for growth and success, drives employees to unethical conducts, their performance and practices in an organisation leads towards miss happenings in the long run. Organisation success depends on the employee performance, learning and in having opportunities for practicing new skills. According to the study, proper care should be undertaken and steady check of the personality should be done at the time of intake of employees. They had divided the characteristics of employees in three kinds of Guna's. One is Satwa which depicts purity, Rajas which depicts activity and passion to work and the third is Tamas which represents darkness, inertia etc. so it is to be decided by the manager that to which extent he wants Satwa, Rajas and Tamas in his prospective employees. As per the expectation of the company the job applicant have to prepare themselves. Suman Mishra & Mohapatra (2010) in their study mentioned that EI is most important factor in judging the efficiency of employee. Daniel (1997) worked on the aspect of knowing the importance of work value and organisation fit judgement as an predictor of employability and found that work value and organization fit judgment is important but required to be taken care of in the later stages of interview and Adkins, Russell and Werbel (2004) also reflected same opinion in their study according to them employer should be concerned with the impact of prospective employee organisation fit only in the last stages of recruitment it is of no much importance at the early stages of interview process. According to his study Quaid, R.W (2006) conducted a study which was aimed at finding out all the relevant skills which are required for gaining employability and they found out various individual, demand, personal factors consisting of various subfactors which contribute towards the employability. Stoner and Margaret (2008) conducted a study to find out general employability skills among accounting and finance students and they discovered that three skills are mainly required and these are time management, modelling and learning to learn.

Cheryl L, Adkins, Craig J. Russell, James D. Werbel, conducted a study to find out importance of judgment of fit in the selection process and found out that it matters a lot to the organizations. Dr Vicki Belt, Research Manager Paul Drake (2010) in their policy briefing conducted a research which aimed at studying the complete employability orientation with respect to career satisfaction, and role breadth self-efficacy and they found out that students lack in ICT skills.

Angelo J. Kinicki, Blake E. Ashforth (2004), in their study proved that employability is career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital. Johannes G. L. Thijessan, Beatrice I. J. M. Van Der Heijden, Tonette (2008) in their study talked about the importance and adaptability of ICT skills and study revealed that market oriented courses should be encouraged as it was found out that these market oriented courses enhance the employability of students. S.rocco, Rebecca Walton, Cynthia Putnam, Erica Johnson & Beth Kolko (2009) again studied the importance of ICT skills in today's scenario. Aukje Nautal, AnneliesvanVianen2 and Marja Willemsen(2010) conducted a study for understanding the factors that promote employability orientation and they found out that impression management is very important factor of employability specially for sales and marketing people. Amos Drory and Nurit Zaidman Ben Gurion (1997) also hold the same view that impression management behaviour is considered good in mechanistic type of organisation. Some of the researchers have argued that reassessment of curriculum should be done to keep up with changes and trends in order to make sure that we are not passing outdated and irrelevant knowledge to the students. According to Brand III (2005) continuous efforts must be made to revise and update curriculum to ensure it is meeting student needs in the ever changing workforce. Farkas, Prucell and walo (1993, 2000) in their respective studies also gave the same message that educators should reassess the curriculum to ensure that their curriculum is adequately developing student's necessary employability skills and should not pass on outdated knowledge to the students. Breiter and Clements (1996) and Pavesic(1991), they emphasized the importance of upper level leadership skills such as human skills, conceptual skills, communication skills, analytical skills, problem solving skills and planning skills as the key focus of hospitality curricula to make students more employable. They said that these skills are more important than technical skills, which are usually acquired by various training programmes provided by organizations after placement. Robinson (2006) identified 67 employability skills that were perceived important by educators, employers and employees in the entry level positions for employment success, he indicated that leadership skills, conflict management skills, communication skills are necessary for all levels of employment and for all levels of education. The 67 employability skills are: ability to work independently, adapting to situation of change, allocating time efficiently, applying information to new or broader contexts, assessing long term effect of decisions, assigning and delegating responsibility, combining relevant information from a number of sources, communicating ideas verbally to groups, conceptualising the future for the company, contributing to group problem solving, conveying information one to one, coordinating the work of peers, coordinating the work of subordinates, delegating work to peers, delegating work to subordinates, empathizing with others, establishing good rapport with subordinates, establishing the critical events to be completed, functioning at an optional level of performance, functioning well in stressful situation, gaining new knowledge from everyday experiences, gaining new knowledge in areas outside the immediate job, giving direction and guidance to others, identify problems, identifying essential components of the problem, identifying political implications of the decision to be made, identifying potential negative outcomes when considering a risky venture, identifying sources of conflict among people, initiating change to enhance productivity, integrating information into more general contexts, integrating strategic considerations in the plans, keeping up-to-date on developments in the field, keeping up-to date with external realities related to your company's success, knowing ethical implications of the decisions, listening attentively, maintaining a high energy level, maintaining a positive attitude, making decisions in a short time period, making decisions on basis of thorough analysis of the situation, making effective business presentations, making impromptu presentation, managing and overseeing several task at once, meeting deadlines, monitoring progress against the plan, monitoring progress toward objectives in risky ventures, prioritizing problems, providing innovative path for the company, to follow for future developments, providing novel solution to problems, recognizing alternative routes in meeting objectives, recognizing the effect of decisions to be made, re-conceptualising your role in response to changing corporate realities, relating well with supervisors, resolving conflicts, responding positively to constructive criticism, responding to others comments during a conversation, revising plans to include new information, setting priorities and solving problems, sorting out the relevant data to solve the problem, supervising the work of others, taking reasonable job related risks, undertaking the needs of others, using proper grammar, spelling and punctuation, writing external business communication, writing internal business communication and writing reports. According to Katz (1995), effective administration depends upon three basic skills i.e. technical, human and conceptual skills. Here technical skill refers to some sort of proficiency and knowledge about a specific work that requires some specialised capability to use certain tool and techniques. Human skills are also known as people skills or it is also known as one's capacity to get along with others in work environment. The importance of each skill depends upon the manager's position in the organizational chart. Since the top level management is more involved in strategic decision making, so conceptual skills are more important for this level of managers, Yukl (1989) also supported this idea and said that need for conceptual skills increases as one moves up from entry level management to higher level management. Northhouse (2004) described conceptual skills as ability to work with ideas and concepts, whereas technical skills deal with things and human skills deals with people. He contended that conceptual skills are very important to management and they are central to creating a vision and strategic plan for an organization. According to Yukl (1989), conceptual skills are general analytical ability, logical thinking, proficiency in concept formation and conceptualization of complex and ambiguous relationship, creativity in idea generation and problem solving, ability to analyse events and perceive trends, anticipate changes, and recognize opportunities, and potential problems. According to Coplin (2003) employers are looking for employees who have good communication skills, which includes listening skills prominently top the list of qualities employers seek for entry level job including executive and blue- collar position as well. McKay(2005) and Woods and kings (2002) also agreed upon the same fact that communication skills which includes listening skills prominently top the list of the qualities which employers seek for entry level jobs including executives and blue collar jobs as well. One quality which manager should possess is problem solving and resolving conflicts. Resolving conflicts require good communication skills as stated by wood and kings (2002). Brown and Fritz (1993) stated that employers desire employees with good leadership skills especially in the areas of problem solving and team work. Atkins (1999) and Hewitt (2005) indicated that employers are readily urging higher educators to incorporate employability skills into students learning experiences.

Now to see what preparations company's needed to attract job applicant. I have gone through some articles out of which one of the study is done on brand image of the company to judge whether it is one of the reason behind attracting job applicants or not. Study done by Aggarwal and Swaroop (2009) showed that student's application intentions are influenced by their perception of the responsibility and empowerment in the job, as well as on compensation and locational considerations. Brand equity perspective to recruitment is recently being looked into by "Collins and Stevens 2002" result of the study showed that effectiveness of campus recruitment in B-Schools can be increased if the hiring organisation focuses on enhancing the brand equity of the organisation as an employer.

Another study done by "Alan M sacks and Krista (2009), sequential and combined effects of recruitment

information on applicant reactions" showed that if specific information is being provided during campus fair, a informative recruiter is there, an opportunity is given to students to interact with organisation's people during the site visit are positively related to applicants reaction. Another study done by Elizabeth D.Scott (2004) studied about the moral values of organisation and students fit, matters the students intentions to apply, and the result showed that values of the companies and the fit of those values with those of students values are both important to students intentions and decisions to apply. Turban and Cable (2003), conducted a study to find out whether firms with good reputation attract applicants or not and concluded that students get attracted to good reputed firms and firms recruit highly skilled people. Michael(1992) studied the characteristics required by the students to compete for job and found out characteristics like communication skills, intelligence, self confidence, willingness to accept responsibility, initiative, ability to handle conflict, goal achievement, competitiveness vocational skills, direction, leadership, flexibility, interpersonal skills etc. Hillage and Pollard, (1998) demonstrated employability with respect to three different stages. First stage relates to the ability of individual to gain employment, the second stage concerns with the ability to maintain employment and the third stage concerns with the ability to gain new employment. In the first stage emphasis remains on how to provide students with the qualities, skills and knowledge that are useful in the labour market and how they can be made attractive to their perspective employers. Blackwell, Bowes, Harvey, Hesketh & Knight, (2001) also supported this view. Hillage and pollard (1998), stated that employability assets include knowledge, skills and attributes. And these assets can be divided into three different assets namely baseline assets which includes one's basic skills and attributes such as integrity and honesty, intermediate assets includes two kinds of skills related to occupation, one is specific skills related to occupation and general skills which apply to all kinds of occupations. Third and the last kind of asset will be high level assets which is the kind of knowledge that contributes to organisational success such as team work and self management. Mc Quaid and Lindsay (2005), stated that adaptability and flexibility of employees towards changing environment is also considered as a crucial aspect of employability. Another factor which appeared in the literature is the individual's willingness to be mobile possesses influence on employability as stated by Defillippi & Arthur (1994) and supported by Forreir and sels (2003), Kluytmans & ott (1999). Daniel (1998) and Washington (1999) emphasised that employability is the form of self-evaluation and self-efficacy.

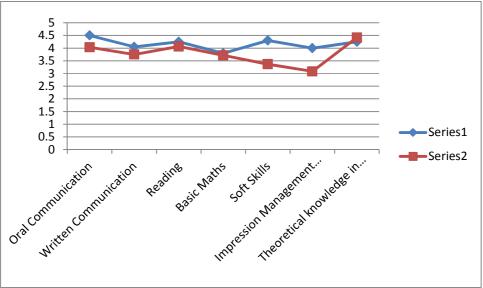
Data Analysis and interpretation:

Table below shows the mean scores of the data collected and the difference between mean scores. By analysing the mean scores of each skill we can judge the importance of that skill in employability and level of skill attained by students during their management course.

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	Positive thinking	4.25	2.85	1.40

In very first skill set i.e. basic literacy and communication skill highest gap can be identified in soft skills category where HR managers found it necessary whereas according to students their curriculum is moderately designed to teach soft skills. We can also see a negative value in theoretical knowledge field. This is because of the fact that HR experts do not find it as highly necessary but students find this in their curriculum at very high level.

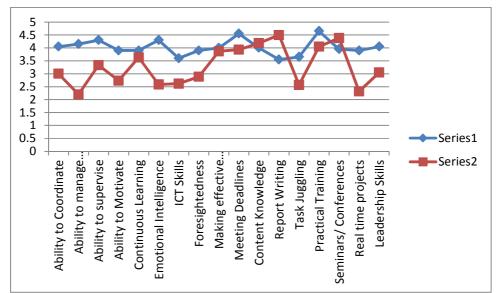
All other skills in the first skill set category do not show much difference from each other. The graph below shows two mean values plotted against each other to make the difference more clear. Graph 1



Series 1 shows HR means and Series 2 shows Students Mean.

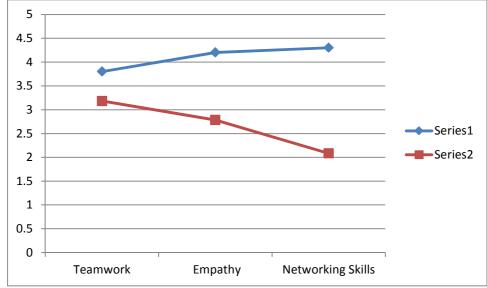
Coming to second skill set i.e. Management skill / Technical skill, highest difference can be seen in the managing conflicts with mean difference of 1.95, followed by emotional intelligence with mean score difference of 1.72 which shows that curriculum lacks in providing these necessary skills. Making effective presentation and continuous learning

shows the minimum difference in means, which proves that colleges have become successful in imparting those skills. Some figures are in negative which shows that students possess much more skills than expected by experts in these categories and they are content knowledge, seminars/ conferences and Report writing. Graph 2



Third skill set talks about Interpersonal skills where highest gap is identified in networking skills with value 2.22 and lowest in teamwork with value .62. Which means curriculum should focus on building networking skills in students.

Graph 3

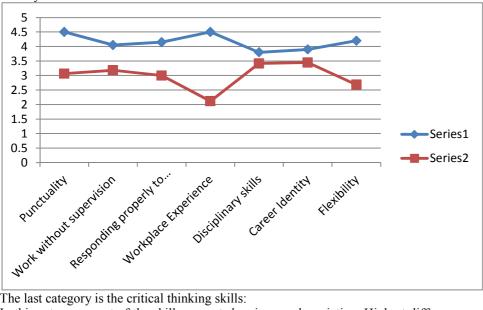


Series 1 shows HR mean scores and Series 2 shows students mean scores.

Fourth category is Informational skill which simply mean keeping up to date with external realities but in this skill also curriculum has failed to match the expectations of HR experts with mean difference if 1.42 which is quiet high.

Fifth category is of work ethic disposition. In this category also the highest difference can **Graph 5**

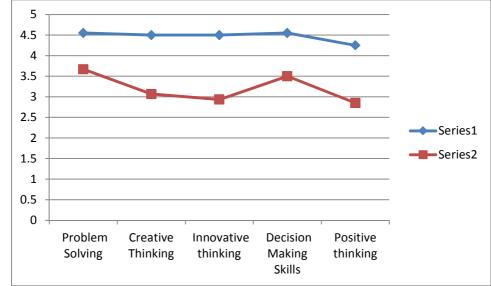
be seen in workplace experience and flexibility which means that curriculum has failed to meet expectations of HR experts in these fields. Whereas lowest difference can be seen in disciplinary skills with value .38 and career identity with value .45.



The last category is the critical thinking skills:

In this category most of the skills are not showing much variation. Highest difference can be seen in innovative thinking, with value of 1.57, creative thinking with value of 1.43 and positive thinking with value 1.40. So work needs to be done in these fields.

Graph 6



Series 1 shows HR means, Series 2 shows Students mean scores.

Key findings:

In very first skill set i.e. basic literacy and communication skill highest gap can be identified in soft skills category with mean

importance in curriculum should be given to soft skills development. On the other hand minimum difference can be seen in theoretical knowledge which means curriculum is designed in such a manner which is imparting theoretical knowledge more to the students but experts do not give it much weightage. (graph1).

In second skill category i.e. Management skill / Technical skill, highest difference can be seen in the managing conflicts with mean difference of 1.95,followed by emotional intelligence with mean score difference of 1.72 Making effective presentation and continuous learning, content knowledge, seminars/ conferences and Report writing shows minimum difference in mean scores which proves that colleges and curriculum has got success in imparting those skills (graph 2).

Third skill focuses on Interpersonal skills where highest gap can be seen in networking skills with value 2.22 and lowest in teamwork with value .62.

This means curriculum should focus on building networking skills in students. (Graph 3)

Fourth category is Informational skill which simply mean keeping up to date with external realities but in this skill also curriculum has failed to match the expectations of HR experts with mean difference of 1.42 which is quiet high.

Fifth category is of work ethic disposition. In this category also the highest difference can be seen in workplace experience and flexibility which means that curriculum has failed to meet expectations of HR experts in these fields. Whereas lowest difference can be seen in disciplinary skills with value .38 and career identity with value .45. (graph 5)

In the last category i.e. critical thinking skills, most of the skills are not showing much variation. Highest difference can be seen in innovative thinking, with value of 1.57, creative thinking with value of 1.43 and positive thinking with value 1.40. So curriculum should be designed in such a way which will strengthen these skills in students.(Graph6)

Conclusion

After analysing all the facts and figures we can conclude that in almost all areas, curriculum which universities are following these days fail to meet the expectation of industry. This has become main cause of increased number of unemployable management graduates in Delhi.

Curriculum which universities are following these days focuses on theoretical knowledge, report writing, presentation skills, seminars and conferences which are indeed important but along with these we need to focus on improving skills like networking skills, imparting practical trainings, work experience,

innovative thinking etc. By improving upon these skills we can ensure enhancement of employability of management graduates.

As we have seen in the analysis part universities really need to focus on impression management skills focus

should be given to confidence boosting and etiquette management in students.

In second skill category ability to manage conflicts, real time projects, emotional intelligence poses greatest threat to universities these skills can be enhance by using techniques like case studies, role plays and by arranging workshops.

In third category Networking skills poses the biggest threat to universities. Networking skills are undoubtedly very important and these can be enhanced by various ways like arranging Alumni meet, building a "mentor mentee" relationship between seniors and juniors which will increase their interaction and hence networking skills.

In the forth category of informational skills curriculum should be designed in such a way which automatically encourages students to update their knowledge. For example universities can arrange inter college or Intra College quiz competitions on regular basis on current affairs. Another way can by asking students to make presentation about the changes occurring in external environment and their impact on businesses.

Fifth category is work ethic dispositions in this category universities need to work hard in providing work place experience to their students. Generally universities arrange for 2 or 3 months of practical training but this is not enough. Keeping in mind today's work scenario and industry demand, it is the time now to make a complete shift from existing theoretical knowledge based degrees to completely practical based learning system.

In last category universities need to deal with the problem of innovative thinking and creative thinking. Curriculum should be such to inculcate these two skills in the students.

By making above changes in the university curriculum we can aim to minimize the gap between industry requirements and students skills. We can match up to the expectation of the industry and hence can improve employability of management graduates.

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