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## The Graduand's Perspective on Employability

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### Abstract

Being a graduate does not always qualify a student to be employable. The industry needs students who rate high on employability. Attaining good grades does not always mean that the student is good at practicing what he or she has learnt. It does not always mean that he is employable. Then what exactly is employability? Employability is "A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy". Professor Mantz Yorke (2004). The employability skills involve cognitive skills, technical skills, and/or people interpersonal skills. Few of these skills are Verbal communication, Teamwork, Commercial awareness, analyzing & investigating, Problem solving, Initiative/self-motivation, Written communication, Planning & organizing, Adaptability, Time management, Leadership, Interpersonal Sensitivity etc. Hence, employability can be discussed in two contexts. First, Job readiness of the students and secondly, their ability to continue to be employed and build their career

Time and again a lot of efforts have been put in to enhance the employability of the students from all the pertaining stake holders. The New Education Policy also has certain aspects relating to the employability of the graduates. In the light of the NEP, colleges will not only be perceived as a facilitator of degree but would also be treated as a platform for overall personality development of the students but also support them in their holistic professional growth. On the other hand, the present day students are well informed. Their perceptions and expectations from the education system have been changing. Hence the role of colleges is going to be influenced to a large extent. Accordingly, requiring them to modify their practices. According to the India Skills Report (a joint initiative of Wheebox (a global talent-assessment company), Tagged by People Strong and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in collaboration with UNDP, AICTE and AIU) 46.21 % of the students are employable. It also says "the most employable candidates as per the courses were MBA Students at 54 per cent. B Pharm, Polytechnic, B Com and BA courses, on the other hand, saw an improvement in employability which is increased by more than 15 per cent." However, there was a decline in employability in BTech, Engineering, MCA graduates, Technical & Computer-related courses.

In the given background the present paper tries to examine the student's perception of employability in the first context and also briefly study the provisions of employability in the New Education Policy. The research was carried out on the basis of primary as well as secondary data. The analysis reveals that the students perceive employability as the ability to continue to be employed. For that they need to acquire skills like analytical, right attitude, initiative, communication skills etc. In order to enhance the same, NEP 2020 has proposed various measures like, introducing more number of autonomous colleges, single

governing authorities, awarding certificates for the completion of every academic year, during graduation, making top global universities available locally, Multi exit and entry for courses, Skill-based education etc.

#### KEY WORDS

Graduate, Employability, Higher Education System, Employability Skills, New Education Policy 2020

## Introduction

### Employability:

He or she might be a graduate but not necessarily employable. Then what is employability? Employability is “A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy”. Professor Mantz Yorke (2004). Employability is a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual industry ready. It is the degree to which fresh graduates could seek employment and achieve success in the practical world. The employers look for the achievements and experiences of a graduate while considering him for employment. Employability is not only about acquiring transferable skills, it is about going beyond that and working on the skills and attitudes that enable employees to get along with their colleagues, to make critical decisions, solve problems, develop respect and ultimately become strong ambassadors for the organization.

Employability is very important as it is not only about being a graduate but about being high on the employability factor. At present the average age of the population in India is around 29 years, as against 40 years in USA, 46 years in Europe and 47 years in Japan. In fact, in the next twenty years industrialized world will decline by 4% while India it will increase by 32%. This poses both challenges and opportunity. To reap the demographic dividend which is expected to last next 25 years, India needs to equip its workforce. But it is estimated that the employability of graduates coming out of the educational system is becoming a matter of great concern. It is a fact that only 25% of our graduates across all streams have employable skills. A youth seeking job in the market today is expected to have the basic as well as related skills about his job, even before he/she faces an interview.

According to the India Skills Report (a joint initiative of Wheebox (a global talent-assessment company), Tagged by PeopleStrong and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in collaboration with UNDP, AICTE and AIU) 46.21 % of the students are employable. It also says “the most employable candidates as per the courses were MBA Students at 54 per cent. B Pharm, Polytechnic, B Com and BA courses, on the other hand, saw an improvement in employability which is increased by more than 15 per cent.” However, there was a decline in employability in BTech, Engineering, MCA graduates, Technical & Computer-related courses. Most of the graduates are not considered employable. Hence the need to ponder upon employability.

### National Education Policy:

Education is a basic right of every single individual. It is key to realize the human potential, cultivate an equitable and just society, and also to promote national development. India will have the highest population of young people in the world over the next decade, and our ability to provide high-quality educational opportunities to them will determine the future of our country. The world has been changing drastically, in every field. Right from chemistry to biology to social science technology etc. Many of the practices and processes have been experiencing obsolescence due to these changes. This is affecting the youth to a large extent. They have to learn not just the new things but also learn how to learn. Hence according to the NEP, education is no more about content but more about critical thinking. For this the curriculum must include basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, languages, literature, culture, and values, in addition to science and mathematics, to develop all aspects and capabilities of the students. Education should be made more well-rounded, useful, and fulfilling. It must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate, and caring, while at the same time prepare them gainful, fulfilling

employment by enhancing their employability. Hence there is a need to bridge the gap through major restructurings in the present practices.

Higher education significantly contributes towards sustainable livelihoods and economic development of the nation. As India moves towards becoming a knowledge economy and society, more and more young Indians are likely to aspire for higher education. Given the 21st century requirements, quality higher education must aim to develop good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals. It must enable an individual to study one or more specialized areas of interest at a deep level, and also develop character, ethical and Constitutional values, intellectual curiosity, scientific temper, creativity, spirit of service, and 21st century capabilities across a range of disciplines including sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, languages, as well as professional, technical, and vocational subjects. (Part II. Higher Education,9.1.1, NEP,20 20)

This policy envisions a complete overhaul and re-energizing of the higher education system to overcome these challenges and thereby deliver high-quality higher education. Noteworthy changes planned in the current system are moving towards a higher educational system consisting of large, multidisciplinary universities and colleges, moving towards a more multidisciplinary undergraduate education, moving towards faculty and institutional autonomy, revamping curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student support for enhanced student experiences, governance of HEIs by high qualified independent boards having academic and administrative autonomy (Part II. Higher Education,9.3, NEP 2020)

## Literature Review

According to the India Skills Report (a joint initiative of Wheebox (a global talent-assessment company), Taggd by PeopleStrong and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in collaboration with UNDP, AICTE and AIU) 46.21 % of the students are employable. It also says “the most employable candidates as per the courses were MBA Students at 54 per cent. B Pharm, Polytechnic, B Com and BA courses, on the other hand, saw an improvement in employability which is increased by more than 15 per cent.” However, there was a decline in employability in BTech, Engineering, MCA graduates, Technical & Computer-related courses.

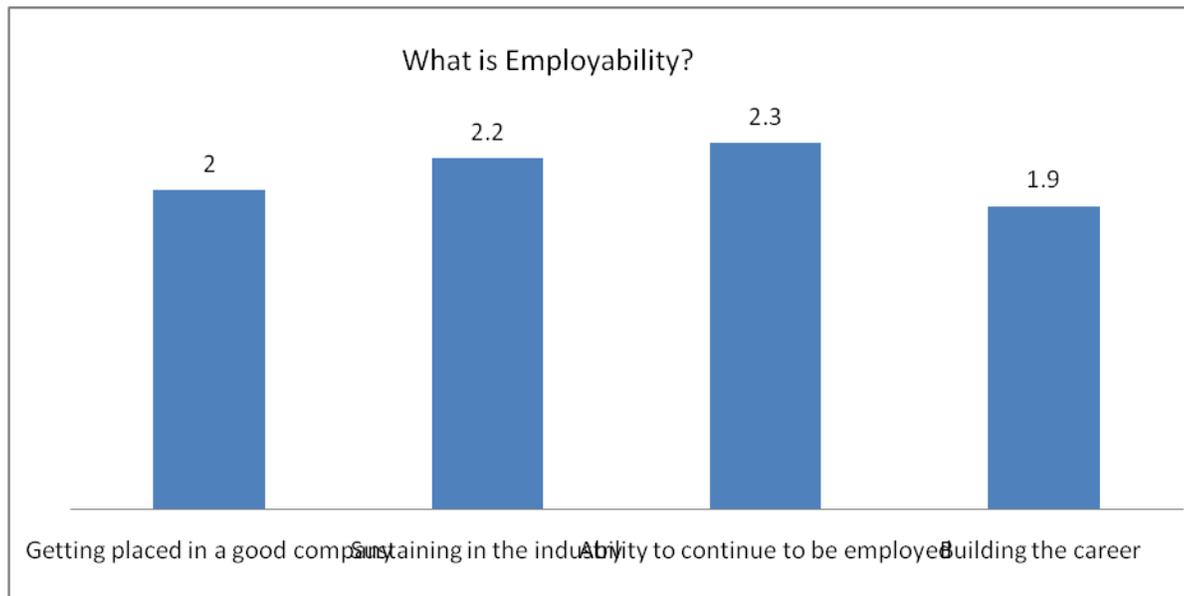
As per one of the article, with the new education policy coming in picture, the school and college education will not only be seen as a facilitator of degree but it will be treated as a medium to build personality and it'll help the students in their holistic professional growth. Sumesh Nair, Co-founder of Board Infinity feels that these measures will create a potential workforce in the future. He said, "50% gross enrollment target in higher education and multi-disciplinary education are progressive measures towards creating a high potential workforce. Also, making more institutions go autonomous gives the flexibility to decide the curriculum and pedagogy. If we are able to combine this with skill-based education focusing on what the contemporary needs of the industry are, we will be able to create world-class talent in India in pure absolute numbers because of our demographics".

## Objectives of the study

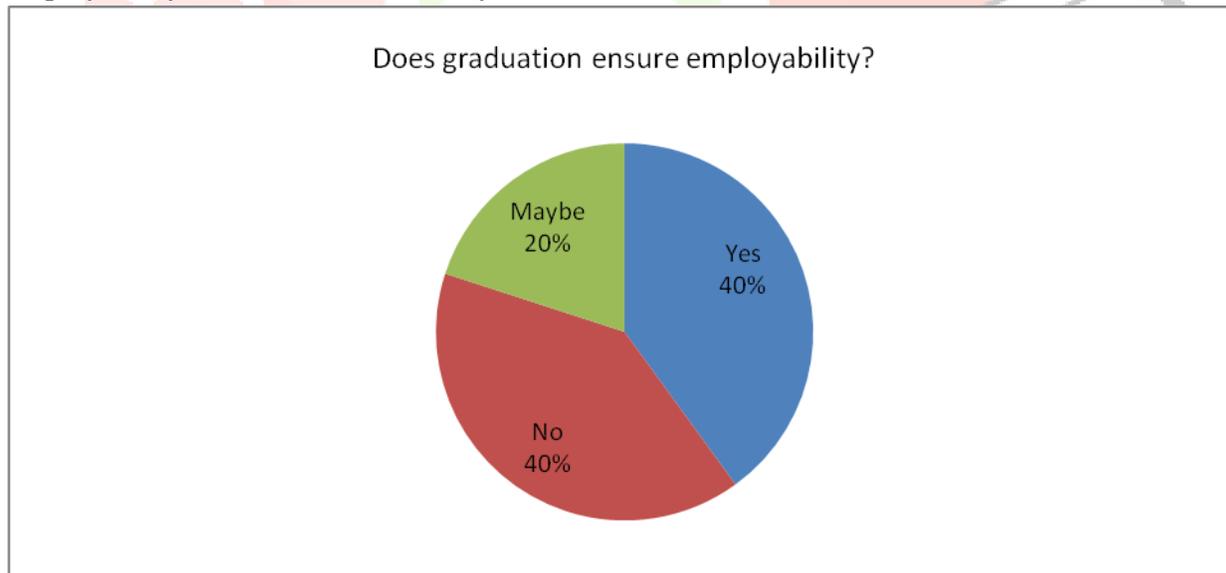
- To study the perception of the engineering students about employability.
- To study the measures to improve employability in the light of National Educational Policy 2020.

### Data Analysis

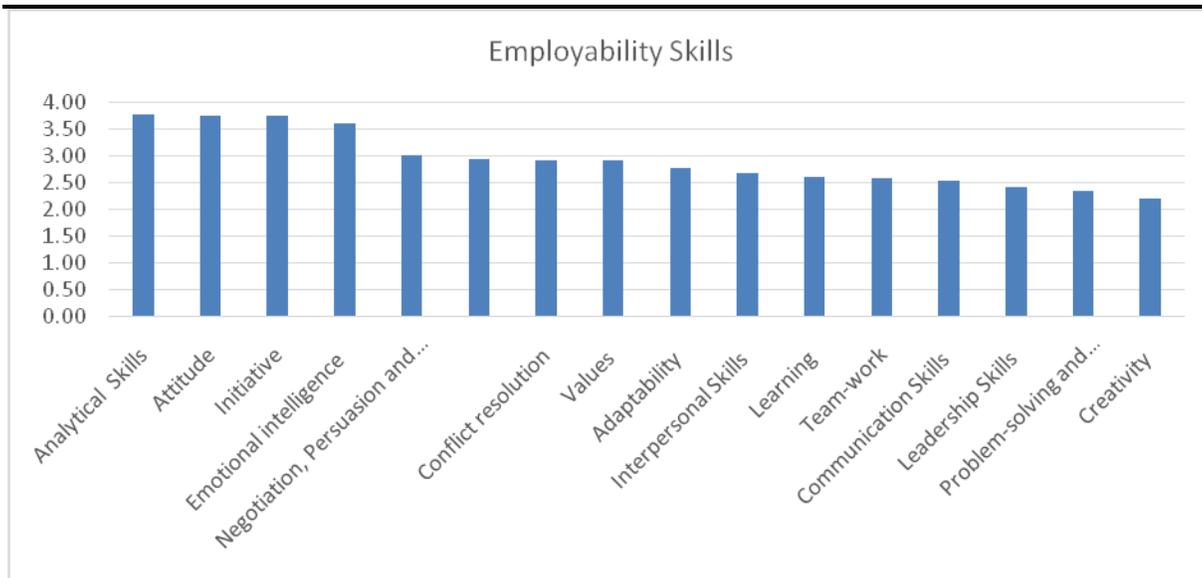
Data used in the study is both primary and secondary. Primary data is collected through questionnaire filled by the students mostly studying in the final year of engineering studying two of the most reputed institutions in the area.



The above chart reveals that most of the students are of the opinion that employability for them is not just getting a job but the ability to continue to be employed. They have ranked it as 2.3 on a scale of 5. Secondly, they have ranked sustaining in the industry on 2.2 out of 5. Whereas they have ranked getting placed in a good company as 2 on a scale of 5. Few of the respondents have expressed the opinion that employability is for them is the ability to exhibit and use their skills to the fullest.

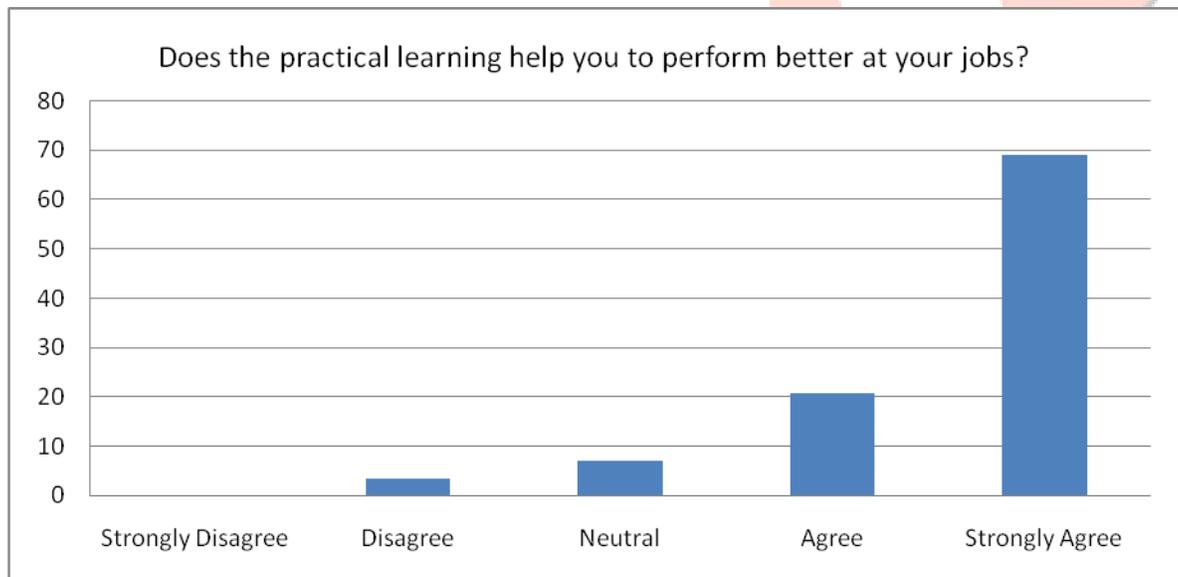


The above chart reveals that 40% of the respondents feels that graduation ensures employability and 40% feels that graduation does not ensure employability. whereas 20% of them are not very sure. Hence we can infer that being graduate does not always mean that a student is employable

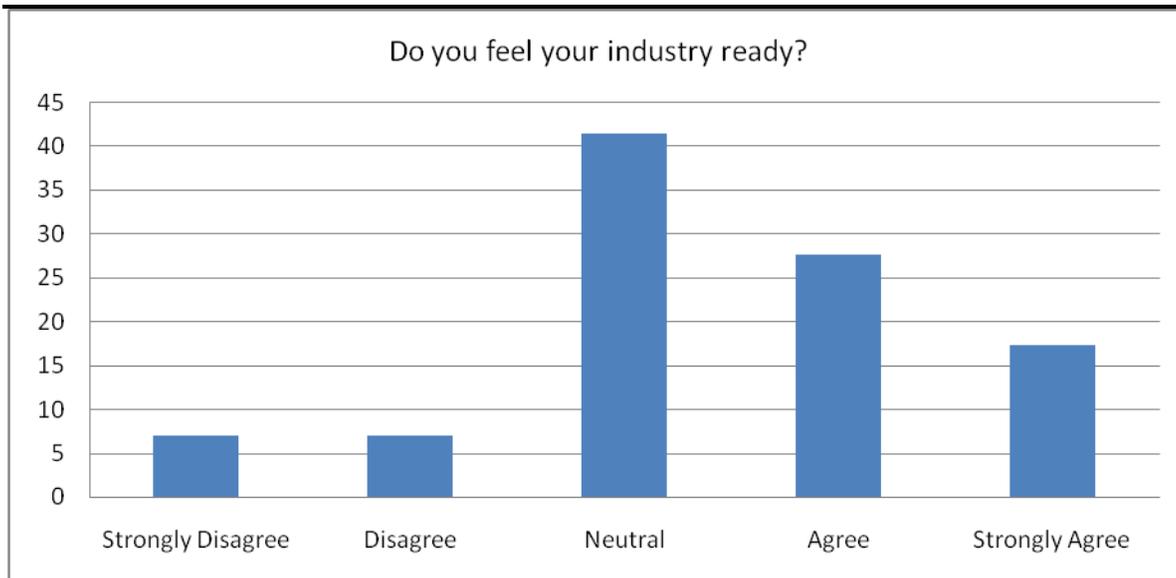


The above chart reveals that most of the respondents have ranked the analytical skills to be of utmost importance among the employability skills. Followed by attitude and initiative. Other skills that are important for the employability are Emotional intelligence, Communication Skills, Adaptability, Team-working Negotiation, Persuasion and influencing skill, Conflict Resolution, Problem-solving and decision-making, Values, Leadership Skills, Creativity, Stress Management, Lifelong learning, Interpersonal Skills.

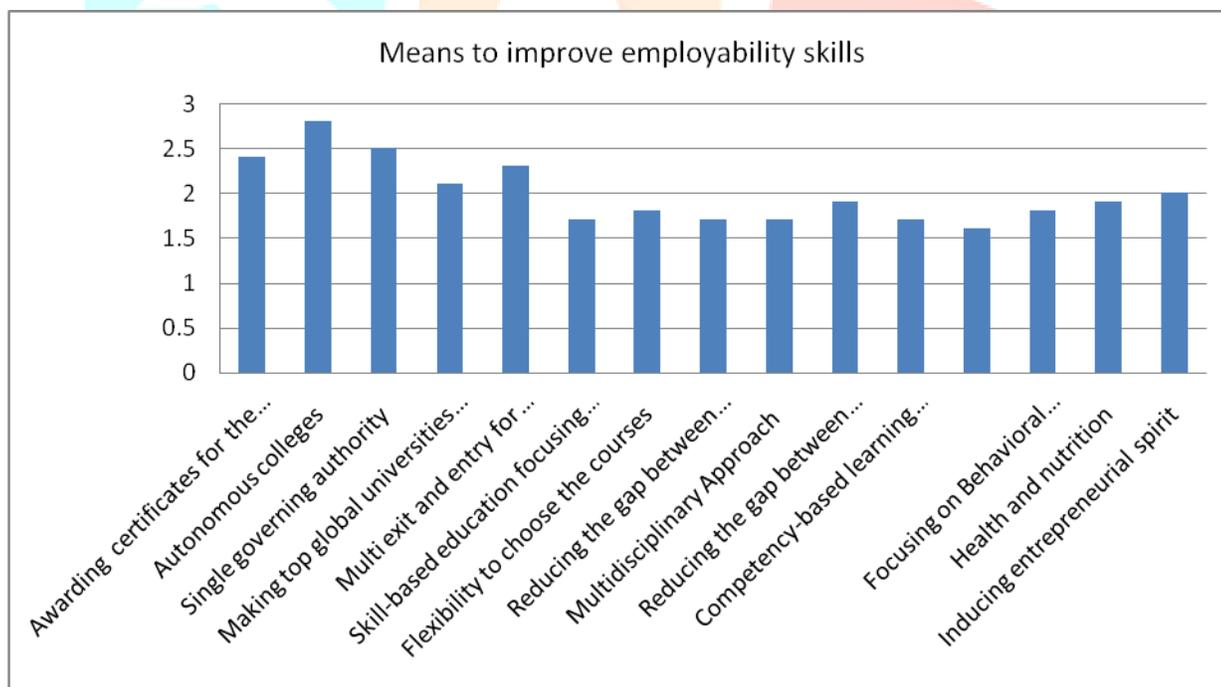
The NEP 2020 policy has well addressed the above mentioned skills and has also suggested various means to improve the same.



The above chart reveals that nearly 90% of the respondents believe that practical learning helps them at their workplace. This data reaffirms that the provisions regarding the professional, technical, and vocational subjects in the NEP 2020 are well deserved.



The above chart reveals that most of the respondents are confused about their readiness to join the job after their graduation. Which is definitely an area of concern. This confusion might be due to the lack of confidence as well as lack of knowledge.



From the above graph we can infer that most of the respondents feel that introducing more number of autonomous colleges can improve employability. Followed by single governing authorities and awarding certificates Awarding certificates for the completion of every academic year, during graduation. Apart from this various other factors like making top global universities available locally, Multi exit and entry for courses, Skill-based education focusing on the present-day needs of the industry, Flexibility to choose the courses, Reducing the gap between curricular, extracurricular and co-curricular, Multidisciplinary Approach, Reducing the gap between vocational or academic streams, Competency-based learning and education, Mentorship, coaching and guidance, Focusing on Behavioral competencies like resilience, agility,

innovation and adaptability, learning beyond the subject matter, Health and nutrition go a long way in enhancing the employability of the graduates. All these measures are in fact suggested in the NEP 2020.

## Findings

- Most of the students perceive employability as the ability to continue to be employed and sustaining in the industry
- 40% of the respondents feels that graduation ensures employability, 40 % feels that graduation does not ensure employability, whereas 20% of them have opted for may be.
- Most of the respondents have ranked the analytical skills to be of utmost importance among the employability skills. Followed by attitude and initiative. Other skills that are important for the employability are Emotional intelligence, Communication Skills, Adaptability, etc, and these are well addressed in NEP 2020
- 90% of the respondents believe that practical learning helps them at their workplace.
- Various measures to improve employability include, the introduction of more number of autonomous colleges, single governing authorities, awarding certificates for the completion of every academic year, during graduation, making top global universities available locally, Multi exit and entry for courses, Skill-based education focusing on the present-day needs of the industry, Flexibility to choose the courses etc.

## Suggestions

- In the present situation where life is posing a new challenge daily and the world changing day in and day out apart from the other employability skills lifelong learning should be emphasized
- Practical learning should be emphasized beside the content learning.
- Educational institutions should have programmes to induce entrepreneurial spirit among the fresh graduates. This will help develop a new breed of job giver and not just jobseekers

## Conclusion

Long gone are those days when graduation guaranteed employment. The definition of employability has evolved over a period of time. Today employability is beyond just procuring a job. It is more about attitude and not just qualification. The employability is an area of concern for the educational institutions across the different streams be it science, art or commerce. Hence a lot of emphasis is being given to this very aspect in the New Education Policy 2020. According to the India Skills Report the most employable candidates as per the courses were MBA Students, followed BPharm, Polytechnic, B Com and BA courses. However, there was a decline in employability in BTech, Engineering, MCA graduates, Technical & Computer-related courses.

There are various skills that a graduate has to equip himself with if he/she has to enhance the employability. Few of the skills are, analytical skills, right attitude, initiative emotional intelligence, Communication Skills, Adaptability, etc, In order to enhance these skills various measure have been proposed in the NEP. The important ones being, introducing more number of autonomous colleges, single governing authorities, awarding certificates for the completion of every academic year, during graduation, making top global universities available locally, Multi exit and entry for courses, Skill-based education focusing on the present-day needs of the industry, Flexibility to choose the courses etc.

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