

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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ROLE OF INDUSTRY-ACADEMIA INTERFACE FOR FILLING THE SKILL GAP

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ABSTRACT

Industry needs academia and can benefit from its capabilities. Teaching research and extension are the trinity of higher education. A productive interface between industry and academia, in the current era of a knowledge driven economy, is critical. Industry Interface is an interactive and collaborative arrangement between academic institutions and business corporations for the achievement of certain mutually inclusive goals and objectives. Institute remain in continuous touch with industry for overall development of their students. Industry needs "ideas". It has funds, but lacks time. It has Yesterday in mind. Institute needs "funds". They have time, expertise and can provide ideas. They have Tomorrow mind. Bringing them together gets us Today. There is no Chase, there is NEED! The paper is an attempt to list down benefits from industry – academia interface and would also point out the ways to build the gap so as to develop the skill. This paper also states out the inhibiting factors both from industry and academia and measures to overcome it. Technical education forms the backbone of development of a nation. Industry is the major consumer of technical institution product. The real requirement of industry will be explored only through effective interaction with them. The paper is exploratory in nature and is an effort to create a base for further study.

KEYWORDS

Industry Interface, Academia Interaction, Inhibiting Factors, Suggested Solutions.

INTRODUCTION

Universities and industry are rapidly inching closer to each other to create synergies like providing industry exposure, upgrade the skills of the students and guide them on governance which is benefit to Institution, Students and Industries as well as towards society.

The initiative is structured in such a manner that the students gain knowledge, functional understanding, and exposure to the industry environment. Industry institute interaction is done through various means like sending students for industrial training & visiting, inviting students for campus interviews & inviting experts from different industries for lectures. also they take different activities like summer training, experiential learning & industrial projects.

Universities are, or at least ought to be, prime repositories of up - to - date and advanced levels of knowledge in different fields in a society. Especially in a knowledge society, industry and business are the main users and beneficiaries of such knowledge. Therefore, it is almost inevitable for the universities and industries to come together in a close, constructive collaboration to use such knowledge for their mutual benefit and also for the benefit of society.

The skill gap refers to the expanding difference between the theory taught in academia and the actual practice in industry. It is therefore of utmost importance that an interface programme helps in the phase of building the path to encourage fill the gap.

REASONS BEHIND THE GAP BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA

The Gap between the needs of the industry and aspirations of academic community is very large. Academicians always have a strong feeling that unless these initiatives find a place in industrial sector, this interaction will be confined to only developmental activities. There is a strong mismatch in perception of the two on the issues related to technology development. At present, the academic community is not geared to face this challenge of translating an evolving idea into technology development.

1. Academics and Industrialists have a different mindset, Therefore both are living in two different worlds.
2. Both Academics and Industrialists are pursuing different goals entirely. The Academics is striving for recognition from his or her peers. The Industrialist is striving to survive.
3. Industry thinks in terms of short range goals whereas Academic has a long range perspective.
4. Industry prefers proven solutions with a low risk, whereas Academia is interested in creating new solutions with a high innovation rate.
5. Industry seeks the minimum solution to minimize their risk, whereas Academia strives for a maximum solution to maximize their recognition.
6. Industry is mainly concerned with costs. Academia could care less about costs, it is mainly interested in the benefits (and prestige).

PURPOSE TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN INDUSTRIES - ACADEMIA

The reason that there are few jobs to be found in academe is not because there are too few colleges, universities, departments or programmes, rather there are too many. The problem is the Supply outnumbered the Demand. So it is important to consider all options.

Today, Businesses are looking for innovative solutions from the academia to help meet their business needs of higher productivity and lower costs, yet increase efficiencies. In area of talent, India has to strengthen its technical and management resources as these are crucial to knowledge - based industries. A market - driven approach to higher education has to be fostered in order to encourage manpower development from the grass root level itself. The idea is to involve the private sector in higher education.

In recent trends we have witnessed a lot of technological changes. These changes, however, have not been properly used by our graduates in order to compete in the present scenario. It is essential to have industry - academia interactions which will help to impart relevant knowledge and will be sustainable in the changing conditions. Another most important reason behind bridging the gap between industry and academia is to fulfill the expectations which are complimentary in nature.

Large industrial companies have the resources to invest in technology development initiatives. Academic participation is often needed in minor technological innovation. Small scale industries often depend on support in the areas of design, process improvement and machinery performance, etc. They also rely on processes to yield a product which already exists. In case, problem solving may simply amount to product testing and production enhancement in terms of quantity and quality. In such interactions, industry's expected time frames have been immediate and investment is directed towards efforts that promise result oriented solutions.

An Academician shows interest normally in problems that are intellectually challenging. His or her areas of interest lie in technology development initiatives and methods related to process and design improvement. Researcher has strong preference for working towards creation of knowledge in specialized areas. For industry related problems, a researcher has to explore a variety of options which is time consuming.

BENEFITS IN BRIDGING THE SKILL GAP

It is important that in coming decades, industry and academia must together along with government, non - government, financial companies, scientific societies, inter - governmental organizations, work to imagine and help to realize a more sustainable and equitable future.

In recent years lot of changes are taking place in developing countries with emerging demand for academic consultancy and collaboration. The expected scenario seems to be one of increasing awareness and willingness to make the necessary commitment on the part of industries, and increasing capacity and readiness on the academic side. From such a perspective one can hope to build sustainable advantages from such collaborations.

The benefits of interaction can simply be stated as follows: -

INDUSTRY

Using the academic knowledge base to improve industrial cost, quality and competitive dimensions, reducing dependence on foreign know-how and expenditure on internal R&D, updating and upgrading the knowledge base of the industry's professionals through management development programmes designed by the academia, the faculty's exposure to industry leading to improved curricular and widened and deepened teaching perspective resulting in professional graduates of a high caliber to man industry.

Academia - Industry Interaction should be considered as part of the education. Industry education can bring to the table real world experience and examples. Also, with the presence of industry education in campus, this should foster some sort of relationship. More importantly, this would allow for recruitment of outstanding candidates who lie in academia and are looking to break into industry. Graduates and post-graduates are no the best at networking, so this would also allow for some exposure outside of their mundane classroom environment. Even when Industries offer internship to student society their incentive is to hire the best and brightest to strengthen and grow your company.

ACADEMIA

The satisfaction of seeing its knowledge and expertise being used for socially useful and productive purposes, widening and deepening of the curricula and the perspective of teachers and researchers and thereby improving their morale as well as that of student, earn additional resources for a system already severely constrained in this regard, secure training and final placements more easily for their students based on the respect earned from, and the relationship established with, industry.

Since the benefits in academe can be light bearing and fruit bearing it can be characterized as proximate benefits and ultimate benefits. Proximate benefits include the interactive learning and mutual advancement. Whereas ultimate benefits consist of triggering the indigenous Research & Development, enhancing quality of Research, enhancing Industrial competitiveness, overall economic development, Income and Revenue Saving.

FACTORS INHIBITING INDUSTRY - ACADEMIA INTERFACE AND RECIPROCATING THE BRIDGING OF SKILL GAP

The current of cooperation between Academia and Industry is such that Academicians are driven by their conferences and technical journals and their need to publish but seldom attend industrial conference as they intend that is not circled in their portfolio. Academicians are not aware of the actual problems and constraints faced by the industries; rather they look down to industrial newspaper and magazines which does not portray the exact picture of the companies.

Just as the benefits of interface was complimenting from both the sides. Similar are the inhibiting factors.

FROM INDUSTRY SIDE

1. Insensitivity to or lack of awareness of the resource potential of the academia
2. A blind, herd-like obsession with expensive and high profile consultants
3. Easy availability of foreign Know-How
4. Compulsion of existing technical collaboration agreements
5. Bad experience of interactions with the academia in the past
6. Anxiety to keep problems and breakthroughs confidential for fear of losing the competitive edge.

FROM ACADEMIA'S SIDE

1. Apathy towards applied research and extension and reluctance to leave the comfort zone of pure teaching,
2. Inadequate marketing of its strengths to industry
3. Lack of a critical mass of experts and specialized technical infrastructure
4. Overspecialized loyalties and reluctance to collaborate inter-disciplinary problem solving
5. Unhelpful, restrictive internal policies and procedures discouraging or frustrating academicians attempts to collaborate with industry
6. Unsettled conditions in the campus resulting in unproductive distraction of attention and energy.

SUGGESTED MEASURES

As teaching is a major responsibility of universities, research and consultancy should not be at the expense of teaching but as additional, value-adding activities. All teachers, junior or senior, in universities should engage in both teaching and research / consultancy as synergizing modules. Existing rules, procedures and incentives should suitably redesigned to facilitate this. Certain high profile departments with unusual expertise or promise could, however, be given a reduced teaching and administrative load and enabled to concentrate on honing their expertise. In accreditation process the institute should only focus on highlighting the potential and capabilities of departments for training, problem-oriented research and consultancy. Every major academic institution should have a suitably structured academia - industry interaction council headed by the director/principal of the institution which will take steps to promote and delete the bottlenecks in such interactions.

On the contrary Industry's planning committee used to farm out research projects on specialized sectoral studies to university departments. This practice deserves to be continued and expanded further. Apart from motivating the academics, this would enable industry to readily identify competent departments for giving assignments with confidence. Though the public sector is shrinking, major ones which would still survive should, as a matter of policy, utilize available expertise in the academia wherever feasible. At the annual conference of trade and industry association such as Ficci and CII, as well as academics should make presentations on academia's problem-solving, research and consultancy capabilities.

Since the industry does not generally have a high opinion of academia's capability, it is for the latter to take initiative to break the ice.

SOME LISTED ICE - BREAKING TECHNIQUES

1. Including pro-active and positive-minded professionals from industry and business in syndicates and boards of study.
2. Using practicing professionals from industry as part-time guest faculty.
3. Securing training/ projects attachments for senior students and research scholars in industry.
4. Exploiting contacts with alumni who are successful in industry and business.
5. Offering management development courses for professionals in industry, as this is a safe, inexpensive trial interaction for the latter
6. Offering inexpensive, if necessary free, consultancy to small and medium industries which cannot afford expensive consultants

The recent successes of Indian entrepreneurs in IT and Outsourcing have generated a new self-confidence because of collaborations with universities. Indian companies have won prestigious awards such as the Deming Prize. Wipro and Infosys recently signed MoUs with some Universities. The atmosphere is therefore, ripe for academia to exploit to its advantages this new ambience of confidence and self-reliance in industry.

There are of course few principles that can be followed by Industry as well as academia to strengthen the Skill and can be used as guidelines

- a) Open academic environment - It is the responsibility of the administration, the academic senate and departmental faculty to establish appropriate norms for existence of an open environment
- b) Freedom to publish - Freedom to publish is fundamental to the university and is a major criterion for the research project. Faculty should be encouraged to engage in outside projects. These at the same time, should not interfere with their performance of teaching and research duties.

CONCLUSION

It is said Rome was not built in a day. There is surely a great need of industry and academia relationship to grow so that the deficit can be balanced in both ends. It is evident that the effort to achieve this collaboration will definitely start at the micro level but will gradually grow and will be adopted by rest of the world.

With the help of corporate sponsors such awareness and interaction can be fostered and promoted on campus and universities/ colleges nationwide. Such

involvement at the minimum would include seminar/ speakers from industry on campus. Many do not see the need or importance; however, someone has to make the first move. Until then, academia and industry will continue to not understand each other or see the need to have an intertwined and collaborative relationship especially for long-term.

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