

Industry-Driven Curriculum Design for Enhancing Employability in Management Education: An Analytical Study

Dr. Pankaj V. Dolas

Associate Professor, Dept. of Management Studies, Hirachand Nemchand College of Commerce,
Solapur

Dr. Reshma S. Gawali

Associate Professor, Dept. of Management Studies, Hirachand Nemchand College of Commerce,
Solapur

Sandeep P. Kasturkar

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Management Studies, Hirachand Nemchand College of Commerce,
Solapur

Abstract

Education is the key tool for socio-economic empowerment. The persistent mismatch between management graduates' competencies and industry expectations remains a critical challenge in higher education. Despite the expansion of management programs, employers frequently highlight gaps in practical skills, leadership capabilities, digital proficiency, and workplace readiness. This paper analytically examines industry-driven curriculum design as a strategic solution to bridge this gap. Adopting a conceptual and analytical approach, the study evaluates key employability skills, the role of industry-academia collaboration, work-integrated learning practices, innovative pedagogies, and assessment frameworks. It further explores how aligning curricula with industry requirements enhances managerial competence and employability outcomes. The findings reveal that industry-driven curriculum frameworks significantly improve job readiness, professional confidence, and adaptability among management graduates. The study emphasizes that sustainable industry partnerships and outcome-based curriculum design are essential to ensure the relevance, effectiveness, and future preparedness of management education in a rapidly evolving business environment.

Keywords: *Management education, employability, industry-driven curriculum, industry-academia collaboration, work-integrated learning*

Submitted: January 27, 2026

Revised: February 28, 2026

Accepted: March 16, 2026

Published: March 20, 2026

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.19428091](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19428091)



1. Introduction

The developing economies need skilled manpower as productive workforce. It is the human capital for the nation and society. The management education occupies a strategic position in developing future business leaders, administrators, and entrepreneurs capable of contributing effectively to organizational performance and economic development. Over the past two decades, forces such as globalization, digital transformation, and increasing competitive pressures have significantly reshaped managerial roles and expectations. As a result, organizations now require management graduates to possess not only domain-specific knowledge but also strategic thinking, problem-solving skills, leadership competence, ethical awareness, and technological proficiency, reflecting the evolving demands of contemporary business environments (Jackson, 2016). Despite the rapid expansion of business schools and management

programs, concerns regarding graduate employability continue to persist. Employers frequently highlight deficiencies in practical exposure, real-world decision-making capabilities, and professional readiness among management graduates. This disconnect has contributed to rising levels of unemployment and underemployment, raising critical questions about the effectiveness of traditional curriculum frameworks. Conventional management education has largely emphasized theory-driven, discipline-based approaches, often neglecting experiential and application-oriented learning. In response, industry-driven curriculum design has emerged as a significant reform strategy that fosters collaboration between academia and industry to align curriculum content, pedagogy, and assessment with practical requirements. Such alignment enhances employability and ensures that graduates are better prepared to meet workplace challenges (Pang et al., 2019).

2. Background of Study

Management education has long been recognized as a critical driver of economic growth, organizational efficiency, and leadership development across nations. There are various generations such as Gen Z, Gen Alpha likely to enter the workforce in a dynamic labour market. Their competitive is tougher than ever (Bhanot & Gaikwad, 2025). In the Indian context, the expansion of management institutions particularly after economic liberalization has significantly increased access to professional education. This rapid growth has not always been accompanied by proportional improvements in quality, relevance, and industry alignment. As industries evolve under the influence of globalization and technological advancements, the expectations from management graduates have shifted toward multidimensional competencies such as analytical thinking, innovation, adaptability, and digital literacy (Varghese & Malik, 2016). The emergence of Industry 4.0, digital transformation, and knowledge-based economies has further intensified the demand for skill-oriented and application-driven education systems. Employers today seek graduates who can integrate theoretical knowledge with practical insights, demonstrate agility in dynamic environments, and contribute effectively from the early stages of employment (Gaikwad, 2021). Traditional management curricula often remain static, with limited incorporation of experiential learning, internships, case-based pedagogy, and real-time business problem-solving. This has created a noticeable gap between academic training and workplace requirements, thereby affecting graduate employability and organizational productivity (Andrews & Higson, 2008). There has been a growing emphasis on industry-driven curriculum design as a transformative approach in management education. This model promotes active collaboration between academic institutions and industry stakeholders in designing course content, delivery mechanisms, and assessment frameworks. It integrates elements such as work-integrated learning, live projects, internships, and competency-based education to enhance practical exposure and professional readiness. The background of this study is rooted in the need to critically examine how such industry-aligned curriculum frameworks can bridge the employability gap and ensure that management graduates are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes required in the contemporary business landscape (Tran, 2015).

3. Scope and Significant of Study

The scope of the present study is centered on analyzing the role and effectiveness of industry-driven curriculum design in enhancing the employability of management graduates. It primarily focuses on key dimensions such as employability skills, industry–academia collaboration, work-integrated learning practices, pedagogical innovations, and assessment mechanisms within management education. The study is conceptual and analytical in nature, drawing insights from existing literature, frameworks, and

best practices adopted by leading management institutions and industry bodies. It encompasses contemporary developments such as digital transformation, Industry 4.0 requirements, and competency-based education models, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of curriculum relevance in the modern business environment. However, the study is limited to secondary data and does not involve primary empirical investigation, which may restrict the generalizability of findings across different institutional contexts (Tomlinson, 2017). The significance of the study lies in its contribution to bridging the gap between academic learning and industry expectations, which remains a persistent issue in management education. There is a need for management education students to adopt high end technologies such artificial intelligence, business analytics, machine learning as they are expected by the industries (Gaikwad, 2024). By emphasizing industry-driven curriculum frameworks, the study highlights the importance of aligning educational outcomes with real-world business requirements, thereby improving graduate employability and organizational readiness. It offers valuable insights for academic institutions, policymakers, curriculum designers, and industry stakeholders to develop more responsive and outcome-oriented education systems. Furthermore, the study supports the advancement of sustainable education practices by advocating for continuous curriculum revision, stakeholder engagement, and skill-based learning approaches. In the context of a rapidly evolving global economy, such alignment is crucial for fostering a competent workforce, enhancing economic productivity, and ensuring long-term career success for management graduates (Bridgstock, 2009).

4. Objectives and Scope of the Study

- To analyze the gap between traditional management curricula and industry expectations
- To identify key employability skills required by contemporary management graduates
- To examine the role of industry participation in curriculum development and delivery
- To analyze work-integrated learning as a mechanism for employability enhancement
- To assess the impact of industry-aligned teaching and assessment strategies
- To present findings on employability outcomes resulting from industry-driven curricula

5. Reviews of Literature

The concept of employability in higher education has gained significant attention as institutions increasingly face pressure to align academic outcomes with labor market requirements. Yorke conceptualized employability as a set of achievements skills, understandings, and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and succeed in their chosen occupations. In the context of management education, this implies a shift from knowledge-centric teaching to competency-based learning frameworks that integrate analytical ability, communication skills, and professional attitudes. Scholars emphasize that curriculum relevance must be continuously updated to reflect changing industry expectations, particularly in dynamic sectors influenced by globalization and technological disruption (Yorke, 2006).

A growing body of research highlights the persistent gap between academic preparation and employer expectations, particularly in business and management disciplines. Clarke argued that employability is not merely about acquiring generic skills but also about developing contextual intelligence, adaptability, and the ability to apply knowledge in real-world situations. Employers consistently report that graduates lack practical exposure, decision-making capabilities, and industry awareness, which are essential for immediate workplace integration. This mismatch underscores the limitations of traditional lecture-based

pedagogies and calls for experiential learning approaches such as internships, simulations, and project-based learning to enhance employability outcomes (Clarke, 2018).

Industry-driven curriculum design has emerged as a strategic solution to address these challenges by fostering collaboration between academic institutions and industry stakeholders. Studies indicate that curriculum co-creation with industry experts ensures that course content remains relevant, updated, and aligned with market needs. Demonstrated that incorporating industry inputs into curriculum design significantly improves students' technical competencies, soft skills, and workplace readiness. Additionally, work-integrated learning models such as internships, live projects, and industry mentorship programs provide students with practical exposure, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice (Rasul et al., 2012).

The research emphasizes the importance of competency-based education and outcome-oriented curriculum frameworks in enhancing graduate employability. Mulder highlighted that competency-based approaches focus on measurable learning outcomes, enabling students to develop both technical and behavioral competencies required in professional settings. In management education, this approach facilitates the integration of leadership skills, ethical decision-making, and strategic thinking into the curriculum. Moreover, digital transformation and Industry 4.0 have intensified the need for incorporating technological skills such as data analytics, artificial intelligence, and digital communication into management programs to ensure future workforce readiness (Mulder, 2017). Another important dimension discussed in the literature is the role of pedagogical innovation in strengthening employability. Active learning strategies such as case-based teaching, problem-based learning, flipped classrooms, and simulation exercises have been found to significantly enhance students' critical thinking and decision-making abilities. According to Kolb's experiential learning theory, knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, making experiential learning a vital component of effective management education. These pedagogical approaches not only improve knowledge retention but also prepare students to handle complex and uncertain business environments (Kolb, 2015).

6. Research Methodology

This study adopts the analytical research methodology based on secondary data sources. Relevant literature was reviewed from academic journals, policy reports, institutional documents, and industry publications related to management education and employability. The analysis focuses on identifying patterns, relationships, and outcomes associated with industry-driven curriculum models. Conceptual models and structured tables are used to synthesize findings and present analytical insights. This study provides a strong theoretical and analytical foundation for future empirical research.

7. Discussion and Analysis

The analysis of employability skills in management education reveals that employability is a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, behavioral, and technical competencies. Cognitive and analytical skills are fundamental for managerial effectiveness, as modern business environments require data-driven decision-making, strategic thinking, and problem-solving under uncertainty. However, traditional curricula have often remained theory-centric, limiting opportunities for applied learning. Industry-driven curriculum design addresses this limitation by incorporating case-based teaching, simulations, and live projects, which enhance students' ability to apply conceptual knowledge

in real-world contexts. Empirical studies indicate that experiential learning significantly improves analytical reasoning and decision-making capabilities among management graduates (Lombardi et al., 2021). Furthermore, communication and interpersonal skills are increasingly recognized as critical employability attributes, as managers must engage with diverse stakeholders. Industry-aligned programs that integrate presentations, role plays, and collaborative assignments have been shown to enhance professional communication and confidence levels (Succi & Canovi, 2020).

Leadership, teamwork, and ethical competencies also play a crucial role in shaping employability outcomes in management education. Industry-driven curricula emphasize experiential exposure through team-based projects and leadership simulations, enabling students to develop emotional intelligence, conflict management skills, and accountability in decision-making. At the same time, digital and technological skills have become indispensable due to rapid digital transformation across industries. The integration of analytics tools, ERP systems, and digital platforms within the curriculum ensures that graduates are equipped with relevant technological competencies required in contemporary organizations. Additionally, the inclusion of ethics, sustainability, and corporate governance in curriculum frameworks prepares students for responsible leadership, addressing the increasing demand for ethical decision-making in business practices (García-Aracil et al., 2021).

Figure 1: Linking Management Education with Industry



(Source: Authors' Self-Interpretation)

The analysis of industry-driven curriculum design highlights its effectiveness in enhancing curriculum relevance, flexibility, and outcome orientation. By actively involving industry stakeholders in curriculum development, institutions can ensure that course content reflects current business practices and emerging trends such as business analytics, fintech, and digital marketing. Outcome-based education

frameworks further strengthen this alignment by clearly defining graduate attributes and linking learning outcomes with industry competencies. Industry academia collaboration plays a pivotal role in ensuring continuous curriculum improvement through feedback mechanisms, guest lectures, and industry-based assessments. Work-integrated learning (WIL), including internships, live projects, and simulations, emerges as a critical component in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Students exposed to WIL demonstrate higher levels of job readiness, professional confidence, and adaptability. Finally, innovative teaching strategies and authentic assessment models such as case studies, portfolios, industry evaluations, and reflective journals significantly enhance employability by promoting active learning and continuous skill development, thereby making management education more responsive to industry needs (Jackson, 2015).

8. Findings of the Study

- Industry-driven curriculum design significantly improves management graduate employability.
- Employability is multidimensional, requiring cognitive, interpersonal, digital, and ethical skills.
- Industry–academia collaboration enhances curriculum relevance and responsiveness.
- Work-integrated learning is a critical determinant of job readiness.
- Learner-centered pedagogies and authentic assessment models strengthen professional competence.
- Graduates from industry-aligned programs demonstrate higher confidence, adaptability, and career clarity.
- Excessive focus on short-term industry needs may risk weakening theoretical foundations, necessitating balance.

9. Conclusion

This analytical study demonstrates that industry-driven curriculum design is a powerful strategy for enhancing employability in management education. By aligning curriculum objectives, pedagogy, and assessment with industry expectations, business schools can produce graduates who are not only job-ready but also capable of long-term professional growth and leadership. Sustainable industry–academia collaboration, outcome-based frameworks, and continuous curriculum renewal are essential to maintaining relevance in a rapidly evolving business environment.

References

- Andrews, J., & Higson, H. (2008). Graduate employability, ‘soft skills’ versus ‘hard’ business knowledge: A European study. *Higher Education in Europe*, 33(4), 411–422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03797720802522627>
- Bhanot, S., & Gaikwad, S. R. (2025). Bridging the generational divide: Exploring communication preferences, workplace behaviour, and conflict resolution between Generation Z and Generation Alpha. *Asian and Pacific Economic Review*, 18(1), 1071–1082. <https://doi.org/10.65985/APER.2025669549>
- Bridgstock, R. (2009). The graduate attributes we’ve overlooked: Enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28(1), 31–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360802444347>

- Clarke, M. (2018). Rethinking graduate employability: The role of capital, individual attributes and context. *Studies in Higher Education*, 43(11), 1923–1937. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1294152>
- Gaikwad, S. R. (2021). Enhancement of English communication skills for employability of college and university students. *Vidyabharati International Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 13(1), 265–272. https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=KufjkiwAAAAJ&citation_for_view=KufjkiwAAAAJ:zYLM7Y9cAGgC
- Gaikwad, S. R. (2024). Role of artificial intelligence in smart manufacturing of automobile industry in India. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, 3178(1), 070012. <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0229368>
- García-Aracil, A., Monteiro, S., & Almeida, L. S. (2021). Students' perceptions of their preparedness for transition to work after graduation. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 22(1), 49–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787418791026>
- Jackson, D. (2015). Employability skill development in work-integrated learning: Barriers and best practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(2), 350–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.842221>
- Jackson, D. (2016). Re-conceptualising graduate employability: The importance of pre-professional identity. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 35(5), 925–939. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2016.1139551>
- Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780133892406>
- Lombardi, R., Secundo, G., & Dumay, J. (2021). Entrepreneurial universities and strategy: The case of higher education institutions. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 164, 120563. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120563>
- Mulder, M. (2017). Competence theory and research: A synthesis. In *Handbook of vocational education and training* (pp. 1071–1106). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49789-1_50
- Pang, E., Wong, M., Leung, C. H., & Coombes, J. (2019). Competencies for fresh graduates' success at work: Perspectives of employers. *Industry and Higher Education*, 33(1), 55–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950422218792333>
- Rasul, M. S., Rauf, R. A. A., Mansor, A. N., & Puvanasvaran, A. P. (2012). Employability skills assessment tool development. *International Education Studies*, 5(5), 43–56. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v5n5p43>
- Succi, C., & Canovi, M. (2020). Soft skills to enhance graduate employability: Comparing students and employers' perceptions. *Studies in Higher Education*, 45(9), 1834–1847. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1585420>
- Tomlinson, M. (2017). Forms of graduate capital and their relationship to graduate employability. *Education + Training*, 59(4), 338–352. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-05-2016-0090>
- Tran, T. T. (2015). Is graduate employability the 'whole-of-higher-education-issue'? *Journal of Education and Work*, 28(3), 207–227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2014.900167>
- Varghese, N. V., & Malik, G. (2016). *India higher education report 2015*. Routledge India. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315670957>
- Yorke, M. (2006). *Employability in higher education: What it is—What it is not*. Higher Education Academy. https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/id116_employability_in_higher_education_336.pdf