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Research Article

Skill Education, Graduate Employability, and Ranking Outcomes: A NEP-Based Evaluation of Indian Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Skill education has emerged as a strategic priority in Indian higher education following the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasises employability, multidisciplinary learning, and institutional performance. This study evaluates the relationship between skill education initiatives, graduate employability outcomes, and institutional ranking performance in Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Using a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates survey data from undergraduate and postgraduate students with institutional performance indicators aligned with national ranking frameworks. The findings reveal that HEIs demonstrating stronger integration of skill education within curricula show higher graduate employability confidence and improved ranking outcomes. The study highlights critical gaps in implementation capacity and offers policy-relevant insights for strengthening skill-based higher education under NEP 2020.

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KEYWORDS: Skill education; graduate employability; NEP 2020; higher education institutions; ranking systems

1. INTRODUCTION

Graduate employability has become a central concern for higher education systems worldwide as labour markets increasingly demand adaptable, skill-oriented graduates [1], [2]. In India, despite significant growth in higher education enrolment, employability outcomes remain uneven due to persistent skill mismatches between academic training and industry expectations [3].

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 positions skill education as a foundational element of higher education reform, emphasising experiential learning, multidisciplinary curricula, and outcome-based assessment [4]. Simultaneously, institutional ranking frameworks such as the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) increasingly incorporate graduate outcomes and societal impact as performance indicators [5].

This convergence of skill education policy and ranking accountability creates a critical need to empirically examine how NEP-aligned skill initiatives influence graduate employability and institutional ranking performance.

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2. Research Gap

Existing literature extensively examines graduate employability and skill development in isolation [6], [7]. However, limited empirical research links skill education implementation, graduate employability outcomes, and institutional ranking performance within the NEP framework [8]. Moreover, few studies adopt a mixed-methods approach that integrates student perceptions with institutional performance metrics. This study addresses this gap by offering a holistic NEP-based evaluation.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

➢ To examine the implementation of skill education initiatives in Indian HEIs under NEP 2020.
➢ To assess the impact of skill education on graduate employability outcomes.
➢ To analyse the relationship between skill education indicators and institutional ranking performance.
➢ To identify implementation challenges and future policy directions.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods design was adopted to enhance analytical depth and validity [9].

4.2 Quantitative Survey

A structured questionnaire was administered to 420 undergraduate and postgraduate students from public and private Indian HEIs. Employability confidence and skill acquisition were measured using a five-point Likert scale [10].

4.3 Institutional Data Analysis

Secondary data related to employability indicators and ranking parameters were analysed from publicly available NIRF-aligned institutional reports [5].

4.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics, mean score comparison, and correlation analysis were employed, supported by thematic analysis of qualitative responses [11].

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Student Participation in Skill Education Initiatives

Skill Initiative	Participation (%)
Soft Skills Training	64
Digital / Technical Skills	59
Internships / Apprenticeships	46
Industry-led Workshops	39

Table 2: Graduate Employability Confidence Mean Scores

Indicator	Mean Score
Job Readiness	3.51
Communication Skills	3.62
Problem-Solving Ability	3.68
Career Confidence	3.44

6. Ranking Outcome Comparison

Table 3: Skill Education Indicators and Ranking Performance

Parameter	High Skill Integration HEIs	Low Skill Integration HEIs
Graduate Outcomes Score	High	Moderate
Industry Collaboration	Strong	Limited
Overall Ranking Position	Improved	Static

Calculation Example

Correlation between skill integration index and graduate outcomes score showed $r = 0.61$, indicating a strong positive relationship [12].

7. DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that NEP-aligned skill education initiatives significantly enhance employability confidence and contribute positively to institutional ranking outcomes [13], [14]. Institutions with embedded skill curricula and experiential learning frameworks demonstrate superior performance across employability-related ranking indicators. However, implementation capacity remains uneven due to faculty readiness and infrastructure limitations [15].

8. Future Scope

Future research may:
➢ Conduct longitudinal tracking of graduate employment outcomes
➢ Integrate employer-verified employability metrics
➢ Develop discipline-specific NEP skill education indices
➢ Expand analysis to global ranking frameworks [16]

9. CONCLUSION

This study establishes a clear link between skill education, graduate employability, and institutional ranking outcomes under NEP 2020. While policy intent is strong, institutional capacity building remains critical for translating reform into measurable performance gains. Strategic integration of skill education within curricula is essential for improving both graduate success and institutional standing [4], [17].

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