

# Inclusive Academic Curriculum and Evaluation System by Integrating Employability/Life Skills at Schools – Stakeholders' Perception

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## **Abstract**

*Inclusive development has gained ample emphasize in the education, employment and health sector. There have been enormous studies propagating the need for inclusiveness in education, employment and health. Most of the employability reports in India revealed that the present generation lack in employability and life skills. However, in most cases, equity fails in teaching and assessment. In such cases, most education systems have failed to include these skills integrated into curriculum, taught and evaluated. Boud and Falchikov (2010) suggest moving away from traditional way of teaching and assessment, which undermines students' capacity to judge their own work, to authentic, work- or research- relevant assessments that better prepare students for future employability and coping with life. The intellectual capacity gains more space during the course of school life and no space for employability and life skills enhancement. This paper proves the need for integrating the employability/life skills into school curriculum and the academic performance evaluation should also include the employability/life skills. The opinion of 120 respondents (employers, teachers, parents and students) have been consolidated and described. Descriptive design has been used to describe the variables. SPSS software was used to process and infer the data. The findings and suggestion of this paper will pave way for emphasizing and strategizing the need for integrating and grading the employability/life skills of students.*

**Index Terms:** *Inclusion, Employability and Life Skills, Inclusive Curriculum and Evaluation.*

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## **Introduction**

Government of India, through its highly ambitious National Skill Development Initiative, has set a target of skilling 500 million people by 2022. Inclusive development has gained ample emphasize in the education, employment and health sector. There have been enormous studies propagating the need for inclusiveness in education, employment and health. Most of the employability reports in India revealed that the present generation lack in employability and life skills. As most of the education sector has become corporate and business in nature there has been severely reported need for integrating and evaluating employability/life skills into curriculum, teaching and evaluation system. This paper highlights the need for ensuring inclusive curriculum and evaluation system integrating employability/skills at school level. This paper will be a seed to grow the need for skilling India from the budding.

## **Literature Review**

Employability Skills refer to the skills enable the youth to acquire and excel in the job taken and the life skills refer to the skills that enable the youth to cope with personal and professional life effectively. There are few descriptive studies done in India on the employability skills status of students such as; (Wheebox, 2014; DEST, 2012; Aspiring Minds, 2013;) altogether say that employability skills of Indian youth is very low and does not meet the requirements of labour market.

Studies of employer demand for graduates have found that appropriate work experience and evidence of commercial understanding rank highly as selection criteria because of commercial pressures to seek graduates who will not require long 'learning curves' when they start employment. A number of reports issued by employers' associations and higher educational

organizations urged universities to make more explicit efforts to develop the skills for employment (Wheebox, 2014; Sattar et al., 2012; European Commission, 2001 & 2013; Agencia, 2015; Edge Foundation, 2011 and Chithra, 2013).

Inclusive assessment was introduced at Plymouth University in 2006 through the Staff-Student Partnership for Assessment Change and Evaluation (SPACE) project (Waterfield and West 2006) to meet the needs of the diverse student population. The use of the term 'inclusive' has since become synonymous with accommodating students with disabilities, but should be seen in its wider context. The SPACE project identified the need to support students with disabilities and to provide satisfactory student experience for all students using an '*inclusive approach*' to assessment. Today's challenging economic situation means that it is no longer sufficient for student to have knowledge of an academic subject; increasingly it is necessary for students to gain those skills which will enhance their prospects of gaining skills required to perform jobs.

### **Developing Employability Skills through Inclusive Curriculum**

Foster et al. (1986) in his study compares the employability scores of secondary students who participated in an employability skills course with those who did not. The Employability Inventory scores of students of experimental group was significantly higher than those of students of control group. Stasz et al. (1993) builds on findings from a previous research effort to study academic and vocational classrooms in which teachers successfully imparted generic employability skills to secondary students. It offers a model for designing classroom instruction based on findings. Stasz et al. (1990) investigates the instructional and classroom management practices of four successful vocational educators to determine what kinds of generic employability skills they seek to teach and how these skills are imparted to students. Classroom observation, surveys, and interviews were used to gather information.

The acquisition of employability skills by students in the three groups (as determined by rating instrument, teacher judgment, workplace supervisor, or other means) is then compared. Research, however, shows that these employability skills and traits are very amenable to being taught. (Foster, Engels, and Wilson 1986 and Stasz, et al. 1990, 1993).

The higher education sector is characterised by diversity; course and student profiles are different and universities aim to develop students with distinct characteristics or attributes. Universities have taken different approaches in the manner in which they develop students' employability skills. Universities work to develop employability skills in their students by providing academic staff with relevant support and resources, integrating these skills into curriculum and course design, providing students with work placements and exposure to professional settings and providing advice and guidance through career services. Furthermore, universities offer students opportunities for developing themselves through participation in clubs and societies and university life.

### **Assessment and Reporting of Employability Skills**

Employability skills can be effectively assessed where the specific skill and its application is described in course materials and learning objectives, and where it is clearly located within the context of a given discipline. Good assessment practice is underpinned by curriculum and course design which makes explicit the requirements for employability skills and describes how and at what point in the course they will be addressed. Workplace supervisors for programs are in a unique position to assess and provide feedback on a student's employability skills. Assessment reports by workplace supervisors should specifically address employability skills and be used to provide feedback to (1) the university on the efficacy of teaching practice and (2) the students on their performance. There was however support for students being offered some form of self-assessment, so that they could better manage their own learning and development. Ultimately though, it is employers who assess a student's employability skills. Assessment centres are favoured by larger employers and typically they use a range of techniques to assess a candidate's suitability for the workplace and job role. Students could be assessed through observation in various settings, group work, conducting presentations, providing written responses to scenarios, and behaviour in interviews, which can be given as components into curriculum and teaching.

**Objectives and Hypotheses:** Hence, this paper aims to describe the opinion of the stakeholders on the necessity to integrate the employability/life skills into school curriculum and including the skills during assessment along with the other subjects. It also aims to see whether the opinion differs by the type of stakeholders, gender, age, occupation and education.

### Methodology

This study was done in Tirupattur Taluk, Vellore Dist. TN using Descriptive Design. Stratified Quota Sampling was used for collecting data from 120 respondents (30 each from Teachers, Parents, Employers and Students). Questionnaire was used to collect data, which had dependent and independent variables answering the aims of this paper. The variables were measured by scale (1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree). Employability/Life skills were measured using 10 point scale (0 indicated the least and 10 indicated the highest). SPSS 20 version was used to process the data. One way and two way tables were used to describe the results. ANOVA and t tests were used to infer the relationship among variables.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table No-1: Demographic Details**

Category of the Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	30	25.0
Parent	30	25.0
Employer	30	25.0
Student	30	25.0
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	66	55.0
Female	54	45.0
<b>Age in Years</b>		
Up to 20 Years	30	25.0
21 - 40 Years	50	41.7
40 Years and Above	40	33.3
<b>Education</b>		
Primary	3	2.5
Secondary	10	8.3
Hr.Sec	23	19.2
B.Ed./Diploma	7	5.8
Graduation	36	30.0
PG/Engineering	41	34.2
<b>Occupation</b>		
Private	42	35.0
Govt.	21	17.5
Business	23	19.2
Student	34	28.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table No-2: Opinion that present education system (curriculum and teaching) in school gives importance only to marks**

Respondents		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Teacher	Count	15	10	2	2	29
	Row %	51.7%	34.5%	6.9%	6.9%	100.0%
Parent	Count	11	11	2	1	25
	Row %	44.0%	44.0%	8.0%	4.0%	100.0%
Employer	Count	10	11	4	1	26
	Row %	38.5%	42.3%	15.4%	3.8%	100.0%
Student	Count	19	7	0	0	26
	Row %	73.1%	26.9%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	55	39	8	4	106
	Row %	51.9%	36.8%	7.5%	3.8%	100.0%

$N=106$

**Table No-3: Opinion that present education system evaluates, grades and Promotes the students based on marks scored (memory power) in the subject alone.**

Respondents		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Teacher	Count	7	13	6	1	27
	Row %	25.9%	48.1%	22.2%	3.7%	100.0%
Parent	Count	9	12	5	0	26
	Row %	34.6%	46.2%	19.2%	0.0%	100.0%
Employer	Count	8	10	6	1	25
	Row %	32.0%	40.0%	24.0%	4.0%	100.0%
Student	Count	12	13	1	0	26
	Row %	46.2%	50.0%	3.8%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	36	48	18	2	104
	Row %	34.6%	46.2%	17.3%	1.9%	100.0%

$N=104$

**Table No-4: Opinion that the Present School Curriculum Matches to the Present Workplace Requirement.**

Respondents		Matching Completely	Matching Somewhat	Not Matching	Not At all Matching	Total
Teacher	Count	2	14	10	1	27
	Row %	7.4%	51.9%	37.0%	3.7%	100.0%
Parent	Count	2	14	7	3	26
	Row %	7.7%	53.8%	26.9%	11.5%	100.0%
Employer	Count	2	15	9	1	27
	Row %	7.4%	55.6%	33.3%	3.7%	100.0%
Student	Count	1	14	5	4	24
	Row %	4.2%	58.3%	20.8%	16.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	7	57	31	9	104
	Row %	6.7%	54.8%	29.8%	8.7%	100.0%

$N=104$

**Table No-5: Opinion that Employability/Life skills could be integrated into school curriculum**

Respondents		Strongly Believe	Believe	Don't Believe	Not At all Possible	Total
Teacher	Count	12	10	2	3	27
	Row %	44.4%	37.0%	7.4%	11.1%	100.0%
Parent	Count	14	8	4	2	28
	Row %	50.0%	28.6%	14.3%	7.1%	100.0%
Employer	Count	14	9	5	2	30
	Row %	46.7%	30.0%	16.7%	6.7%	100.0%
Student	Count	4	13	7	3	27
	Row %	14.8%	48.1%	25.9%	11.1%	100.0%
Total	Count	44	40	18	10	112
	Row %	39.3%	35.7%	16.1%	8.9%	100.0%

$N=112$

**Table No-6: Opinion that it is Importance for Scoring Marks to Succeed in Career/life**

Respondents		Very Important	Important	Not Important	Not At All Important	Total
Teacher	Count	4	16	5	3	28

	Row %	14.3%	57.1%	17.9%	10.7%	100.0%
Parent	Count	5	17	6	2	30
	Row %	16.7%	56.7%	20.0%	6.7%	100.0%
Employer	Count	7	17	5	1	30
	Row %	23.3%	56.7%	16.7%	3.3%	100.0%
Student	Count	11	14	3	1	29
	Row %	37.9%	48.3%	10.3%	3.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	27	64	19	7	117
	Row %	23.1%	54.7%	16.2%	6.0%	100.0%

**Table No-7: Opinion that most students erase the subject knowledge gained after the exam**

Respondents		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Teacher	Count	11	18	0	1	30
	Row %	36.7%	60.0%	0.0%	3.3%	100.0%
Parent	Count	6	16	6	1	29
	Row %	20.7%	55.2%	20.7%	3.4%	100.0%
Employer	Count	7	16	4	2	29
	Row %	24.1%	55.2%	13.8%	6.9%	100.0%
Student	Count	9	13	2	0	24
	Row %	37.5%	54.2%	8.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	33	63	12	4	112
	Row %	29.5%	56.2%	10.7%	3.6%	100.0%

**Table No-8: Opinion that it would be unethical to enforce a student to score 100% in all the subjects**

Respondents		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Teacher	Count	9	15	1	2	27
	Row %	33.3%	55.6%	3.7%	7.4%	100.0%
Parent	Count	4	15	3	1	23
	Row %	17.4%	65.2%	13.0%	4.3%	100.0%
Employer	Count	6	13	2	2	23
	Row %	26.1%	56.5%	8.7%	8.7%	100.0%
Student	Count	1	10	13	4	28
	Row %	3.6%	35.7%	46.4%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	20	53	19	9	101
	Row %	19.8%	52.5%	18.8%	8.9%	100.0%

**Table No-9: Opinion that only the students excelling in academics succeed in career and life**

Respondents		Strongly Believe	Believe	Don't Believe	Not at all Believing	Total
Teacher	Count	1	11	9	7	28
	Row %	3.6%	39.3%	32.1%	25.0%	100.0%
Parent	Count	0	10	14	4	28
	Row %	0.0%	35.7%	50.0%	14.3%	100.0%
Employer	Count	1	10	10	6	27
	Row %	3.7%	37.0%	37.0%	22.2%	100.0%
Student	Count	4	8	4	11	27
	Row %	14.8%	29.6%	14.8%	40.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	6	39	37	28	110
	Row %	5.5%	35.5%	33.6%	25.5%	100.0%

**Table No-10: Opinion that it is Important to gain life skills/employability skills during the course of education in schools**

Respondents	Very Important	Important	Not Important	Not at all important	Total
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Teacher	Count	15	9	1	1	26
	Row %	57.7%	34.6%	3.8%	3.8%	100.0%
Parent	Count	9	15	4	1	29
	Row %	31.0%	51.7%	13.8%	3.4%	100.0%
Employer	Count	12	14	1	2	29
	Row %	41.4%	48.3%	3.4%	6.9%	100.0%
Student	Count	11	14	0	1	26
	Row %	42.3%	53.8%	0.0%	3.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	47	52	6	5	110
	Row %	42.7%	47.3%	5.5%	4.5%	100.0%

**Table No-11: Opinion that adequate importance is given by the present education system in school to gain employability skills or life skills which are very important to lead and succeed in work and personal life**

Respondents		Very High	To Some Extent	Less Important given	No Importance given at all	Total
Teacher	Count	3	13	11	1	28
	Row %	10.7%	46.4%	39.3%	3.6%	100.0%
Parent	Count	7	14	6	1	28
	Row %	25.0%	50.0%	21.4%	3.6%	100.0%
Employer	Count	6	16	7	0	29
	Row %	20.7%	55.2%	24.1%	0.0%	100.0%
Student	Count	4	18	3	0	25
	Row %	16.0%	72.0%	12.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	20	61	27	2	110
	Row %	18.2%	55.5%	24.5%	1.8%	100.0%

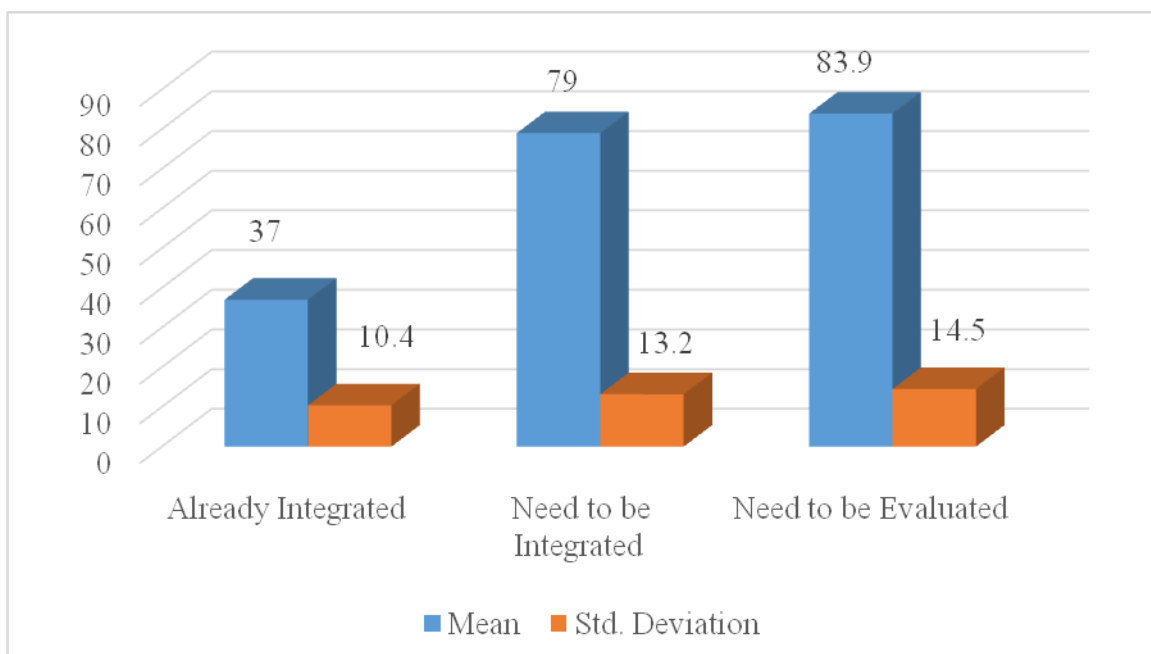
**Table No-12: Opinion that students have the right to gain employability/life skills during their course of education.**

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Respondents		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Total
Teacher	Count	19	7	0	26
	Row %	73.1%	26.9%	0.0%	100.0%
Parent	Count	24	4	1	29
	Row %	82.8%	13.8%	3.4%	100.0%
Employer	Count	24	5	0	29
	Row %	82.8%	17.2%	0.0%	100.0%
Student	Count	17	12	1	30
	Row %	56.7%	40.0%	3.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	84	28	2	114
	Row %	73.7%	24.6%	1.8%	100.0%

**Figure No-1: Opinion on Integrating and Evaluating Employability/Life Skills into Curriculum**

Employability/Life skills include; Effective Communication skills, Planning and Organizing skills, Team work and Leadership Skills, Self-management and Adaptability Skills, Critical and Creative Thinking Skills, Technology Skills (Computer), Stress Management skills, Inter-personal Relationship Skills, Learning Skills and Integrity and Values.



One third of the respondents (37%) opined that employability/life skills have been integrated into curriculum. Majority (79%) opined that employability/life skills have been integrated into curriculum. Majority (83.9%) opined that the academic performance evaluation should include employability/life skills.

#### **Opinion on Integrating and Evaluating Employability/Life Skills into Curriculum by category, age, education and occupation**

ANOVA and t test by the Respondents (category, gender, age and occupation) revealed that the opinion on Integrating and Evaluating Employability/Life Skills into Curriculum does not significantly differ ( $P < 0.05$ ). It shows that all (employers, teachers, parents and students) have the same opinion that the employability/life skills have not been adequately integrated into present curriculum and there is a necessity to integrate and evaluate the employability/life skills. Respondents with higher education tend to emphasize ( $P > 0.05$ ) the need for integrating and evaluating the employability/life skills.

#### **Summary and Conclusion**

The result of this paper reveals that all the stakeholders mentioned here emphasize the need for integrating employability/life skills into school curriculum and integrating them into evaluation system. Irrespective of any respondent category, all opined to have these skills integrated into curriculum and be evaluated.

The study revealed the emphasis of most of the respondents that the present education system (curriculum and teaching) in school gives importance only to marks, present education system evaluates, grades and Promotes the students based on marks scored (memory power) in the subject alone, the present school curriculum do not match to the present workplace requirement, most students erase the subject knowledge gained after the exam, it would be unethical to enforce a student to score 100% in all the subjects, not only the students excelling in academics succeed in career and life, it is important to gain life skills/employability skills during the course of education in schools, there is no adequate importance is given by the present education system in school to gain employability skills or life skills which are very important to lead and succeed in work and personal life, the students have the right to gain employability/life skills during their course of education and opinion of integrating and Evaluating Employability/Life Skills into Curriculum is felt very high by the respondents by their gender, age, education and occupation.

When most of the employability reports and government talk about enhancing employability/life skills to ensure development in nation, it cannot be ensured at the eleventh hours but it could be possible by integrating them into curriculum at school level and

incorporating them as one of the evaluation parameters. Academic systems and schools should rethink of their memory based banking system of education and provide productive skill integrated system of teaching and evaluation. Teaching methodology and lesson plans should incorporate employability/life skills and grading of the same should reflect in the certificates. Skilling India should begin at the school level by integrating them into curriculum.

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