

The employability Crisis - Need for Academia and Industry Collaboration

Mains: GS II - Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector - Human Resource

Why in News?

Recently India is seeing a large number of jobless graduates and there is an urgent need for collaboration between academia and industry to enhance graduate employability and bridge the skills gap.

What is the issue of employability in India?

- **Jobless graduates** - A joint ILO and IHD report indicated a 29.1% jobless rate for graduates.
- Many well-qualified students struggle to find roles that match both their expectations and their training.
 - **For instance**, in India, only about 42.6% of graduates are considered employable.
- **Issue** - The academia and the industries in India work in Silos which leads to large skill and employability gaps.
- If academia and industry continue to run on separate tracks, the young professionals often end up stalled at the starting line.
- **Employability** - It is the set of skills, qualities, and achievements that make an individual more likely to get a job and be successful in their career.
- It means graduates have the knowledge, skills, and mindset to succeed in a challenging and evolving world.

What are the several elements that contribute to this gap?

- **Outdated curriculum** - Many higher education institutions still teach as though the workplace has stood still in the pre-covid era.
- The pace at which mindsets, technology, business models have transformed, education curriculum and methodologies have not.
- **Theory based learning** - Our institutions are still focusing on theories, longer lectures, same old standardised assessments, with limited industry exposure leaving students unprepared for practical challenges.
- **Insufficient soft-skill training** - Technical skill set is there in the books and class rooms but the real challenge is to prepare young professionals with soft skills as they often struggle with communication, stakeholder management, teamwork, and

adaptability.

- **Faculty and infrastructure limitations** - We have progressed a lot in terms of AI, automation, so to cope up with today's market place, faculty may lack new age industry experience; labs and practical environments are often inadequate.
- **Challenges from the industrial side** - Employers expect "job-ready" graduates but often find new hires require extensive hand holding, mentoring and guidance.
- The rapid pace of technological and organisational change means that yesterday's knowledge isn't enough for today's workplace.
- Industry frequently views academia as detached, while simultaneously underinvesting in bridging that gap.

What academia can learn from industry?

- **Bring real-world relevance into classrooms** - When students work on actual business problems, they learn to think critically, communicate effectively, and apply theory with context.
- **Focus on adaptability, not just academic achievement** - Being able to pick up new tools, collaborate across functions, and handle ambiguity defines success today.
- Classrooms should mirror the unpredictability of workplaces. Interdisciplinary group projects, simulations, and reflective exercises can build this agility.
- **Build continuous feedback loops** - Professors need to spend time in business environments in the form of short sabbaticals, internships, or as consultants. This immersion allows teachers to refresh content and return to campus with new industry knowledge.
- **Provide substantive internships and experiential learning** - An internship isn't a check-off formality.
- When designed carefully with mentors, project objectives, and reflection periods, it boosts students' job preparedness.
- **Enable placement cells as bridges to careers** - Placement centers need to transition from employment boards to career bridges monitoring student performance after placement, continually monitoring industry trends, and adjusting training programs in response.

What industries can learn from academia?

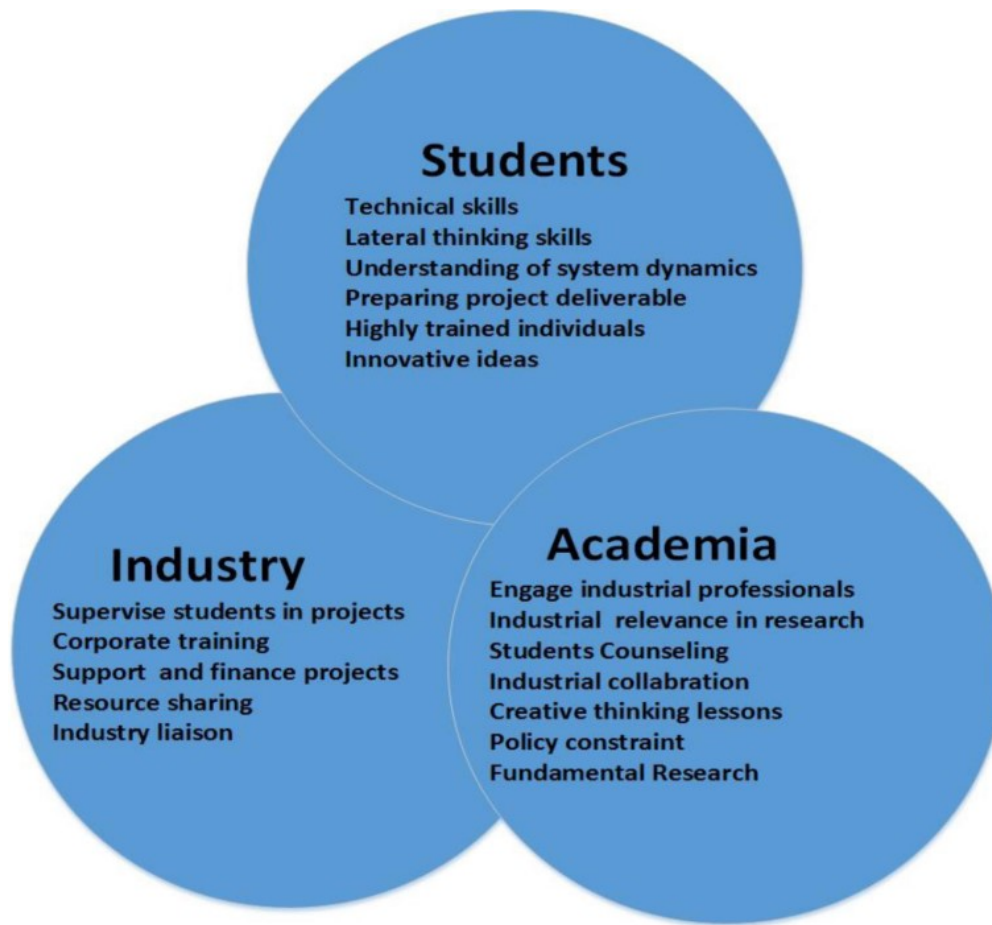
- **Space for development** - Firms usually seek "ready-made" employees, but each new candidate needs the room to develop.
- **Substantial investment** - Investing in early-career mentoring, systematic onboarding, and rotational assignments builds loyalty and resilience.
- Industry has the pulse of the type of skills that matter today and what will matter tomorrow.
- **Support** - By co-designing courses, leading projects, and supporting faculty development, businesses can shape graduates who are prepared and relevant.
- **Partnership** - Organisations can partner with institutions to establish learning ecosystems with sponsored laboratories, innovation competitions, and workshops can initiate early interaction and mutual trust.
- When business, recruitment, and training teams operate in silos, organisations lose

actionable information.

- **Feedback** - The feedback loop among them ensures continuous learning for the company and for the colleges that provide it.

What are the ways that academia and industry can collaborate meaningfully?

- **Joint curriculum reviews** - Organize biannual workshops where universities and employers examine current content and gaps.
- **Apprenticeship models** - Blend classroom study with hands-on projects.
- Undergraduate work-integrated programs provide students with valuable, paid experience.



- **Track outcomes, not just placements** - Universities should measure success beyond job offers by tracking how their alumni perform six or twelve months into work.
- **Regional collaborations** - Employability gaps are not uniform. Local partnerships between smaller colleges and nearby businesses can create context-specific training modules.
- **Modular and micro-learning opportunities** - Allow students to earn micro-credentials on specific job skills co-created by industry experts.
- **Soft-skill and mindset labs** - Jointly run communication, ethics, and problem-solving labs that focus on how to work with others, not just what to work on.

What lies ahead?

- If even half are not ready for work, the human, social, and economic cost is immense.
- When fresh graduates walk into organisations unprepared, it chips away at their confidence and wastes potential.
- When academia and industry work as partners, we don't just create employees, we create a force that will propel the economy into the next orbit, a set of professionals who understand purpose, culture, and contribution. That's the foundation of a sustainable workforce.
- A strong partnership also builds inclusivity.
- Academia brings depth, research, and rigour and Industry brings speed, relevance, and accountability.
- When these strengths intersect, learning becomes dynamic and employability stops being a checkbox and starts becoming a continuum.
- We don't need perfection today. We need progress.
- Let's start with one classroom, one internship, and one collaborative workshop at a time.

Reference

[The Hindu| Employability crisis in India.](#)

