

PERCEPTION OF STAKEHOLDERS TOWARDS INFLUENCE OF COMPETENCY BASED EDUCATION ON SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper has attempted to propose competency based teaching and learning in Higher Education. In India, the curriculum is enforceable in some Institutions and cannot be altered, in which case to support the objective of the paper; the teaching learning objectives can be designed as per the competencies required by the student to get employable. The paper focuses the need of being employable and not only being graduate. Hence this paper examines the use of competency based assessment. Thus the correlation between the curriculum preparation and the desired outputs in terms of the skills of the student can be easily understood through such assessments. The objective of the paper has been sought after through a primary research survey in higher educational institutions, gaining perception of teachers towards the mentioned areas and also from the industries towards the assessment of students during the campus placements. The research tool has been a structured questionnaire with focus on understanding the opinion of the respondents towards competency based teaching and learning and also assessments. The data has been obtained from multiple disciplines to understand the relevance of each institution towards competency based education. The data gathered has been analysed and a comparative report has been prepared which highlights the perception of stakeholders as teachers and industries from various disciplines of study. The outputs of this research can also help the higher educational institutions to focus on creating curriculum or modules delivering employability oriented competencies. Thus through this research objectives like, perception of faculties towards competency based education, Assessment based on level of competency achieved, inclusion

methodology of competencies based approach in teaching and learning and much more can be obtained. The paper can thus contribute to a new thought process of a new approach in teaching and learning.

Key Words: Competencies, Higher Education, Students

JEL classification: A20, A29

INTRODUCTION

There is an increase in the number of Higher Educational Institutes in India with the increasing population and also the trend towards completion of higher education by masses. However, the quality of education has not fulfilled the part of its journey in the same speed as the progress of the number of Institutions. There is a strong need to improve the quality of teaching and learning to facilitate the need of student graduating with excellent employability skills. It is also important to assess the student in the terms of the competencies, to actually gauge the level of expertise they have gained from the teaching and learning process. The research is needed to understand the use of competencies desired in Industry to be base criteria for the curriculum prepared in various courses of the higher educational Institutions. It is important to understand the output of the content of the teaching and learning and whether it really benefits the students in acquiring the right skill sets.

From the report of Prof. J.S Rajput, Vision 2020 - Education National Council of Educational Research and Training Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi – 110016 it is prompted by the Prime Minister's vision for India's development as Knowledge Society, the Planning Commission constituted a Vision 2020 Group to look into the various parameters of knowledge society which relate to knowledge as a base to create values to be shared through global networking. NCERT was assigned the task to develop the educational aspect of Vision 2020. The management system of knowledge has to be closely relooked into. Effective measures for management of knowledge workers are to be evolved. Traditional, administrative and bureaucratic structure will not be adequate with respect to management of knowledge workers. Universities, colleges, schools and institutes of professional learning are all crying for a new management system that would be dynamic and responsive. Faculty members of world- class competency have to be nurtured, recruited, retrained and retained to ensure maintenance of levels, standards and dynamism as an educational institution performs a significant function of providing learning experiences to lead their students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge

The literature review suggests the practices changing at an international level and also within some institutions in India. Although there is a dire need to inculcate this practice in a general manner across all higher educational institutions to ensure effective teaching

and placements. The problem statement has been framed considering the past researches carried out by researchers in the areas of quality of higher education.

David w. Johnson (2000) described a competency-based approach to effectiveness assessment at the program level utilizing various feedback mechanisms and also discussed an approach to feedback analysis using curriculum-competency mapping that could suggest areas for program improvements. Finally, experiences in applying the competency-based assessment process for the Computer Information Systems program of a small college were described.

Meeta Kanhere (2006) highlighted the importance of competency mapping in different HR functions like recruitment, performance appraisal, training and development and its overall impact on the organization. “Competencies” aim at linking the human resource system of an organization to its purpose. The competency focus gave insights into the process of aligning the human resources of an organization with the vision and mission of the same. Describing what was done helps performance management, describing what was being done helps training and development and describing what should be done helps to define selection standards and performance goals. An attempt was made in this paper to study the competency mapping process and benefits in the three select information technology companies. Pooja Tripathi, Jayanthi Ranjan; (2010) A Competency Mapping for Educational Institution: Expert System Approach.

This paper presents the development of expert system to assist in the operation of competence management in educational institution. The knowledge based consists of a rule-based expert system for the competence management and subsequent performance assessment. It is generally recognized that an expert system can cope with many of the common problems relative with the operation and control of the competence management process. In this work an expert system is developed which emphasize on various steps involved in the competence management process. The knowledge acquisition to develop this expert system involved an exhaustive literature review on competence management operation and interviews with experienced deans and the competence managers. The development tool for this system is an expert system shell. Coll & Zegward (2006) focused on establishing what competencies the various stakeholders think are the ideal competencies needed by employees in the hospitality field in places such as hotels, food service providers, restaurants and lodges. Employers have indicated that candidates are often not prepared for the workplace and calls for assessment of competencies rather than on intelligence scores. By improving and developing candidates’ competencies such as interpersonal skills, teamwork, communication and problem solving skills, value will be added to their intellectual capabilities making them more employable. There are varieties of interpretations of the term competency and can be viewed as a characteristic of an individual and related to personal attributers rather than technical skills.

Ashok Sankethi (2008) explained that Competency mapping is the process of identifying key competencies for a particular position in an organisation. Once this process is

complete, the map becomes an input for several other HR processes such as job-evaluation; recruitment; training and development; performance management; and succession planning. For competency mapping to be productive, the organisation has to be clear about its business goals in the short- as well as long-term and the capability-building imperatives for achieving these business goals. The process starts from as macro an endeavour as understanding the vision and mission of the organisation and how that translates into specific, time-bound business goals. Talbot & et. al. (2007) argued that competencies are a useful tool to assist the process of curriculum development, selection of assessment items, and ongoing quality, assurance for health promotion education. The authors provided a case study that applied the competencies in curriculum development, assessment selection and quality assurance in an Australian University. Competencies set performance expectations for professionals working in the field.

A gap has to be filled between the pedagogy oriented skill sets and the Industry demanded skill sets. There is a dire need of a radical reform which is required in Indian higher education. It is now necessary to have higher standards of transparency, strengthening of the skill based education and research oriented education and stronger industry connects professionalization of the sector through stronger institutional responsibility. There are abundant test on aptitude and cognition, which the student undergoes as a part of the selection process for getting job. However, it would be more effective to have the pedagogy based on the competencies to be enriched for the student. The competencies framework can be relevant as per the discipline areas, as the skill set for each job will be different.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Primary Objectives:

- 1.To study the perception of faculties towards influence of competency based education on skill development
- 2.To study the perception of industries towards influence of competency based education on skill development

Secondary Objectives:

- 1.To seek perception of faculties towards preparation of curriculum using competency based approach
- 2.To understand perception of faculties towards use the competency based assessment system
- 3.To seek perception of Industry representatives towards selection of candidates using competency based grading
- 4.To understand the present scenario of fresh graduates in terms to employability skills

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used for this paper is Descriptive research design. Two structured questionnaires were prepared. The first structured questionnaire (A) was prepared and

administered to the faculties of a Higher Educational Institution. The respondents were chosen from different disciplines of study. The second structured questionnaire (B) was prepared and administered to representatives from different Industries like Manufacturing and Service. The respondents were selected through convenient sampling from the middle level of the organisational hierarchy. An effort was made to administer the respondents from Industry responsible for recruitment and selection of students from campus. The sample size in both the case was 50 respondents. The fully filled questionnaire was taken into consideration.

SUMMARY

Results:

Results 1: Responses from Questionnaire A addressed to faculties from different disciplines

Demographics:

Total faculties: 50 (Engineering: 25 respondents, Management: 25 respondents)

Minimum experience of the faculties in teaching in Higher Education Institution: 5 years

Selection criteria: Experience in curriculum development and Student Placement Coordination.

Table 1: Responses from Questionnaire A addressed to faculties from different disciplines

Sr. No.	Question	Responses	
		Engineering	Business/ Management
1.	Institution follows curriculum suggested by University Grants Commission for the courses	Agree: 100 % Neutral: 0% Disagree: 0%	Agree: 100% Neutral: 0% Disagree: 0%
2.	The recommended curriculum offers enough flexibility to change the contents by the course coordinator at the Institution to adapt to the competencies of the students	Agree: 36% Neutral: 2% Disagree: 62%	Agree: 43% Neutral: 0% Disagree: 57%
3.	The curriculum outcome significantly mentions the competencies which will be attained after the course is over	Agree: 12% Neutral: 0% Disagree: 88%	Agree: 7% Neutral: 0% Disagree: 93%
4.	There is noticeable identification of the skills acquired by the students after attending the course	Agree: 12% Can't say: 3% Disagree: 85%	Agree: 25% Can't say: 0% Disagree: 75%
5.	The Faculties are clearly aware of the employability skills which are to be developed during the course tenure	Agree: 32% Neutral: 0% Disagree: 68%	Agree: 28% Neutral: 0% Disagree: 72%

Findings:

- The results show that the Institution follows the national agency for the curriculum preparation. It has objectives and course outcomes but has no specific mention about the employability skills being gained through the completion of the course.
- It is observed that the institutions have very less flexibility to change the contents of the curriculum or incorporate additional sessions based on their individual insights at a great level.
- The curriculum does not mention the specific noticeable skills adaptations or behaviour of the student after undertaking the course.
- It is also found that the assessment of the students is carried out basically on the theoretical and practical contents. There is no assessment carried out with the deliverables of the competencies gained from the course.
- The faculties teaching the courses are also not aware of the specific competencies which will be gained by the students after completion of the course. The faculties are aware of the course outcomes in a generalist method.
- The results have been differentiated as per the discipline responses from Engineering and Business. The faculties of both the disciplines are almost of the same opinion in respect to the lack of flexibility in curriculum, no competency based teaching or evaluation system for the classroom and placements respectively. The faculties are not aware of the competencies which will be developed by the students after attending the course. The difference in the opinion of teachers is not significantly high towards these aspects.

Results 2: Responses from Questionnaire B addressed to industry representatives from different industries.

Demographics:

Total faculties: 50 (Manufacturing: 25 respondents, Service: 25 respondents)

Minimum experience of the Recruitment and Selection of students from Higher Education Institutions: 5 years

Selection criteria: Experience in conducting and organizing Student Recruitment and Selection

Sr. No.	Question	Responses	
		Manufacturing	Service
1.	The fresh graduates joining Industry for job are perfectly fit for their job roles	Agree: 100 % Neutral: 0% Disagree: 0%	Agree: 100% Neutral: 0% Disagree: 0%
2.	Rank and evaluate the selection criteria according to the importance attached to it at practical level during the campus interviews:		
a)	Performance of candidate in Institute examination	Rank: First Very important: 93% Important: 7% Less important: 0%	Rank : First Very important: 97% Important: 3% Less important: 0%
b)	Job Description	Rank: Fourth Very important: 22% Important: 13% Less important: 75%	Rank: Fourth Very important: 32% Important: 6% Less important: 62%
c)	Matching Job competencies precisely defined	Rank: Fifth Very important: 18% Important: 7% Less important: 75%	Rank: Fifth Very important: 4% Important: 23% Less important: 73%
d)	Background check with Professors	Rank: Third Very important: 80% Important: 20% Less important: 0%	Rank: Second Very important: 85% Important: 15% Less important: 0%
e)	Group discussions Interview performance	Rank: Second Very important: 82% Important: 18% Less important: 0%	Rank: Third Very important: 78% Important: 22% Less important: 0%
3.	Competency based assessment yield better results	Agree: 56% Can't say: 30% Disagree: 14%	Agree: 76% Can't say: 12% Disagree: 12%
4.	There is a industry academia linkage for curriculum preparation	Agree: 26% Neutral: 10% Disagree: 64%	Agree: 22% Neutral: 5% Disagree: 73%

Findings:

- The results indicate that industries are focussing more on academic orientation of the students during the selection process than the competencies required. The ranking and preference is more towards bright students who are achieve good grades for the institution exams.
- The industries are usually not using competency based assessment for the selection process during campus interviews. There is no match done at a

specific level with the competencies of the students with the job competencies. Students are selected basically for a job profile in a general description.

- The respondents were from different industries, manufacturing and service industries. However the responses towards each question are almost similar when it comes to lack of use of competency assessment for selection process. They are also not involved in the curriculum framing of the courses at the academic institutions in a very extensive manner.
- The performance of the students during the interviews or group discussion is more considered than the matching of the competencies of students with respect to jobs.
- Thus the most important criteria for selection of the students are academic performance, interviews, and group discussions and in some cases followed by competency mapping.
- There is a poor industry academia linkage especially with regards to the course/curriculum development in institutions. The industry is not approached for major contributions to the syllabus development for students. Hence the gap exists between the skills gained by the student in the classroom and the skills required by the students in the industry.
- The industry representatives were of the opinion that the competency based assessment can ensure a more appropriate selection of the students.

SUGGESTIONS

The higher educational institutions are growing in numbers but it is essential to understand the quality of the youth graduating out of the institutions. The prime importance of education is not only to feed knowledge but also to make them capable of becoming employable or become an employer. The current system pursuing in the higher educational institutions is more of approaching the curriculum with a more theoretical manner than a practical based approach which will be more applicable in the industries. Even the teachers are observed to focus more on the course outcomes which mentions the outcomes in a more generalist approach than actually focussing on the skills deliverables. There is less scope of flexibility with the curriculum change and hence the course is offered in more or less the same manner all across the classroom and through many years, without much change. It is observed that the students selected during the campus interviews are majorly selected on basis of their academic performance but actually missing out on the skills they are essentially required to perform in the job role. The assessment criteria hardly focus on the competencies or skills set of the students during the selection process. There is no matching of the skill set of the candidate with the skill set required in the organisation. The less academic and industry linkage on developing the students through connecting the requirement of the industry with the academia is the most crucial block in the entire process. The curriculum if based on the requirement of the industry and the

changing environment can lead the development of the exact competencies among the students which are required by the job profile. This will also help during the selection process of the candidates. The competency framework designed as per the particular job profile can help select the perfect or the right candidate for the job. Thus in brief the suggestions to be implemented for an effective performance of the candidate after joining the industry are as follows:

- Curriculum to be prepared with competency based outcomes.
- Faculties to be trained to identify the competencies to be inculcated through the curriculum and teach the students with those deliverables in mind.
- Curriculum has to be made a little flexible giving opportunity by each Institution to incorporate topics to focus on the industry requirement and the changing business environment in the local areas.
- Curriculum to be prepared in consultation with the industry, so as to prepare the deliverables matching the job profiles.
- Increase the industry academia linkage and actions.
- Selection of the candidates based on competency framework, so as to ensure that right candidates are selected for the right job, which ensures less turnover for the industry.

LIMITATIONS

- The research has been carried out for few institutions only in the same city. Thus the response is significantly not the perception of higher educational institutions at a general level.
- The time line of the research is less, considering the time spent on the research. Hence it mentions the current perception of the faculties and the industry and cannot be taken for a larger scope of time.
- The feedback of the respondents is personal and cannot be generalised.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to understand the existing scenario of a higher educational institution with respect to the deliverables through curriculum and also the assessment of the students. The research has also tried to focus on the existing practices of the placements of a higher educational institutions and the process with respect to the selection of the candidates during the campus placements. It has been significantly brought out that the focus of the process of educating and placement is not based on competency framework and thus a gap exist between the competency required by the industry whilst the competency gained during the course teaching. The findings have brought out the need of competency based system in higher educational institution for teaching and assessment of students.

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