Analyzing Skill Gap between Higher Education and Employability

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Analyzing Skill Gap between Higher Education and Employability

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Abstract

Students usually enroll in higher education institutes for earning an academic qualification or degree, gain appropriate skills and to step into the corporate world via employment opportunities. The purpose of the study is to find out student's perceptions about which skills are important to attain for job while they are studying. Also, to find employer's perceptions about most important skills required in the future employees. The study findings reveal that skill gap exist between employers and students' perceptions of the skills and traits critical for securing employment. Based on literature review, skills important for employment were identified and grouped under three categories namely technical skills, non-technical skills and behavioral skills. Through the use of structures questionnaires, both students and HR Executives were asked to rate all the skills on a Likert scale of 1(least important) to 5(most important). Based on the mean scores of the ratings, a ranking order was established to ascertain the skill gap. Another major finding of the study was to determine which skills are more important for employers so as to on which students should focus on acquiring to be better prepared for the job market. The study also provides recommendations to close the gap between the skill gaps identified in the study. These steps must be taken simultaneously by all the stakeholders involved in the higher education i.e. Students, higher education institutions and corporate employers.

Keywords

Behavioral Skills Education, Employability, Non-Technical Skills, Skills Gap, Technical Skills

Introduction

One of the main objectives of higher education is to enable the students find suitable employability opportunities after completion of the course. It is the expectations of students from the higher education institutions to train them and equip them with all the relevant knowledge, experience and skills to get a good job and to excel at their jobs.

It is the responsibility of the Universities and higher education institutes to develop and upgrade their curriculum to match the industry requirements. On the other hand, employers are seeking a diverse range of skills in new graduates to gain a competitive advantage (Birrell, 2006). It is expected that by 2022, 600 million skilled workers will be required to meet the needs of the growing Indian economy. But India's performance on the employment and education front has only been below average. Although India has grown into a knowledge economy, still unemployment is a big challenge. There is a skills shortage in the country.

In the current challenging economic situation, it is no longer sufficient for a new graduate to possess only academic knowledge, it is increasingly necessary for the students to gain more employability skills which will enhance their prospects of employment.

A holistic approach is required to transform the higher education system in terms of its approach and vision. Graduate and post-graduate should be instilled with job-specific skills in addition to academic excellence to make them 'job-ready'. It is essential to create job opportunities for overall growth of the economy.

Government Initiatives

Indian government has taken several initiatives to bridge employability skill gap in students. Many organizations, institution and agencies have been established for the same. Some of them are:

1. **National Vocational Education Qualification Framework** – an initiative by Human Resource Development Ministry (MHRD), India. The framework aims at developing a pool of skilled professionals and providing opportunities to start doing job just after completing intermediate. Through this framework, schools, vocational institutes and colleges will be linked together with one system and will provide placement assistance. Emphasis will be on courses and programs in agriculture, BPO, construction, infrastructure, finance, banking and tourism by providing vocational degree and diploma every year.

2. **National Skill Development Corporation** – it was set as a public-private partnership (PPP) to catalyze the skills landscape in India. Main objectives are to upgrade skills to international standards through significant industry involvement and develop necessary frameworks for standards, curriculum and quality assurance, to enhance support and coordinate private sector initiatives for skill development and to play a role of market maker.

3. **National Skill Development Corporation** – aims to bridge the industry academia gap by integrating skill-based trainings into the academia cycle of the university. It currently works with 21 universities, UGC and AICTE

4. **National Skill Development Fund** – it was set up by Government of India in 2009 for raising funds both from government and non-government sector for skill development.

5. **Skill Development Bureau** – arranges investment for harnessing the country's demographic dividend.

Reasons for Gap

It has been observed that higher education system and skilling programmes works in isolation with each other. There is insufficient congruence between policy makers in educational institutes and the hiring requirements in corporate sector. Moreover, students are not aware of what to expect after moving from college to the workplace. This lack of integration between students,

higher educational institutes and corporate is the main reason for low employability of the students. This leads to higher unemployment and low workforce retention in corporate. Employees feel pressured and dissatisfied with the jobs as they are not trained to work in such environments possessing appropriate skill set. Lastly, higher education institutes are unable to get all the students placed in good companies with good packages, thus affecting their future admissions and reputation.

Students are not aware of the skills which employers regard with high importance. When students appear for job interviews, they are not fully prepared and perform poorly. Recruiters regard relevant job-related knowledge to be more important than academic knowledge. There is a lack of communication from recruiters to the institutes in terms of what skills are important for them, due to which institutes are unable to train their students appropriately.

Hence, it is a need of all the stakeholders to come together and close the gaps between student perceptions and employers' expectations while higher education institutes acting as a bridge between the two sides.

Literature Review

Employability is a critical issue for both Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and corporate. The higher education's obligation is to lay the foundations for a lifelong commitment by students for learning and their professional development (West, 1998). This will enable a positive attitude towards learning. The universities have a full control on the curriculum design and implementation. It is their main responsibility to prepare their students with a more comprehensive range of skills (Albin and Crockett, 1991; Hall, 1998; Mathews, 2000). As a response, Universities have taken several corrective measures by developing and articulating policies and frameworks and by creating institutions specifically to cater to these problems.

Many a times, fresh graduates are not fully prepared to begin professional practice as they show a poor performance in job interviews. Possession of good academic qualifications is not enough to secure good employment (Yorke, 2006). Employers have additional expectations from the students in terms of having well developed employability skills. Students are required to undertake a series of skills activities and psychometric tests, and to produce a personality profile while applying for the new-age jobs (Graduate Prospects, 2009). This will enable them to make an immediate contribution to the workplace after recruitment (Confederation of British Industry, 2008). From a different perspective, it is not necessary that students who have not attained good academic qualifications are not employable. Employers give a lot of weightage to graduates with good employability skills (Denholm, 2004; Morley et al., 2006; Morley and Aynsley, 2007).

There is an increased current trend of placing increased emphasis on key skills. Consequently, the Higher Education Institutes' curriculum must incorporate opportunities to develop such skills in conjunction with subject specific skills and knowledge. This ought to enhance applicants' potential for success in the recruitment process by making them 'business ready' graduates. Students must be able to hone their capabilities to make a dynamic start and rapidly adapt to changing environment. Different academic programmes in different universities have started to adopt various strategies like offering work experience, work-related learning and employability

skills modules, and 'ready for work' events, as well as involving employers in course design and delivery. In many cases, with employability skills already embedded in the curriculum, universities employ a range of initiatives to make them more explicit to students (Cranmer, 2006).

It is imperative to find out the skills required by corporates for a successful career. Research has attempted to differentiate between the broader generic skills, context-specific, technical and practical skills (Crebert, 2002; Ashbaugh and Johnstone, 2000). In the literature, research has focused on identifying gaps between the perceptions of academia and corporate regarding the importance of various skills necessary for employment (Gilsdorf 1986; Levenburg 1996; McFadden, Jansen, and Towell 1999). Research has also been done to identify the skills sought by employers to provide suggestions for curriculum redesign. McFadden, Jansen, and Towell (1999) suggest that increased interaction between the business community and the academic community will be a major trend in the new millennium. Their findings indicate that the academic community has begun to understand what businesses want from the graduates and are getting involved in designing curricula to meet the needs of the business community. Identification of skills and characteristics that employers' value in applicants (Hakel and Schuh 1971; Powell and Posner 1983; Atkins and Kent 1988; Kanungo and Misra 1992). Fortune 500 recruiters focus on the candidate's people skills with an assumption that graduates possess the appropriate technical skills Kane (1993). Fortune 500 managers believe that, the technical skill requirements needed for a position can differ across functional areas, while general skills and personal characteristics are same across all functional areas (Martell and Carroll,1994). Motivation/ambition are the most important attribute sought by employers (Drake, Kaplan, and Stone, 1972). Some employers value communication skills above both grade point average and work experience (Tschirgi's, 1972). Oral communication skills are more important than written communication (Maes, Weldy and Icenogle, 1997).

Research has also focused on exploring the link between the academia and students. It is the strongest and longest of the three links. Students get exposure to faculty perceptions through their classroom experiences over several years. Some students build connections with faculty through student organizations. Faculty members have the highest influence on the students. They tend to communicate their perceptions of the needs of the business community to the students. Faculty perceptions can bias students' opinions. There is a need to address the issue of whether higher education institutions are adequately preparing students to succeed in curent highly technical and global marketplace (Mandt 1982; Hildebrandt, Bond, Miller, and Swinyard 1982; Behrman and Levin 1984; Hahn, Mabert, and Biggs 1984; Houshyar 1990; Harris 1994). Following the trends discussed in the literature, university and industry training have traditionally failed to develop the skills and traits necessary for success in business. More recently, business schools have failed to improve students' oral and written communication skills (Clarke and Franklin 1985; Atkins and Kent 1988; Buckley, Peach, and Weitzel 1989; Harris 1994; McEwen 1997; Levenburg 1996). Studies propose transitioning from theoretical teaching to a more applications-oriented approach (Buckley, Peach, and Weitzel 1989; Hammond, Hartman, and Brown 1996; McFadden, Jansen, and Towell 1999). Some research indicates that programs should concentrate on management development instead of quantitative skills (Behrman and Levin 1984; Buckley, Peach, and Weitzel 1989; Levenburg 1996). It has been suggested that operations management programs lack focus on various technical skills, such as

management information systems (Berry and Lancaster 1992; Mueller and Ma 1999). It is essential to place greater emphasis on the use of computer-based tools and embed stronger MIS skills into the curriculum. Higher education institutes must make an effort to understand ongoing and future trends, to receive feedback from the business community and in turn allows these institutes to improve the performance and marketability of their students.

The link between the students and the corporate is the weakest of the three links. Most students have little or limited interaction with the business community prior to graduation. They should be encouraged to gain exposure during work-related experiences such as internships. Students can interact with business managers along with classroom experiences.

Objectives

1. To study the perceptions of students about which skills are required for employment.
2. To study the perceptions of employers about which skills are required for employment.
3. To analyze the skill gap based on differences between skill perceptions of students and employers.
4. To provide recommendations for closing the identified skill gap.

Research Methodology

Based on literature review, skills important for employment were identified and grouped under three categories namely technical skills, non-technical skills and behavioral skills.

Technical skills refer to technology or domain-based knowledge. These skills will enable the employees to execute the functional tasks on the job and are directly helpful for carrying out the work. These include Word processing, Spreadsheets, Databases, Computer Literacy, Project management, Presentations, Inventory management, Quality management, Forecasting, Resource planning, Telecommunication and Quantitative analysis.

Non-Technical skills are more generic or broad-based skills that are desirable for completing daily tasks efficiently. These are more of general business skills. These include Communication skills, Problem-solving skills, Learning Agility, Team-building skills, Adaptability, Time management skills, Leadership skills, Ability to Work independently, Interpersonal skills and Negotiation skills.

Behavioral skills are inherent personality traits or qualities of an individual. They include skills such as being Ethical, Responsible, Flexible, Motivated, Enthusiastic, Risk Taker, Compliant, Intelligent, Confident, Self-confident, Persistent, Creative, Rational, Perfectionist, Curious, Technical, Extrovert, Aggressive, Visionary and Compromising. The individual items for general skills, technical skills, and personality characteristics were based on the literature (Levenburg 1996; Maes, Weldy, and Icenogle 1997).

First a pilot study was conducted with a sample of 35 students to assess its face validity. All the ambiguous words were removed.

The final study was conducted in two parts. In first part, primary data was collected from 230 graduate and post- graduate students in Delhi- NCR using convenience sampling. It was done using a structured questionnaire. For the second part of the study, primary data was collected from 50 HR (Human Resource) executives in Delhi- NCR. These HR executives are responsible for recruitment from higher education institutes.

Both students and HR Executives were asked to rate all the three types of skills on a Likert scale ranging from 1(least important) to 5(most important) to indicate how important it is for employers or prospective employees respectively to have these employability skills.

Secondary data was taken from various reports, journal articles and websites of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), AICTE, UGC etc.

Analysis

Part I: Analyzing Student's Perception of Skills Gap

Demographics of Respondents:

Table 1: The demographic profile of the Student respondents is as follows:

S. NO.	DEMOGRAPHIC	CATEGORIES	% OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS
1	Age (Years)	21 Or Below	33
		22-24	30
		Above 24	37
2	Gender	Male	51
		Female	49
3	Qualification	Undergraduate	33
		Graduate Only	37
		Post-Graduate or Above	30

Out of the total respondents, 33% were Undergraduate, 37% were Graduates and 30% were post-graduate students. In terms of gender, 51% male and 49% females participated in the research. The data collected was quite balanced in terms of representation from different categories.

Table 2: Student Rankings for Non-Technical Skills

Non-Technical Skills	**Mean Value**
Communication skills	4.77
Problem-solving skills	4.657
Learning Agility	4.617
Time management skills	4.537
Team-building skills	4.532
Leadership skills	4.441
Adaptability	4.39
Interpersonal skills	4.361

Negotiation skills	4.248
Ability to Work independently	4.066

The students perceived the following ranking order for **Non-Technical Skills,** where most required skill was Communication skills followed by Problem-solving skills, Learning Agility, Time management skills, Team-building skills, Leadership skills, Adaptability**,** Interpersonal skills, Negotiation skills and lastly Ability to Work independently. Students actively work on improving their communication skills by joining various courses and a lot of inputs are also given by the higher education institutes by conducting Personality Development Sessions etc.

Table 3: Student Rankings for Technical Skills

Technical Skills	**Mean Value**
Spreadsheets	4.573
Computer Literacy	4.486
Word processing	4.381
Databases	4.381
Presentations	4.236
Project management	4.102
Telecommunication	4.033
Resource planning	3.881
Forecasting	3.806
Inventory management	3.8
Quality management	3.724
Quantitative analysis	3.695

The students perceived the following ranking order for **Technical Skills,** where most required skill was Knowledge of Spreadsheets followed by Computer Literacy, Word processing, Databases, Presentations, Project management, Telecommunication, Resource planning, Forecasting, Inventory management, Quality management and lastly Quantitative analysis. All the curriculum at different levels of higher education includes the imparting of working knowledge of spreadsheets through practical assessments.

Table 4: Student Rankings for Behavioral Skills

Behavioral Skills	**Mean Value**
Motivated	4.673
Responsible	4.673
Confident	4.626
Intelligent	4.62
Self-confident	4.596
Ethical	4.573
Flexible	4.567
Enthusiastic	4.537

Creative	4.36
Compliant	4.33
Persistent	4.194
Technical	4.141
Rational	4.075
Visionary	4.019
Curious	4.01
Aggressive	3.992
Compromising	3.975
Risk Taker	3.951
Perfectionist	3.933
Extrovert	3.803

The students perceived the following ranking order for **Behavioral Skills,** where most required skill was Motivated followed by Responsible, Confident, Intelligent, Self-confident, Ethical, Flexible, Enthusiastic, Creative, Compliant, Persistent, Technical, Rational, Visionary, Curious, Aggressive, Compromising, Risk Taker, Perfectionist and lastly being an Extrovert. Higher education institutes work in many ways to motivate their students by involving them in various extra-curricular activities and also by interaction with personnel who have achieved success in their lives.

Part II: Analyzing Employer's Perception of Skills Gap

Demographics of Respondents:

Table 5: The demographic profile of the HR Executive respondents is as follows:

S. NO.	DEMOGRAPHIC	CATEGORIES	% OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS
1	Industry	Marketing	40
		Financial Services	30
		Human Resources	15
		Information Technology	15
2	Size of Organization	Under 1000 Employees	45
		1000 Employees and Above	55
3	Average Starting Salary of Employees (Monthly)	Under 25,000	30
		25,001-35,000	40
		Above 35,000	30

Respondents of the research are a good mix of different industries and reflect an overall view of the corporate hiring trends. 40% HR executives belonged to Marketing related companies, 30% in Financial Services, 15% in Human Resources and 15% in Information Technology sector.

Table 6: HR Executive Rankings for Technical Skills

Technical Skills	Mean Value
Word processing	4.128
Spreadsheets	4.069
Databases	3.569
Computer Literacy	3.422
Project management	3.275
Presentations	3.099
Inventory management	2.922
Quality management	2.658
Forecasting	2.628
Resource planning	2.569
Telecommunication	2.393
Quantitative analysis	2.334

The HR Executives perceived the following ranking order for **Technical Skills,** where most required skill was Word processing followed by use of Spreadsheets, Databases, Computer Literacy, Project management, Presentations, Inventory management, Quality management, Forecasting, Resource planning, Telecommunication and lastly Quantitative analysis.

Table 7: HR Executive Rankings for Non-Technical Skills

Non-Technical Skills	Mean Value
Communication skills	4.756
Problem-solving skills	4.638
Learning Agility	4.491
Team-building skills	4.315
Adaptability	4.138
Time management skills	4.079
Leadership skills	4.05
Ability to Work independently	3.903
Interpersonal skills	3.844
Negotiation skills	3.55

The HR Executives perceived the following ranking order for **Non-Technical Skills,** where most required skill was Communication skills followed by Problem-solving skills, Learning Agility, Team-building skills, Adaptability, Time management skills, Leadership skills, Ability to Work independently, Interpersonal skills and lastly Negotiation skills.

Table 8: HR Executive Rankings for Behavioral Skills

Behavioral Skills	Mean Value
Ethical	4.804
Responsible	4.675
Flexible	4.578

Motivated	4.482
Enthusiastic	4.385
Risk Taker	4.353
Compliant	4.353
Intelligent	4.32
Confident	4.288
Self-confident	4.095
Persistent	3.998
Creative	3.965
Rational	3.933
Perfectionist	3.869
Curious	3.836
Technical	3.731
Extrovert	3.546
Aggressive	3.514
Visionary	3.288
Compromising	2.998

The HR Executives perceived the following ranking order for **Behavioral Skills,** where most required skill was being Ethical followed by being Responsible, Flexible, Motivated, Enthusiastic, Risk Taker, Compliant, Intelligent, Confident, Self-confident, Persistent, Creative, Rational, Perfectionist, Curious, Technical, Extrovert, Aggressive, Visionary and lastly Compromising.

Part III: Analyzing Skills Gap

It can be observed from the previous tables that there is a clear gap between the perceptions of the students and HR executives. This gap reflects that there is a significant difference between opinions of the students and higher education institutes from the corporate.

In terms of **Technical Skills**, Students feel that use of spreadsheets would be most important at job while HR executives believe that Word processing is most important. Based on the nature of job, employees are required to create a lot of training documents and word files for the normal course of work. Spreadsheets are also important as employees need to collate a lot of data and analyze it to further use them for reporting. Students perceive Computer literacy to be second highest important skill as it is extensively taught in the classrooms. Even on job it is an important skill as now a days most of the work is being done using computers and these skills are a must.

Inventory management skills have been ranked by HR on seventh position while students ranked it quite low at tenth position. It involves the ability to deal with the resources available for the team and emphasize habits of pre-planning effectively. Similar gap exists for Quality Management skills which refers to ensuring that quality of work, materials and people are well taken care of. Students does not understand the importance of quality till the time they reach the job place. The companies embed the culture of high quality amongst its employees. This can be done by the institutes to make the students' post-placement adjustment easier.

In terms of **Non-Technical Skills**, both students and HR match in their perception of the top three skills i.e Communication skills, Problem-solving skills and Learning Agility. Institutes also work profusely towards enhancing the communication skills of student by providing them training is soft skills, business etiquettes, group discussions, mock interviews, debate competitions etc. Problem solving skills enables the students to handle different situations on the job with confidence and zeal. Institutes impart these skills by involving students in various events, committees, clubs etc. hence the balance is maintained.

The gap remains in few skills like Team-building skills. HR gives higher importance to it as most of the work done is usually in teams and employees are expected to observe basic team etiquettes. Students don't perceive team work to be of higher importance, instead they perceive that to be time management. HR ranked Adaptability skill to be of high importance as in the corporate environment there is a requirement of a high degree of flexibility and employees must be able to adapt quickly to any changes happening around them, whether in teams, projects, departments, company policies, other regulations etc.

Students ranked Ability to Work independently as lowest as they feel that they will always be given inputs and instructions from the seniors which they will simply follow, and the work will be done. But, this is not true in the corporate as HR ranked it much higher. Employees are expected to work independently without too much inputs, in fact they should come up with innovative ideas and suggestions for improvement of the company.

In terms of **Behavioral Skills**, most important skill for HR is being ethical, while students placed it on sixth rank. Companies are very cautious about their ethical practices and make lot of efforts to imbibe ethical values in their employees by training programs and sessions. Any unethical practices by a single employee can have bad repercussions for the image of the company.

Students have ranked being motivated as the top behavioral skill. This perception can be based on the frequent interactions with their peers, faculty and industry people. It is mostly emphasized that students should also feel motivated. Another deviation is with respect to Self-confident skill. Students ranked it as fifth important skill while HR ranked it as tenth important skill. The probable reason for this discrepancy is approach towards the job. HR believes that over a period of time there is an improvement in the personality of all the employees after getting exposure to the work culture and grooming by their mentors, so self-confidence will naturally percolate in the employees.

Risk taking skill is ranked at sixth position by HR and at eighteenth position by students. Students have low exposure to the realities of the world and are brought in a protected environment usually. When they enter corporate world, the expectations from an employee are different. They are supposed to be creative, innovative and discover new strategies, product design or process flow to make the company different from their competitors. This can only be done when employees are willing to take risk to try something new.

It can be concluded that among students and HR's perceptions highest skill gaps exist in terms of the behavioral skills. Institutes must devise a strategy to inculcate these behavioral skills among the students to make them more compatible with corporate's needs and expectations.

Part IV

Recommendations: Closing the gap

Based on the views of HR executives and various reports published recently, the following recommendations are made to close the gap between the skill gaps identified in the study. These steps must be taken simultaneously by all the stakeholders involved in the higher education i.e. Students, higher education institutions and corporate employers.

1. **Students' Role**

Students should be pro-active in identifying the skills demand in the job market and equip themselves with these skills by taking support and guidance from their teachers and institutes.

- Students must take employability tests seriously: they should continuously assess their capabilities and enhance their skills over time to make them job-ready.
- Students must be prepared to learn, unlearn and relearn.
- Students should make an effort to keep a track of the current trends in the job market.

2. **Higher Education Institutions' Role**

Higher Education Institutions must act as a bridge between students and corporate. Teachers will act as facilitators or tools of execution. It should be the main responsibility of institutes to make suitable arrangements for skill development in students as per market demand.

- Teachers should be trained to enhance the student's employability capacity.
- Soft skill programmes should be embedded in formal education: focus should be on developing skills considered important by the corporates
- Assessment programmes should be introduced within the course structure: Self-assessment by students as per market standards will help them to assess their capabilities critically and test their employability.
- Opportunities for active learning must be created: through internships, study abroad in student exchange programmes, more extra-curricular activities etc.
- Adopt Business Simulation games-based Pedagogy: to give business students a taste of various business issues by handling a virtual company
- Encourage multimedia based teaching approach: to increase interest level of the students
- Include real life case studies in the curriculum: to enable the students to understand and implement management concepts easily.
- Career Counseling should be made mandatory before the placements or hiring activity is initiated

3. **Corporate Employers' Role**

If businesses want to have better trained employees having the right skills set, they will need to take a more active role in involving themselves with the students. They must open avenues for student- interaction, teacher- interaction and more collaboration with the higher education institutes.

- Corporate must offer some cost-effective educational solutions to meet their industry needs: in form of free certification courses
- Corporate should enable Students to be exposed to various career pathways prevalent in industry: this will help students to have more clarity to align their career aspirations and workforce needs.
- Corporate can have interaction session of their workforce with teachers and students: for directly addressing skills issues
- Corporate can develop workforce-related educational experiences for students like job shadowing, mentorship programs; arrange skills competitions, apprenticeships or internships and tradeshows.
- Corporate can also Sponsor a specific program with the University or institute that would benefit them in the long run.
- Corporate can sponsor education of selected bright economically weak students and later offer them placement opportunities.

Conclusion

Students usually enroll in higher education institutes for earning an academic qualification or degree, gain appropriate skills and to step into the corporate world via employment opportunities. The purpose of the study is to find out student's perceptions about which skills are important to attain for job while they are studying. Also, to find employer's perceptions about most important skills required in the future employees. The study findings reveal that skill gap exist between employers and students' perceptions of the skills and traits critical for securing employment.

Based on the mean scores of the ratings, a ranking order was established to ascertain the skill gap. The findings suggest that among students and HR's perceptions highest skill gaps exist in terms of the behavioral skills. Institutes must devise a strategy to inculcate these behavioral skills among the students to make them more compatible with corporate's needs and expectations. The skills gap is quite evident and there is a mismatch in expectations among students and employers. Such findings indicate that there is a communication gap between universities and employers that needs to be addressed to bridge the skills gap.

The study also provides recommendations to close the gap between the skill gaps identified in the study. These steps must be taken simultaneously by all the stakeholders involved in the higher education i.e. Students, higher education institutions and corporate employers.

The focus should be on creating a long-term plan of creating a skilled talent pool. The skilling ecosystem in India has witnessed some great policy reforms which will create a stable platform for all stakeholders. There is a need for an integrated academic system to provide holistic learning as well as impart basic skill training. One cannot exist without the other. One needs a simultaneous and complimentary acquisition of both knowledge and skills.

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