

SIGNIFICANCE OF LIVE PROJECTS TO EMPLOYABILITY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

Dr. Madhu Arora

Associate Professor, Rukmini Devi Institute of Advanced Studies, Affiliated to GGS Indraprastha University, Delhi.

Ms. Abha Gupta

Assistant Professor, Rukmini Devi Institute of Advanced Studies, Affiliated to GGS Indraprastha University, Delhi.

Introduction

Employability is a big issue in India especially in competitive era of twenty first century. Growing population and increasing demand of skills in globalized scenario is unable to fill the gap between demand and supply of skilled force. Educational institutions have especially professional education providers have obligation to provide placement to its students. But always there is issue of match complained by industry that students are not matching with desired skills. Rachel Sara (2011) Putting industrial environment to classroom is not possible in theoretical framed syllabus where passing the written examination is criteria to be followed by faculty and students.

Live projects are projects done by students on real time. They are performed on deadline for particular defined work. Having practical aspects students have lot to learn from live projects. (bschool career website)

Practical Skills: practical skills like working on PowerPoint presentation, excel and Google sheets are skill learned Kovalchick, Boff and Kovacs (2013) which are helpful to work for different official tasks are learnt by students in live projects. Arora M and Sharma N (2018)

Personality Development: during live projects students learn professional etiquette and manners. Their physical, mental and overall personality grooming occurs. Arora M and Sharma N (2018)

Exposure: outside world is different from their comfort zoned free home environment. Students doing live projects get different exposure during performing live projects. Arora M and Sharma N (2018)

Syllabus: Syllabus is the base for faculty and students to follow for exams. Marks is the central point for degrees and diplomas. Presently live projects are not part of university syllabus curriculum Arora M and Sharma N (2018). If live projects are become part of syllabus. There may or may not be any correlation between syllabus with live projects and employability?

Additional Skills: students handle live chats and calls with customers and try to understand query and solutions. They learnt additional marketing skills, financial skill required for understanding corporate culture. Arora M and Sharma N (2018)

Employability: Employment is the main reason for which students go for higher study. In maximum cases Indian student want a high salary reputed job and some students opt for entrepreneurship. Arora M and Sharma N (2018). Can live projects lead to more employability?

Literature Review

Rachel Sara (2011) found that live projects had high potential for practical learning for higher education. They studies different skill sets and measured with change in students' performance against each skill set. It was recommended that live projects had high potential to change the behaviour of learner in positive manner.

Kovalchick, Boff and Kovacs (2013) in a study performed research on students who had done live projects and found that their performance improved due to learning of different skills in live projects. They performed their study around students working on live projects and found advantageous.

Arora M (2019) executed a survey on Indian students doing live projects and found there was good scope of learning skills required for entrepreneurs and employment. Very good response of students was found and live projects increased their self-confidence and communication skills.

Jane Chang, Alison Rieple (2013) showed in their findings that live projects are very useful for development in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship competency needs ability of team work, empathy, good convincing skills and risk management. All these skills are learned through live projects ad students get practical training.

In A Conceptual Study on Learning of Students Using Live Projects by **Arora M and Sharma N (2018)** explored benefits of doing live projects. They sort out benefits from classroom point of view, syllabus point of view, learner point of view and industry point of view. Based on observation and interview students' focus group, it was found that students showed positive response about learning's from live projects. Their confidence improved, communication improved and sense of achievement created after working on some live projects.

Arora M and Mittal M (2019) used path analysis model to show relationship between live projects and employability. Measurement models show high consistency in the responses towards different variables used such as communication skills, practical skills, relation to syllabus etc. high reliability was noted in zero order confirmatory factor analysis. Reliability and validity was tested in measurement model. Results showed that there was significant correlation with employability using live projects.

The above literature shows that there is enough scope of live projects due to research gap.

Research Methodology

Present study is descriptive in nature. Study uses primary data collected from 400 students from all over India based on purposive sampling. Live projects providing start up takeup is used for getting responses from students. A questionnaire was sent based on 5 point linear scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree made in Google forms. It took 4 months to collect the data. Reliability was tested using cronbach's alpha. Factor analysis conformed the factors and regression outputs are expressed in further results.

Data Analysis

Table No. 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Variable	Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	200	50
	Female	200	50
Age	18-20	120	30
	20-22	190	47.5
	Above 22	90	22.5
Education	Pursuing under Graduate	242	60.5
	Pursuing Post Graduate	147	36.8

(Author's Own Output)

The table describes the demographic profile of the respondents. Fifty percent of the respondents are male while fifty percent are female. As per the age profile of the respondents, major students are from the age category of 20-22 years while thirty percent of the respondents are of 18-20 years of age and only 22 percent belong to the age category of above 22 years. Nearly sixty percent of the respondents pursuing graduation while only thirty six percent are post graduate and only around three percent are holding other academic credentials.

Since the scale was adopted from various studies, exploratory factor analysis was performed to identify the variables in which statements can be clubbed. The results of the exploratory factor analysis provide six different factors which was named as personality development, personal skills, exposure, syllabus, additional skills and employability. The reliability of each factor formed was computed using the test Cronbach Alpha and each factor was found reliable as reliability of personality development (.926), personal skills (.843), exposure (.906), syllabus (.826), additional skills(.859), employability (.875), all are greater than 0.7 which is the threshold limit.

Table No. 2 Reliability Measure of the Factors

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Alpha</i>
<i>PS</i>	<i>0.843</i>
<i>PD</i>	<i>0.926</i>
<i>Exposure</i>	<i>0.906</i>
<i>Syll</i>	<i>0.826</i>
<i>AS</i>	<i>0.859</i>
<i>Employ</i>	<i>0.875</i>

(Author's Own Output based on primary survey)

Table No. 3 Eigen Values and Communalities

	<i>Initial</i>	<i>Extraction</i>
<i>PS1</i>	<i>1.000</i>	<i>.723</i>
<i>PS2</i>	<i>1.000</i>	<i>.732</i>
<i>PS3</i>	<i>1.000</i>	<i>.785</i>
<i>PS4</i>	<i>1.000</i>	<i>.763</i>
<i>PD1</i>	<i>1.000</i>	<i>.794</i>
<i>PD2</i>	<i>1.000</i>	<i>.792</i>
<i>Pd3</i>	<i>1.000</i>	<i>.785</i>
<i>Pd4</i>	<i>1.000</i>	<i>.771</i>
<i>PD5</i>	<i>1.000</i>	<i>.723</i>

PD6	1.000	.715
EXP1	1.000	.702
EXP2	1.000	.781
EXP3	1.000	.762
EXP4	1.000	.772
Syll1	1.000	.784
Syll2	1.000	.793
Syll3	1.000	.783
AS1	1.000	.670
AS2	1.000	.760
AS3	1.000	.752
AS4	1.000	.715
Emp1	1.000	.738
Emp2	1.000	.820
Emp3	1.000	.775

(Author's Own Output based on primary survey)

Table No. 4 Rotated Component Matrix

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
PD2	.766					
PD1	.741					
Pd4	.671					
Pd3	.654					
PD5	.634					
PD6	.527					
Emp2		.733				
Emp3		.724				
Emp1		.602				
AS2			.743			
AS4			.642			
AS3			.598			
AS1			.565			
Syll2				.727		
Syll1				.720		
Syll3				.698		
EXP2					.607	
EXP1					.582	
EXP4					.510	
EXP3					.503	
PS3						.729
PS1						.621
PS2						.620
PS4					.554	.562

Table No. 5 Total Variance Explained

<i>Component</i>	<i>Initial Eigenvalues</i>			<i>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</i>			<i>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</i>		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of Variance</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of Variance</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of Variance</i>	<i>Cumulative %</i>
<i>1</i>	13.93	58.04	58.04	13.93	58.041	58.041	4.177	17.403	17.403
<i>2</i>	1.165	4.85	62.898	1.165	4.856	62.898	3.072	12.799	30.202
<i>3</i>	.989	4.12	67.018	.989	4.120	67.018	2.905	12.105	42.307
<i>4</i>	.812	3.38	70.401	.812	3.383	70.401	2.795	11.648	53.954
<i>5</i>	.661	2.75	73.156	.661	2.754	73.156	2.757	11.487	65.441
<i>6</i>	.634	2.64	75.796	.634	2.640	75.796	2.485	10.355	75.796

(Author's Own Output based on primary survey)

The variance explained by all the factors taken together will explain nearly 75% of the variation taken together. The table describes the variance explained by each factor at successive stages. Factor one i.e. personality development explains nearly 17% variation while personality development with employability explains nearly 30% of the variation while if these factors are clubbed with additional skills explains nearly 42% of the variation in the data set whereas if the factor syllabus is added, the percentage of variation explained increases to 53% while if one more factor is the cumulative variation explained increases to 65% . If all the variables formed are taken together, then the percentage of variation increases to the level of 75%. Since the variation explained is more than fifty per cent, the factors formed are accepted for further analysis. Out of the six variables formed, only one factor that is employability can be taken as the dependent variable , rest all give variables namely personality development , personal skills , additional skills , syllabus , exposure will be taken as independent variables for finding the relationship among the skills developed through live projects and employability traits developed.

Table No 6: Regression Results

		β	<i>Se</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Hypothesis</i>
Model 1						
$R^2 = .427$	<i>Constant</i>	1.274	0.172	7.389	0	(H1) Supported

<i>Dependent variables: Employability</i>	<i>PS</i>	<i>0.701</i>	<i>0.041</i>	<i>17.221</i>	<i>0</i>	
Model 2						
$R^2 = .493$	<i>Constant</i>	<i>1.056</i>	<i>0.162</i>	<i>6.518</i>	<i>0</i>	
<i>Dependent variables: Employability</i>	<i>PD</i>	<i>0.734</i>	<i>0.038</i>	<i>19.682</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>(H2) Supported</i>
Model 3						
$R^2 = .587$	<i>Constant</i>	<i>0.774</i>	<i>0.146</i>	<i>5.292</i>	<i>0</i>	
<i>Dependent variables: Employability</i>	<i>Exposure</i>	<i>0.803</i>	<i>0.034</i>	<i>23.791</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>(H3) Supported</i>
Model 4						
$R^2 = .518$	<i>Constant</i>	<i>0.92</i>	<i>0.161</i>	<i>5.72</i>	<i>0</i>	
<i>Dependent variables: Employability</i>	<i>Syllabus</i>	<i>0.762</i>	<i>0.037</i>	<i>20.678</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>(H4) Supported</i>
Model 5						
$R^2 = .528$	<i>Constant</i>	<i>1.083</i>	<i>0.134</i>	<i>8.108</i>	<i>0</i>	
<i>Dependent variables: Employability</i>	<i>AS</i>	<i>0.77</i>	<i>0.032</i>	<i>23.77</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>(H5) Supported</i>

(Author's Own Output based on primary survey)

First, from the table 6 it is evident that personality development has significant impact on employability where b (0.734), se (0.038), t (19.682) and $p < 0.05$. Hence the hypothesis (H1) is supported.

It is evident from the table 6 it is evident that personal skills has significant impact on employability, where b (0.701), se (0.041), t (17.221) and $p < 0.05$. Hence the hypothesis (H2) is supported.

It is clear that exposure has significant impact on employability, where b (0.803), se (0.034), t (23.791) and $p < 0.05$. Hence the hypothesis (H3) is supported.

It is evident from the table 6 that syllabus has significant impact on employability where b (.762), se (.037), t (20.678) and $p < 0.05$. Hence, the hypothesis (H4) is supported.

It is also clear that additional skills have significant impact on employability where b (0.77), se (0.032), t (23.77) and $p < 0.05$. Hence, the hypothesis (H5) is supported.

Finding and Recommendations

Findings: A significant relationship exists between live projects and employability as live projects developed new skills/traits among the students required for securing employment. Learning from doing live projects increases the chance of employment for the students. There is a direct significant link between skills developed through live projects and employability of the students. Demographic variables play a significant role in the above mentioned relationship.

The finding of the study indicates that skills developed through live project have a significant impact on the employability generation. A skill developed by doing live projects is influencing the skills required for attaining employment. Therefore, one must focus on doing live projects as it will develop skills which will help the person in securing better employment opportunities.

Research limitations /Implications

The study is done with a sample of 400 students focusing only on one aspect of doing live projects i.e. Development of skills required for employability generation. Other aspects like virtual live projects have been ignored.

Practical Implications

The findings of the study can be used to explain the concept of employability to the stakeholders who are new to this domain like young students, parents, managers/top management of the institutes of higher studies. The study showed that live projects are a useful tool to generate employment opportunities. Live projects will boost the morale of the students to start their professional career. It also provides an alternate to the management institutes for motivating their students to focus on recent developments.

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