Role of Co-curricular Activities and Professional Societies in getting better Job Opportunities for Computer Science Graduates in Early Career Academics

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*Abstract: - In the growing era of new skills, there is a significant increase in the opportunities and achievements for students and generally in the early career academics students work on their skillset. Such skills are resulting in new opportunities for jobs and other sectors. With the increase in the number of students involved in the engineering and development domain, there is a rise in competition for job opportunities and in order to tackle this competition many corporates demand a well and multi-skilled person, instead of a normal graduate. Students undertaking various skills and other achievements, usually have a strong profile and have an advantage over other graduates in obtaining jobs and other opportunities during or after their early career academics. In this research, we will try to investigate how extracurricular and co-curricular activities catalyse employability and also influence job seekers and their early career outcomes. In particular, we try to examine how the type as well as the level of participation, enable the acquisition of relevant skills, achievements and knowledge that facilitates the job search. And to achieve the same we developed a dedicated University Evaluation System as an extended version for the Chandigarh University Institute Management System in order to measure and keep a record of the co-curricular activities and other achievements which are acquired by students and score them on the basis of those achievements. Our results suggest that the type of activities pursued in college or in school is consistently important for occupational outcomes, and different types of activities have a significant influence on different cohorts. Extracurricular activities tend to have more job benefits for college graduates. This paper draws the usefulness of the extracurricular or co-curricular activities for graduate students, especially in taking jobs and other opportunities and thereby also ensuring the growth of students as well as the universities.*

# INTRODUCTION

The co-curricular and extra-curricular activities both play an important role in the life of a student and a professional. The co-curricular activities can be defined as the activities related to the student’s institution and coursework, the part-time work, participation in university clubs and societies, student chapters, and other activities related to institutions/universities like volunteering, social services, class representative, holding executive positions in college societies and clubs, and these are also described as the activities out of the tutor-led learning time. [2]

Graduate employability is extremely competitive, due to a high number of participation of students, rising fees of job placement providing institutions and some other factors are also there which lessen the chances for recent graduates in finding a good job and other and students acquiring such activities i.e. co-curricular activities and ample achievements generally have an advantage over other candidates when applying to jobs and other opportunities during or after their early career academics. Participation in such activities as social and professional engagement, academic engagement, social integration, professional bodies, academic achievements, succeeding in activities, and other achievements have resulted in academic successes and has shown a great rise in one’s profile and have shown a great impact on employers, especially for the students pursuing early career academic degree in STEM i.e. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Reference [5] cites the report of students engaging in co-curricular activities at Purdue University and observes the overall growth of students from all the departments, it also mentions that the students who are engaged in co-curricular activities can manage their time properly and are more disciplined than other students comparatively, the approximate time observation table 2.1.1, given below:

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| **HOURS** | **ACTIVITY** |
| Class and Studies | 45 Hours |
| Sleep and Rest | 56 Hours |
| Daily Chores | 20 Hours |
| Unallocated Time | 47 Hours |
| **TOTAL TIME** | 168 Hours |

*Table 2.1.1*

With reference to table 2.1.1, most of the students have about 47 hours of unused time, and this can be used effectively to participate in non-academic activities and can take benefits from such activities if students can manage their time properly.

Requested paper [7]’s manuscript, we’ll write its reference once the request is approved.

Research also reveals that each type of activity provides students unique opportunities for identifying preference and fit for potential occupations, and this process might contribute to a higher level of job satisfaction. Furthermore, employers prefer individuals who have specialised skills, and activities that are related to those skills are valued. It is also possible that employers are looking for homophily, hiring people with specific extracurricular activity profiles that resonate culturally with the people in their organisations [8][9]

# METHODOLOGY

To get a better insight into how students are getting benefited by Co-Curricular activities we conducted a survey of Chandigarh University, whereby we asked students to answer some of the questions like if they are participating in co-curricular activities or not. For which 62% out of 1000 students replied to YES! The majority of them were Engineering students and the domain of their co-curricular activities was majorly technical or research work. The survey also had questions related to their feedback on participating in those activities and the replies were overwhelming that those activities gave them an edge over other candidates when they applied for new positions in the job.

# RESULTS

*3.1 Working on Co-Curricular activities during Early Career Academics*

The benefits of co-curricular activities are numerous, including self-confidence, building networking, improving communication skills, and good mental as well as physical health.

Employers prefer individuals who have specialized skills, and if that individual has been in those activities that are related to those skills, then the value of that candidate enhances. It is also possible that employers are particularly looking for hiring people with specific extracurricular or co-curricular activity profiles that resonate with other people in their organizations.

For instance, an employer is specifically looking for a person with extraordinary speaking skills along with the other job responsibilities, and your profile has a few extracurricular activities where you have been into such activities like you have been a debater and won competitions that those, these things portraits that you have great speaking skills, then without any doubt your chances of being hired increases than your competitors for that position who have not been into such activities.

Furthermore, participation in co-curricular activities leads to a higher level of satisfaction and confidence for people who graduated. Students take the support of their activities for connecting with occupational attainment, and these factors would contribute to a higher level of job and career satisfaction.

*3.2 Working with Professional Societies*

Professional societies have become an area of interest among students, graduates, working professionals and researchers. And have gained ample popularity. These societies serve various benefits for the individual members working for society and the members who are generally students, graduates, working professionals, researchers, professors can also avail various benefits from these societies. This paper focuses primarily on the job opportunities for graduates and working professionals.

Working with professional societies is a subset of cocurricular activities in one’s professional career. And cocurricular activities generally play an important role in the life of professionals and students in building them physically, socially and mentally, with developing self-esteem, gaining confidence and developing social relationships.

Also, professional societies assist professionals and students in building professional connections and networks, which is important in one’s career, and with the help of professional societies, it can be easily achieved. Professional networks benefit graduates and professionals in availing and applying to various jobs and other opportunities, and networking can be a successful tool for career development as career successes also reflect that, networkers are more successful than non-networkers.

Many universities and institutes use professional societies as the way to develop students’ professional career as working with professional societies, also make students develop a professional culture at an early stage which is a stepping stone for their future career. Also, these societies are a way to connect industry experts with the students. Also, the students working at the executive position in a professional society can gain work experience at an early stage and besides work experience, they learn professionalism which many organizations seek in their freshmen employees. [6]

## 3.3 Benefits of Working on Co-Curricular Activities

This paper focuses on the role of co-curricular activities in getting better job opportunities for recently graduated students, and with reference to section III, this can be judged that working on co-curricular activities and especially with professional societies can raise one’s profile and attract interviewers and employers easily.

Also, there are several myths that students pursuing intensive co-curricular activities, generally experience diminished grades as these activities generally distract students and lessen their academic achievement, but according to reference [5] and table 2.1.1 in the Literature Review of this paper, it is seen that students who are working on their co-curricular skills can well manage their time and are much better in case of academics when compared to their peer classmates.

Also, it is seen that the students who are indulged in co-curricular activities are more organised and disciplined[5], which is important in a professional culture.

Working on co-curricular activities professionally with professional bodies develops a culture of professionalism in a student, and such students have an advantage over other candidates while applying for jobs and other opportunities as many companies and organizations are seeking employees with great professionalism.

## 3.3.1 Building Networks with Professional Societies

Also with the help of co-curricular activities, students can build professional connections, and enhance their networking during their early career academics only.

Networking, being an integral part of job search needs to be strengthened when students are at their college. It involves using personal, professional, and academic contacts to assist students or professionals to achieve their career goals and learn about the field.

Networking is all about establishing, and nurturing long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with the people around you.

Networking can be an excellent way to hear about job opportunities or get in at a company worth working with. Research has shown that 80% of professionals consider professional networking to be crucial for one’s career success.

Besides that, the finest roadmap to create a good networking circle is by working with professional societies, like college clubs and associations where you can connect with seniors of your field and get insights into the work culture. Being part of college societies helps to go beyond the curriculum. Some societies have connections to businesses and other organisations which is a boon. Professionals in such societies can guide better and also help in referrals.

# DEVISED SOLUTION

As co-curricular activities play an important role in an undergraduate student’s life, we designed a **University Evaluation System**, which can be employed with the university’s current student management system, can be an extended version for it or can work separately too. With this system, the students can add their achievements and skills which they acquire and further they can be awarded credits on grades, for the skills and achievements they have. Such a system can be really useful for the management of the co-curricular activities or the achievements, students hold, out of their academic life.

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