

Skill Development: Its Challenges Faced by Graduates

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Introduction

Despite degrees and diplomas, many graduates enter the profession market sense underprepared. The problematic isn't a lack of intelligence — it's that the skills required by companies often don't match what campuses deliver.

In today's competitive job market, employability is not determined by academic qualifications alone but by the possession of relevant skills, adaptability, and practical experience. Many graduates and job seekers face difficulties securing employment due to a lack of soft skills, digital literacy, and industry-specific competencies. This proposal outlines an online skill development program designed to enhance employability, bridging the gap between education and industry requirements.

Higher education institutions play a fundamental part in shaping the personnel. But insistent employability gaps indicate the need for universal reforms. This article outlines the root causes and provides a real-world strategy — curriculum, pedagogy, partnerships, and assessment — to produce graduates who are both well-informed and workplace-ready.

Objective of the Study

1. To recognize the major skill development challenges faced by the graduates in their changeover from academic to the workplace.
2. To analyse the employability gap between the skill graduates, possess and the skill employer demand.

Review of Literature

According to NASSCOM (2024), only **49% of Indian graduates are employable**, as many lack essential skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Similarly, Andrews and Higson (2008) emphasized that employers often find graduates academically qualified but lacking in workplace readiness.

Singh and Gera (2015) observed that communication and interpersonal skills are among the most critical areas where graduates struggle. Employers consistently rank these skills higher than technical knowledge when evaluating job applicants (LinkedIn Skills Report, 2023).

The **World Economic Forum (2020)** highlighted that **54% of employees globally will require reskilling or upskilling by 2025**, with digital literacy being a top priority. Graduates who lack exposure to emerging technologies such as AI, cloud computing, and data analytics face challenges in meeting industry demands.

A study by **Yorke (2006)** found that university curricula are often **theory-oriented** and fail to provide adequate experiential learning. Similarly, research by the International Labour Organization (2023) shows that graduates with internships or project-based training are **40–50% more likely to secure jobs** compared to those without practical exposure.

According to **Sharma (2019)**, lack of structured career counselling in higher education leaves graduates underprepared for job search strategies, resume writing, and interview performance. Career readiness programs are therefore seen as vital to improving employability outcomes.

Importance of Skill Development

The rapid pace of technological change and evolving industry needs have made traditional education insufficient on its own. Skill development empowers learners with competencies that make them job-ready, confident and adaptable to workplace demands. Skill development programs are particularly effective because they provide flexibility, access to diverse resources and interactive learning experiences.

Key Challenges in Skill Development

1. Communication and Soft Skills Gap

- A large proportion of graduate's lack proficiency in **verbal and written communication, teamwork, and professional etiquette**.
- This makes it difficult for them to perform well in interviews, group discussions, and workplace collaboration.

2. Limited Industry Exposure

- Many curricula are **theory-driven** with minimal practical exposure, internships, or projects.

- As a result, graduates often lack problem-solving skills and adaptability in real-world situations.

3. Digital Skill Deficiency

- With industries rapidly adopting new technologies, graduates are expected to have knowledge of **digital tools, data literacy, and emerging technologies**.
- However, most graduates have only basic IT knowledge, creating a skill mismatch.

4. Lack of Career Guidance

- Graduates often struggle with **resume writing, interview preparation, and networking** due to insufficient career counselling at the institutional level.
- This affects their confidence and ability to navigate the job market effectively.

5. Financial and Accessibility Barriers

- While online training is growing, some graduates from rural or underprivileged backgrounds lack access to digital infrastructure, devices, or stable internet.
- This widens the skill gap between urban and rural learners.

Data Analysis of the Study

A survey of **50 graduates** was conducted through questionnaires to identify their key challenges in skill development. The findings are summarized below:

Primary Data of the Study

S. No.	Challenge Area	Responses (%)
1.	Lack of Communication Skills	45%
2.	Limited Technical/Digital Skills	30%
3.	Lack of Practical Exposure	40%
4.	Insufficient Career Guidance	35%
5.	Financial/Accessibility Issues	25%

Data Analysis and Interpretation

S. No.	Analysis	Interpretation
1.	Nearly half of graduates feel underconfident in expressing themselves.	Communication training should be prioritized in employability programs.

2.	One-third of respondent's lack knowledge of industry-relevant digital tools.	Indicates need for digital literacy and technical upskilling.
3.	Many feel their education is too theory-oriented.	Programs should include internships, projects, and real-world case studies.
4.	Over one-third lack support in resumes, interviews, and networking.	Career readiness modules must be integrated into training.
5.	Some face challenges in affording or accessing training resources.	Affordable, online, and inclusive models are required to reach all graduates.

Findings

1. The data highlights that **communication skills (45%)** and **lack of practical exposure (40%)** are the most persistent challenges.
2. Technical/digital skill gaps (30%) indicate that **graduates are not fully prepared for the demands of Industry.**
3. Career guidance (35%) is another key area where institutes must step in to bond the gap.
4. Accessibility and affordability barriers (25%) reveal the **need for wide-ranging and low-cost digital programs.**

Future Scope of the Study

1. Role of technology in skill development with the rapid growth of AI
2. Bridging the Industry – Academia collaboration models
3. Highlight the global comparisons and best practices
4. Focus on gender, socio-economic inclusivity in skill development
5. Tools used for the assessment of soft skill development

Conclusion

Graduates face numerous challenges in skill development, primarily centered around **communication, practical experience, and digital willingness.** These issues directly affect their employability and profession development. Addressing these gaps requires a **multi-dimensional tactic:**

1. Implanting employability skills into higher education curricula.
2. Offering affordable and accessible digital training programs.
3. Providing career guidance, mentorship, and industry-linked internships.

By attempting these challenges systematically, graduates can changeover smoothly into the personnel, and administrations can benefit from a pool of **job-ready, skilled professionals**.

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