Challenges Faced By Higher Education – Especially Post Graduate Management Education Programs Concerned with Employability in India

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Abstract: *Over the past two decades the concept of 'employability' is a subject of much of the discussion around the future of work and career prospects for post graduate management program - students. In India lot of management institutes mushroomed in 90's and student intake was almost full but the trend couldn't last long owing to lack of quality education, enrollment of mediocre students to the course who lacked in communication skills, interpersonal skill and team building skills - linking to this was a prolonged slowdown of economy wherein there were hardly any new jobs created. Moreover to this, any graduate or post graduate programs either in management or in engineering operates in an highly increasing knowledge-driven economy which is characterized by rapid obsolescence of technical know-how and practical skills – this has created a gap in Academia and Industry and our higher education is in no match with current and future Industry needs. With this back drop the present paper focuses on Challenges faced by Higher Education post graduate management programs. The argument raised in this paper is why Post Graduate Management Education Programs today are facing daunting challenges regarding Employability. This is a review paper which consists of many arguments which are open-ended, for which we need to get an ongoing solution for resolving the problems faced by Post Graduate Management Programs - whether the course is running in Tier I or Tier II or Tier III institutions. The study concludes by briefly highlighting important insights provided by the review to tackle issues of employability and post graduate management programs.*
Keywords: *Academia, Industry, Employability, Globalization, Liberalization, Privatization, Fourth Generation*

I. Introduction

The ambition of today's youth is to secure a good job or to be an entrepreneur no matter what he learns from his professional education. In this new era of liberalization, privatization and globalization – knowledge is the raw material of any business and Human capital is weighed as the most valuable asset of the business. It acts as a differentiating factor for their competitors. Management education is about developing and transforming the human capital to become more productive and efficient in its business acumen. This is how we looked at management education programs earlier and even now but whether it is really happening today has to be addressed. Many surveys and studies were conducted to look into this factor but the only outcome which could be seen about management education programs with reference to employability is that: students coming out from many management institutes are raw and are unemployable excluding the top B-Schools. Earlier academia and even students used to look at management education as a golden corridor towards a white collar job but it is not the case now. So what are the skill-sets we are looking at in order to groom students and get them into groove so that they get employable – with reference to this many reviews highlight that there is a wide gap between Academia and Industry needs. The academic curriculum has become obsolete and it doesn't match with current as well as future Industrial needs. Today the Higher Education especially post graduate management programs are running in a widely knowledge driven economy and one should foresee the changes happening globally that is the rising of emerging markets, the ageing of global population, the power of disruptive technologies, the integrating world and the return of geo-politics. This is going to impact employability not only for those who are waiting to get hired for jobs but also for those who are already on the jobs. If we do not get re-skilled to adapt to the future trend in technologies and put them in practice in academia, students coming out after their graduation or post-graduation will fall short of skills. Therefore we need to understand the notion of both graduate and post graduate 'employability', along with changes happening within the professional labor market. Thus the issues of Academia, the Industry and the Employability' has to be seen through various

different angles as the future-run in technologies, pedagogies in teaching-learning – has to match and sync with Academia, Industry and Employability (AIE).

II. Literature Review

Higher education - Employability is central to the policy goals of Government and has been identified as a key economic and social target by both Government and big business (Department of Education and Skills London 2003). This argument even falls in line within Indian context and it is seen as a key issue for individuals, businesses and national economic competitiveness which we shouldn't underestimate - as current youth population of India confers to over 60% wherein they need both entrepreneur skills as well as employable skills. 'Over the course of the past two decades Higher Education has expanded from elite to a mass system'[1] (Trow 1994, Scott 1995). The types of employment which graduates enjoyed during 1980's was easy but now it has drastically declined or gradually disorganized owing to mass education and stiff competition and more over because of automation, sharp innovations in technologies, development of economic globalization and knowledge economics. Central to this interpretation is the notion that employers are now increasingly operating more stringent recruitment practices. For post graduates those who are entering into the professional labour market face the problem of managing 'employability' which has become a serious matter, not just at the initial level of job entry, but also for their future career trajectories as a whole. Emphasizing this interpretation is the notion that the skill sets required for post graduates is exceeding, and that not all the post graduates are going to get equal returns for their extra qualifications achieved through Higher Education. Therefore, there may be a mis-match with the post graduate skills required and the demand for that job. This reflects in the placements happening with Tier II and Tier III institutes wherein with a MBA (Post Graduate Degree) the salary offer is mere Rs.12000 per month to Rs.15,000 per month that too, only when they are able to find placements. Apart from this arguably, Roshni Chakrabarty writes in India Today (July 11, 2016) that only the IIMs and few top B–schools can boast quality management education which can help their graduates secure employment and remaining institutes lack in quality education. Furthermore, many authors who have written about employability of MBA graduates have argued that post graduate management skills also have serious mis-match in the expectations around future employment and most of the MBA Graduates in India lack in practical hands-on experience – this is due to students directly joining Post Graduate Management programs soon after their graduation without any prior exposure of the Industrial environment. This is where a gap is formed and students can only gain Industrial experience by being in the trenches and learning from the bottom up in the organization. Furthermore, it is been reviewed in most of the literature that management institutes lack at providing Leadership opportunities as well as career counseling and prior training for students, especially in areas such as Goal Setting i.e., in which stream or area one has to move. Another factor is Personality Development Programs in most of the B-Schools do not sufficiently develop students Interpersonal Skills and People's Management skills this may be due to immense lack of Personal Mentoring and Experiential Learning process in the Course Curriculum. Also we could see there is an imbalance in the combination of Academic & Practical learning. So what is the best way to put in all the ingredients so that we could blend the students to possess Essential Employability Skills (EES), 'Essential Employability Skills (EES) are skills that, regardless of a student's program or discipline, are critical for success in the workplace, in day-to-day living, and for lifelong learning'[2]. According to Mantz Yorke, there should be a formative assessment for every student which should 'Contribute to student learning through the provision of information about performance, either formally or informally'[3] Knight and Yorke (2003) refer to the student's 'personal development' for which it is the students 'personal factor' which probably underplays the importance in 'formative assessment'. Shown in Exhibit 1.

TEACHERS

> **1) are aware of**
> • the epistemology of the discipline;
> • stages of student intellectual and moral development;
> • the individual student's knowledge and stage of intellectual development;
> • the psychology of giving and receiving feedback.
> **2) provide**
> • tasks sufficient in number to create opportunities for giving feedback on all key module/programme learning outcomes;

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[1] Opcit Trow 1994, Scott 1995 https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED091983

[2] Opcit Guide to Teaching and Learning http://cafe.durhamcollege.ca/index.php/curriculum-development/essential-employability-skills

[3] Opcit Yorke Mantz, 'Formative assessment and student success'http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/workshop/formative-assessment-and-student-success-paper.pdf

• tasks of progressively graded difficulty, appropriate to the students;
• criteria against which performance(s) will be judged.
3) communicate with students
• clearly regarding the standards expected of students;
• in a timely manner;
• highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of presented work (and not of the students themselves);
• indicating how their work might subsequently develop.

STUDENTS

• understand what is expected of them (with reference, inter alia, to the assessment criteria);
• elicit the meaning from formative comment;
• act on the basis of their developed understandings.

Exhibit 1: Source: Knight and Yorke (2003: 137)

It is argued (Knight and Yorke 2003) that 'formative assessment can be considered as a complex signaling system that calls into play at various times the background characteristics of student and teacher/assessor'[4]. Furthermore, the assessment task, the criteria against which performance is being judged, the giving and receiving of feedback on performance and the action by the student on the feedback received is crucial for the success of the formative assessment. This feedback signaling system conveys various 'messages' which are subject to varying interpretations and are crucial to likelihood of understanding formative assessment. A successful signaling system means there is a positive-ness seen in the formative assessment meaning students are understanding their roll and adhering to the tasks. 'When and how that signaling system is operated are important pedagogic matters that need to be addressed in the context of contemporary higher education'[5]

Measuring teaching and learning at the classroom level is a key component to ensure continuous improvement of educational outcomes (Grygoryev & Karapetrovic, 2005). However teaching and learning are very difficult concepts to define and to measure as per (Tam 2001). He noted that it is challenging to relate students' characteristics at the points of entry and exit from institutions of higher education due to the fact that these characteristics are being measured over an extended period of time (probably years). This argument infers that it is premature to come to the conclusion about students' employability as it has many intervening factors since their schooling to their Graduation which may affect not only employability but also their interpersonal relationships and team building capabilities. However, human capital theory claims that individuals are rewarded with good jobs to the degree that they possess human capital i. e., knowledge and skill achieved through formal education and training. Therefore this theory focus on the upgrading of skills and expansion of labour market opportunities for `knowledge workers' (Cortada 1998), and it figures out that the problem of graduate employability is presented on the supply side problem (Brown, Hesketh *et al.* 2003). Arguably, Knowledge in action is the order of the day in any University and it is no longer enough to examine what students know. We also need to know what they can do, and how they will use their skills to integrate seamlessly into the diverse environments for their future endeavors.

As per, Richard Everitt Director Education & Society British Council India (2014) - India's education system is one of the world's largest, which is been studied and reflected on through academic papers and used as case studies and the subject of many renowned books. Furthermore, this report envisages that 'Higher education in India is undergoing considerable change. With over 600 million people in India under 25 years old, the system is under tremendous pressure to expand. India's young population has a huge appetite for education and, as the growth in the size of the middle classes escalates, millions are increasingly able to pay for it. By 2020, India will have the largest tertiary-age population in the world and will have the second largest graduate talent pipeline globally, following China and ahead of the USA.'[6] This report further highlights that: World-class research and innovation vests on access of the best of the future academicians and research talent. And in the next decade, 'India will have the largest tertiary enrolment in the world and will be a key source of intellectual

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[4] Ibid Knight and Yorke 2003, 'Formative assessment and student success'
[5] Ibid Knight and Yorke 2003, 'Formative assessment and student success'
[6] Opcit Richard Everitt, 'Understanding India - The Future Of Higher Education And Opportunities For International Cooperation' (2014) https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/understanding_india_report.pdf

capital.'[7] However, there is increasing criticism by many writers on the 'Employability Issue', Roshni Chakrabarty (July 11, 2016) writes that 'High-school education quality in India is in such a dismal state, that even the quality of students from the IIMs and the IITs are deteriorating.'[8] This has resulted in low employability. Further to this argument 'studies done by many researches confine that the quality of education has deflated to such an extent that only 10 % of the graduates are actually employable despite the robust demand for MBAs. As such there is no shield to anybody in this challenging struggle of life for both the business and employment. Both have to keep pace and embrace changes happening around to survive.' [9]

Today the greatest challenge faced by higher education in India especially in *'Post Graduate Management Education Program'* is that:

a) Every other college is offering a MBA degree - an unplanned expansion of management institutes without any objectives either in education or for employment. This is creating a weak base for the students to succeed in this transition.

b) Students lack in good English speaking ability, grooming, confidence, corporate orientation and attitude.

c) Outdated curriculum and the absence of employer engagement in course content and skills development.

d) Pedagogies and assessment are not equipped with the current trend (4G) Fourth Generation.

e) Lack of early stage research experience and no linkages with business and industry.

f) 'An ineffective quality assurance system and a complete lack of accountability by institutions to the state and central government, students and other stakeholders.'[10]

g)'High student: teacher ratio, due to the lack of teaching staff and pressure to enroll more students'[11].

III. Conclusion

The era in which we are living is characterized by explosion of new information that requires a new way of education wherein teaching – learning should be made at ease so that students can grasp easily and use seamlessly for their future endeavors. 'As India will have the largest tertiary enrolment and will be a key source of intellectual capital by 2020' Everitt Richard (2014) – we need to be ready to equip with the required needs in order to take this momentum forward. The challenges highlighted would be coming to us recurring in different ways as there is a sharp innovation happening in different aspects in technology which has percolated changes in teaching and learning styles – for any challenges of this kind we should be ready to embrace change and inculcate the behavior not only in students but also as academicians' in us too - so that a synergy is created between a student and a teacher for new learning. Thus the responsibility vests on Higher Education Institutions to play a key role in promoting and developing the skills and capabilities for both entrepreneurship development and employability for future generations of 'Knowledge Workers'. The call of the future is either we should tune ourselves for re-skilling with future technologies or perish.

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