

Conceptual Article

THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT IN SHAPING THE CAREER COMPETENCY OF COMMERCE STUDENTS

Mutharasi K¹ & Dr. K A Sheeba²

¹ Ph.D. Research scholar, Stella Matutina College of Education, Chennai, TN, India.

² Associate Professor and Research supervisor, Stella Matutina College of Education,
Chennai, TN, India

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6936-0079>

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ABSTRACT

Indian economy is growing rapidly and it has significant effect in the global scenario. It has the power to influence international affairs and ability to attract investment from MNC and financial market. The rapid pace of development and economic expansion creates more career prospectus in different fields of commerce such as banking, insurance, marketing, advertising, transport, international finance, logistics, supply chain management, artificial intelligence and data analysis, stock market etc. In such a situation commerce education deserves an eminent place in Indian higher education. Despite the availability of numerous opportunities a significant number of commerce graduates face employability challenges due to the gap between their expertise and expectations of the corporate and ever changing business world. In this context the role of higher education becomes vital as they cater the needs of indigenous and emerging industries. When the institutions produce students with theoretical, practical knowledge as well as with career competent skills such as communication, technical, soft skill etc. the commerce graduates become the asset of the country and can contribute significantly to the growth of our nation. Therefore this paper aims to explore the academic support provided by the higher educational institutions to fill the gap between education and employability in the field of Commerce.

Keywords: Indian economy, employability skills, career prospectus, academic support, emerging technologies, global requirement, higher educational institutions, career competency

Introduction

Every student wants to seek immediate appointment in the relevant sectors after the completion of the course. It is one of the main objectives of the education to transfer the students in to valuable human resource. To make the students more productive and career competent the educational institutions should provide various support systems to bring out their hidden potentials. Commerce higher educational institutions should create many opportunities to the students in finding their area of interest and explore different employment avenues. As per the recommendation of Indian Educational Commission, every educational institution should relate education to productivity. The commerce higher educational institutions should shoulder the responsibility of realizing practical, social, cultural, disciplinary, moral and vocational values of imparting commerce education.

Concept of Academic Support

Academic support refers to various services, resources, and strategies designed by the higher educational institutions to help students to succeed in their educational pursuits. Career guidance, internship, workshop, industrial exposure, field visit, skill development programs, are some of the support systems which help the students to thrive in their academic journey and beyond. It also includes mentoring programmes, digital literacy, academic advising in selecting elective papers and supplementary courses to suit with the current industrial requirement. These strategies help the students not only to develop academic strength but also to develop various employability skills such as communication skill, presentation skill, interviewing skill, Positive attitude, team spirit, loyalty, commitment and self- motivation.

Glossary of educational reforms defines “Academic support refers to instructional method or educational services that help students to meet learning standards.

According to University of Auckland “Academic support includes working with students to set educational objectives, clarify course content, assist with assignments and research, provide tutoring, learning, and one-to-one guidance ensuring students to achieve learning outcomes and move successfully in to employment or further study.

Concept of Career Competency

Career competencies are the knowledge, skills, and abilities that individuals need to manage their career development proactively, including reflection on strength and motives, building networks, exploring opportunities, and taking control of career goals. It includes cognitive abilities, technical skills, soft skills and management skills. These competencies are used as bench mark to evaluate the candidates or employees by employers.

Kujipers, Meijers &Gundy define “Career competencies are the skills and attitudes that enable individuals to reflect on their career, communicate about it, and take action to shape it”.

According to Frontiers in education “Career competencies refer to reflective, communicative, and behavioral skills that allow individuals to recognize their qualities, build networks, explore opportunities and actively direct their career path”.

DevosVander Heijden &Akkermans defines “Career competencies represent a set of personal resources that help individuals to navigate and shape their careers in a changing labor market”.

Operational Definition

Academic Support

Academic support refers to all activities provided by the commerce higher educational institutions to bridge the gap between academic learning and real world application and job requirements.

Career Competency

Career competency refers to the measurable combination of knowledge, skills, behaviors and other characters that enable an individual successfully choose, adapt and achieve in their career goals.

Review of Related Literature

Kujipers & Meijers (2017) in their study titled Professional competence and career development aims to conceptualize and measure career competencies in vocational and higher education and examine their link to employability. They identified three core competencies:

reflective, communicative and behavioral and suggested higher level of career competencies lead to better career opportunities and work transitions.

Beatrice Vander Heijde & Vander Heidjen (2018) in their thesis *The Employability competencies model Relationship with career success* : examine how specific employability competencies contribute to subjective and objective career success. Their findings were career competency significantly predicts career satisfaction and perceived employability. They also emphasize that lifelong learning mindset strengthens this relationship.

Xia, Gu, Huang, Zhu & Cheng (2020) aim to examine how career support affects employability of college students, testing career adaptation as a mediator and proactive personality as a moderator. Findings of the study were career social support positively affects career adaptation and employability.

Dr.M Jagadeeshwaran & Kaleeshwari (2021) in their study titled *Employability Skill Gap Analysis of Commerce postgraduate students in Higher Education with reference to Coimbatore District* found that Commerce Graduates showed gap in communication, IT and soft skills. They recommended academic support such as internship, placement training to improve career readiness.

Praveena & Thomas (2021) in their empirical study titled *career competency of MBA students in Kerala* aim to assess career competency of MBA students in Kerala and identify gaps for industry readiness. The findings were MBA students scored well on career motivation but lower on networking and self-profiling. They recommended structured career guidance and mentoring to enhance job competency skill.

Rajeswari & Saranya (2022) aim to measure career competency levels among commerce graduates and explore their correlation with employability skills under the title *A Study on career competency and employability skills of commerce graduates in Tamilnadu*. Findings of the study were career competency is positively correlated with employability skills like communication, team work and adaptability. Graduates with higher competency levels reported better campus placement opportunities.

Ramasamy & Kumar (2023) under the title *Career competencies and work readiness among Indian University students* investigated how career competencies influence work readiness in final year undergraduate students. Findings of the study were students with high

self-awareness and networking competency were rated more by recruiters and they suggested integrating competency building modules in to the final year curriculum will increase the career competency of students.

Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem identification and the research title the following objectives are framed

- ❖ To explore the different types of academic support system provided by the commerce higher education institutions in shaping the career competency of students.
- ❖ To enhance academic support system in commerce curriculum.

Academic Support System

The academic support provided by the commerce higher education institutions to make the students more career competent can be divided in to three main parts. They are curricular support, co-curricular support and career guidance support.

Curricular Support

Updated syllabus - The national education policy 2020 has introduced four year commerce program, providing comprehensive, more-in depth and advanced study of commerce and its related subjects such as management, economics, and statistics.

Encourage inter disciplinary learning - The syllabus encourage students to integrate concepts between different subjects like Economics, politics, psychology, marketing, technology, accountancy with commerce and have a broader understanding of business world.

Alignment of syllabus with industrial needs - The syllabus incorporates academic with the current industrial requirements such as project based assessments, skill demonstrations and portfolio development.

Promote experiential learning – To impart practical knowledge to the students experiential learning is the part of the curriculum. Ex virtual business labs, trading games.

Value added courses- More value added courses such as entrepreneurship development, business ethics, business environment, business – correspondence has been offered. It provides

wide variety of choices and enables the students to choose courses according to their need and interest.

Integration of technologies - As this is the digital era to enhance the digital competency of commerce students and to cope up with the exponential growth of current technological world, extensive practical knowledge has been given in the areas such as e-commerce, e-governance, e-learning, e-marketing, e-banking etc.

Co-Curricular Support

These are the support system that complement and enhance the curricular activities. It provides opportunities to apply the learned knowledge in the real world context, making learning more purposive and meaningful. It normally taken place outside the classroom, help the students to develop skills like communication, teamwork, leadership, problem solving in addition to the academic knowledge required. Also it enables the students to find out their area of interest and talents and promotes personal growth. Integration of this support system in the commerce curriculum empowered the students with holistic personality and broad range of skills and experience before enter in to the real corporate world.

Internship - It is a structured work experience provided by an organization for a limited period of time, usually to students. It helps the students to apply the theoretical knowledge in a real world setting and gain practical skills related to their field of study or career interest. It stimulates curiosity, critical thinking, problem solving skills and result in enhanced learning experience.

Industrial visit - It plays a crucial role in shaping the career competency of students. It provides valuable insight in to the market trend, current technological advancement and internal operations of the companies. Industrial visit provides experiential learning opportunities. Students can explore different career paths and gets motivated to select the career according to their interest. Students understand how the theoretical concepts are applied in the real world settings. Industrial visits stimulate curiosity, critical thinking, problem solving skills and result in enhanced learning experience.

Commerce club - It widens the knowledge of students. Seminars on some interesting, important and current topics, discussions on important issues headed by renowned commerce scholars, designing logos, advertisement creation, and power point presentation on important

issues, new policies and amendments, recreational activities are some of the activities organized by the commerce club. It gives practical knowledge to the students and makes the learning an interested one.

Commerce exhibition \ fair - It is an event organized by educational institutions, business organizations or trade bodies to showcase concepts, products, services, business models. It provides platform to the students to exhibit their innovative ideas in commerce and promotes creativity. It inculcates a sense of pride in their talent. The main objective of organizing exhibition is to promote interest in commerce.

Short term certificate courses - It refers to the courses offered alongside the curriculum, designed to enrich the students' knowledge and skill beyond the curriculum. It bridges the gap between the academic learning and professional requirement. GST & Taxation, digital marketing, stock market, insurance are some of the areas where short term certificate course programs are provided by higher educational institutions.

Community engagement - Alumni interaction session, commerce fest, intercollege competitions, professional bodies' membership, case study analysis are some of the programmes organized by colleges to give practical exposure to the students with the society and commercial field.

Career Guidance Support

Career Counseling Sessions - Group counseling or one to one counseling helps the students to identify their strength, interest and career paths.

Placement cell - . A dedicated placement cell can connect students with recruiters and bridge the gap between the job providers and job seekers.

Soft skill - development of soft skills along with academic knowledge provides significant job prospectus. Drafting reports, maintaining records, documents, active participation in meetings such as listening and responding, negotiation, persuasion, verbal and written communication in few languages are the basic soft skill requirements for any graduates. In addition to that analytical, critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, interviewing skills, technical skills, interpersonal and team work skills are very much needed for immediate recruitment in elite

companies. By providing opportunities to students in participating group projects, discussions, seminars, the soft skill proficiency can be increased.

MOU with companies - The higher educational institutions can establish Memorandum of Understanding with reputed companies in banking, insurance, finance, accounting, auditing and taxation sectors and provide hands on training opportunities to students. A dedicated placement cell can connect students with recruiters and bridge the gap between the job providers and job seekers.

Online career resources – Trainings are given to students in using online job portals and digital platforms like Naukri, LinkedIn to increase the placement opportunities.

Mentoring programmes - Assigning of faculties and industrial experts as mentors enable the students to know about the job fairs, emerging career opportunities, recruitment drives and expectations of recruiters.

Educational Implications

The following are the educational implications to strengthen the career competency of commerce students

- ❖ The policy makers should give more attention to incorporate the academic support system in the commerce curriculum.
- ❖ Funds and grants should be allocated for enhancing the career competency programs.
- ❖ Faculty members should guide the students beyond the syllabus.
- ❖ Staff members should give more practical learning activities.
- ❖ Students should be encouraged to utilize and to take active participation in all the academic support system to develop their employability skills.
- ❖ Continuous monitoring and updation in the academic support system should be done to meet the current requirement.

Conclusion

There is no doubt, by providing structured and continuous support system adaptability, confidence and career competency among the students will be significantly increased. Though the support systems are effective they are not duly sufficient to meet the demand of the rapidly changing global environment. Commerce higher educational institutions should innovate and

integrate advanced support system as part of their curriculum and strengthen their collaboration between academia and industry. The educational institutions must evolve the support system to equip the commerce students with global competencies.

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