
INDUSTRY – ACADEMIA PARTNERSHIP: CHALLENGES & EXPECTATIONS

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Abstract

“Collaboration and augmentation are the foundational principles of innovation” –

Vaclav Smil

World over, the intellects are of the opinion that the academic schools (in general) fail to develop curriculum that could satisfy the needs of the industries who need a workforce that has the capability to evolve in conjunction with the continuously changing world. There are many reasons for this academic – industry disconnect. One of the reasons is that academic world continue to teach subjects in isolation – as if the subject has no connection with the real world.

The collaboration between the Industry & the Academics will not only bridge the gap of demand & right supply, but will revolutionize the whole economy. Thus, this association (between the Business & the Academic world) is indeed a significant and a multifaceted topic. This subject is gradually gaining momentum as there is an urgent need to match the rapid evolution of the business environment and the vast transformations which is taking place throughout the academic domain.

So far the universities and industrial companies were functioning with different objectives & on diverse business models, and therefore now we have to put in efforts & investment to converge the two poles before the mutual benefits can be reaped. Universities emphasizes on educating people, updating students with latest trends & knowledge and assisting them in enhancing their existing know-how; while companies deliberate on managing & mastering the challenges of a competitive environment and strives for market success.

Evidently the challenges, expectations & the core interest of both differ. Whenever there is a teamwork, each party expects something from the other – in our case, the companies expect innovative and state-of-the-art lectures to secure high quality education, valuable knowledge and pioneering methodologies, while the universities expect their students to be given business experience e.g. through internships and opportunities to put their skills into practice. The academics also expect to be given the opportunity to transfer theoretical ideas into practical projects and to implement research in the real world.

Both parties have fundamental points of interest and this is where a win-win situation is achieved for both of them. Even the students & country's economy will benefit out of this association. We'll have not only well educated but proficient workforce to support & strengthen our business.

Keywords: Industry, Academia, Association, Innovation, Education, Knowledge, Growth, Research, University, Interaction.

"The objectives of Education & Industry are identical. Both are interested in good citizenship, in serving society, in a better life; & both firmly believe in freedom"

Herman Lee

What is Education Industry offering – The Current Scenario

We would agree that India's public education system is in an awful state. And typically the blame for this is put on bad infrastructure, teacher's indolence, poor student's turnout, inputs-based monitoring, and inadequate teacher training programs.

In spite of colossal investments by the government and social enterprises, our country's education sector continues to be a sad story of inadequate quality and poor results. No doubt, there is a significant mismatch between education spending trends and learning outcomes that calls for a serious introspection of our education policy and practice.

Entrepreneurs generally consider the education sector as a lucrative segment and develop inferior business models that are not aligned with the objective of improving learning outcomes.

Public and private investments in earlier stage education are also proving to be in short supply resulting in a large gap in the skills taught and those required by industry. This disparity between the knowledge acquired at school level and those evaluated through standardized tests has also resulted in a mushrooming test-prep industry.

What are the demands of the Industries?



According to Ashok Reddy, the managing director and co-founder of the recruitment agency Teamlease Services India - There is a “definite disconnect between the skills and aptitude of the majority of graduates and the needs of industry”.

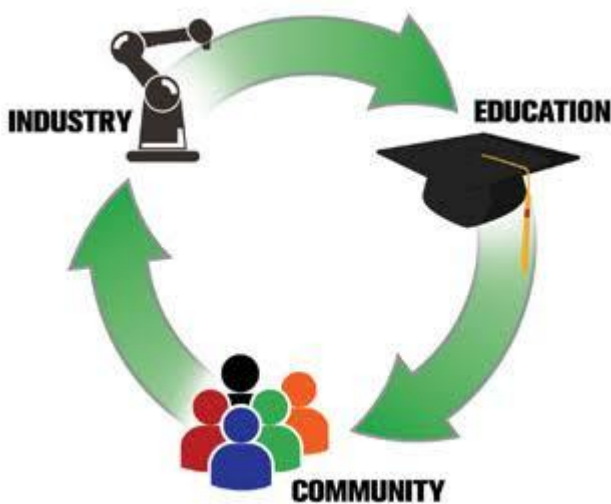
Shock reports have also revealed a vast skills gap in India, with several surveys suggesting that half of all graduates are not employable in any sector based on industry standards. This has sparked growing concern about the mismatch between universities and the needs of the job market.

What is required to sync them?

A. *The Expectations*

Our education system should be designed in such a way that it is capable of providing our students a conducive environment where they learn to solve problems. As the industry trends keep changing, they often face new challenges every now & then, & therefore a team which doesn't consider problems as encumbrance but rather relish solving them will definitely be a boom. We should allow students to get involved in day to day issues related to industrial world & should provide them opportunities to interact with the professionals. We can also construct problems for them & then observe them closely to see how they are moving ahead & can help them choose their career accordingly. We can invite industry professionals in schools to deliver guest lectures.

We need to understand that overall development of an individual should make him fit for all three walks of life – Community, Education & Industry. And that will require intensive brainstorming & planning.



As of now, we solve most of student's problems, and that makes them habitual of getting ready-made solutions.

“If someone else finds answers for you, it makes life boring; and if you find the answers all by yourself, it makes life fun”.

Instead of feeding the information (through books, television & internet), we should rather focus on developing the skills, should spend more time & energy on research & development; should encourage youngsters to try new things. Unfortunately, majority of our colleges / universities focus on issuing a degree and then the student is left in the open market to survive.



In fact, the more degrees you earn, less creative you become; because with all sort of bookish knowledge you start believing that you already know everything. But actually living an experience is totally different from reading an experience. Nowadays, Industries consider creativity & problem solving as a pre-requisite, because to cope up with the changing environment, you need to apply brains & in the right direction.

B. The Challenges

Education & Industry, both are in flux and where all this will end up depends entirely on the decisions we make today. So this is the right time to determine the future direction of the joint venture between education industry & the business world. For this venture to be effective (in this changing environment) would require that the builders of the education system & Industries understand the urgent need of working together & in a harmonious manner.

These essentials can be thought of in terms of customization, interaction, and control. Customization refers to providing the young generation (students) the knowledge they would need and in a manner that would help them associate it with the industrial needs in particular & society in general. Interaction refers to the communication that is to be established between the schools, colleges, universities with the business world, to give learners real time information, immediate feedback and to engage them in live projects in accomplishing realistic tasks. Control refers to putting learners in charge of their learning, so they feel ownership and can direct their learning where their interests take them.

Conclusion

So far, the Academic circle and Industries were functioning on different levels. It was like they were two different worlds which operated on different platforms. Both had diverse purposes and different philosophies & hardly interacted with each other. However, the swift pace of change in the outside environment is now compelling these two different worlds to come together to address and solve some of the real-world challenges.

Eventually, the academia has to revise their curriculum regularly and develop it in accordance with the needs of the industry. Further, it is advisable that experts are regularly invited as guest speakers from different industries and let them interact with the students; this will really prove beneficial for everyone. Apart from teaching the core or technical knowledge, school / colleges should also stress on the soft skills and behavioral, which plays a very significant role in shaping the personality of an individual & contribute to his success once he joins an industry. We also need to provide the right exposure and training to the faculties; as most of the faculties often do not possess requisite industry experience which comes in the way of imparting practical knowledge about industries. It would also be beneficial if the teachers could regularly participate in the short term industrial projects in collaboration with industry experts. This will help faculties in getting tuned with the current industrial trends.

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