

Classroom to Career: A Study of Graduate Employability in Commerce

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ABSTRACT

India's education sector is undergoing significant reforms. The Education Policy 1986 aimed to improve opportunities and reduce disparities. Building on this, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) was introduced to transform India's education system, focusing on key areas such as curriculum, assessment, teacher eligibility, inclusive education, and research to meet 21st-century challenges. This study investigates how commerce education influence graduates' ability to find jobs. Many commerce graduates struggling to get employment, and this research aims to help policymakers, educators, and employers understand how to improve job prospects. The study has three main objectives: to see how commerce education influence employability, to identify key factors that influence job prospects, and to explore how institutional support and personal skills impact employment. This study also tested three ideas: that relevant coursework, institutional support, and personal skills/experience are crucial for getting hired. Study used surveys with commerce graduates, employers, and academics. 251 survey respondents' participants. analysis showed that relevant curriculum, institutional support, and personal skills are vital for getting hired. Employers want graduates with industry-relevant skills and practical experience. Study found that communication, teamwork, and internship experience are essential for job seekers. Based on these findings, this study suggest that institutions prioritize career services and internships, update coursework to match industry needs, and graduates develop key skills and seek practical experience. This study emphasizes the key role of commerce education, institutional support, and personal skills in enhancing graduate employability, bridging the education-employment gap and empowering commerce graduates for success.

Keywords: Commerce Education, Employability, Institutional Support, Personal Skills, Education-Employment Gap.

JEL Classification Code: I21: Analysis of Education, I23: Higher Education; Research Institutions, J24: Human Capital; Skills; Occupational Choice; Labor Productivity, J60: Mobility, Unemployment, and Vacancies: General J64: Unemployment: Models, Duration, Incidence, and Job Search

Introduction

The modern workforce demands skilled and potential professionals, but commerce graduates struggle to find jobs due to a growing gap between education and industry needs. To address this, it's crucial to understand the factors that improve graduate employability. This study focuses on four key areas: curriculum design, institutional support, support systems, and personal factors. By examining these areas, institutions, employers, and graduates can work together to enhance job prospects and

bridge the education-employment gap. This collaboration can create a smoother path from classroom to career, ultimately preparing commerce graduates for success in the modern workforce.

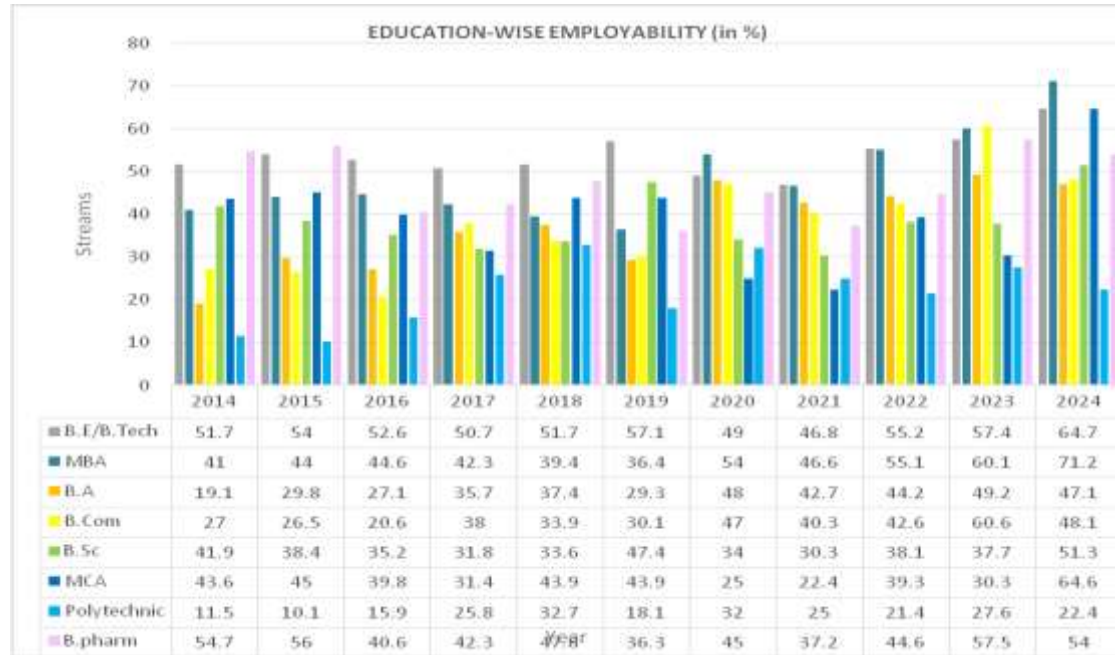


Figure 1

Source: <https://www.themirrorty.com/data/employability>.

Figure :1 Shows that the past decade has seen fluctuating employability rates across various courses. Particularly, the employability of B.E/B.Tech graduates as keep increased from 51.7% in 2014 to 64% in 2024. this increase indicates for tech experts in the economy; MBA graduates have consistency shows a good employability rate reached at 71.2% in 2024 highlighting the importance of management professionals. On the other hand, polytechnic graduates face challenges, with an employability rate of only 22.4% in 2024, despite a slight improvement from 10.1% in 2015. other course has mixed result, with for B.A graduate experienced a slight dip from 49.2% in 2022 to 47.1% in 2024, while MCA graduate remarkable comeback, surging from 22.4% in 2021 to 64.6% in 2024.

Factors Influencing on Employability

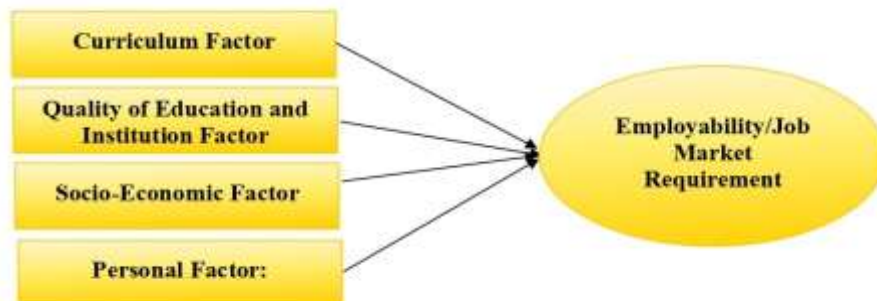


Figure 2

- **Curriculum Factor:**When educational frameworks are carefully designed to meet the needs of various stakeholders, they can Increase chances of employment. In other words, a well-design curriculum can make all the difference in helping students transition smoothly into their careers."
- **Quality of Education and Institution Factor:**The university has a strong reputation, high-quality teaching and learning materials, and excellent academic support, students are more likely to get better jobs. Because Graduating from a prestigious institution can catch an employer's attention.
- **Socio Economic Factor:** Factors like, education level, social class and income can all impact a student's ability to survive a job. For instance, students from lower-income backgrounds may face more challenges in Securing job openings, making it harder for them to get ahead.
- **Personal Factor:** Ultimately, an individual's skills, competencies, and experiences are important to their employability. Employers seek you have skills to do the job, as well as the ability to communicate effectively, work well in a team, and build good relationships. Prior employment, internships, and volunteer work can all be valuable experiences that can help you shine in a crowded job market.
- **Employment / Market Demand:** Employment refers to a graduate's ability to secure and maintain employment in their chosen field. Similarly, the skills, qualifications, ability and experience are the require for the job market's demands.

Key Challenges and Strategies for Business Students in the Modern Job Market

- **The Changing Job Market for Business Students**

Employers expect new hires to be skilled in digital bookkeeping, financial analysis, and data visualization. All of these are essential competency skills in the modern businessworld. Still, commerce students face many challenges when they venture into the job market, mainly the gap between academic courses and real industry work.

- **Challenges in Business Education**

The gap between academic curriculum and industry-specific skills is a considerable challenge. Colleges are not Effectively training students to fill positions that require specialized skills. The situation is tough enough, but the speed of technological change is making it even harder.

- **Bridging the Gap**

There is a need to change modern teaching systems to include digital and vocational skills. In added to that, practical training in the form of internships, project work, and case studies is also helpful to students. Such training is important for the students to implement theory with real life.

- **Practical Training and Collaborating with Industry Partners**

There is aimportant for colleges to work with businesses to provide work-integrated learning opportunities like internships, guest lectures, and employment opportunities, as well as mentorship and guidance to aid informed career decisions. Itprovides a shared advantages for both students and employers.

- **Student Action and Career Growth**

Professional networking is equally important. It can be achieved through networking, career fairs, and engaging with alumni. Fostering additional competencies such as data-driven decision-making, and leadership teaches students to be more competitive.

- **Remaining Well-Structured and Engaged**

Being aware of global and industry changes, as well as personal and skill development help students plan effectively and achieving their expected goals. This awareness provided a competitive edge in chasing aspirations.

- **Career Choice Influencing Elements**

Family, financial aids and constraints, as well as geographical situation are the socio-economical elements influence career choices. Such elements can be addressed to the business scholarships and other financial support and allocated funds.

Literature Review

Alfalah, S. F. (2022)¹ Employability skills predict career success. Soft skills are crucial. Career development programs should prioritize these skills. **Khan, R. A. (2022)**² Soft skills enhance employability. Effective communication and teamwork are essential. Education and training programs should focus on soft skills. **Patel, A. (2022)**³ Graduate employability requires key skills. Graduate attributes and employability skills are crucial. Higher education institutions must prioritize these skills. **Rai, A. (2022)**⁴ Career guidance enhances employability. Career counsellors play a vital role. Career guidance programs should be widely available. **Singh, A. (2022)**⁵ AI enhances employability through personalized learning. AI-based education and training programs are effective. Limitations and challenges must be addressed. **Trevor, J. (2013)**⁶ Teamwork and collaboration are essential workplace skills. Team-building programs enhance teamwork. Effective teamwork improves workplace success. **Bridgstock, R. (2016)**⁷ Graduate attributes predict employability. Higher education institutions must prioritize graduate attributes. Employability skills are crucial. **Raven et al. (2023)**⁸ investigated the potential of AI in enhancing employability, highlighting its ability to provide personalized learning pathways. This study demonstrates the potential of AI in enhancing employability. **Smith et al. (2015)**⁹ examined the employability skills required in commerce education, emphasizing the importance of technology literacy. This study underscores the need for commerce graduates to possess relevant technology skills. **Patel et al. (2014)**¹⁰ conducted a systematic review of graduate employability, identifying key factors influencing employability outcomes. This review highlights the complexity of employability and the need for a multifaceted approach. **Singh et al. (2022)** Researchers explored the role of experiential learning in developing employability skills. Their study highlighted its potential to enhance soft skills and practical knowledge. **Kumar et al. (2022)** These researchers investigated the relationship between curriculum relevance and employment outcomes. They clearly stated that commerce education must align with industry requirements. Furthermore, they demonstrated that curriculum relevance significantly impacts employability outcomes.

Research Gaps

Employability skills in curriculum is very crucial in commerce education in Karnataka. There is research gap regarding challenges for students employability integrated in curriculum. There are several studies have been conducted and identified that there several reasons to integrate the employability skills concepts in curriculum. The literature review found that there is long term benefits and long-term effective by this integration on student's development. The long term benefits such as practical skills like communication and problem-solving are often overlooked, decision-making skills are to be enhanced. Addressing the research gap through comprehensive study will hold the evidence to conduct further research in this area. This study is very relevant in present circumstances and present technology era.

Significance of the Study

There are several ways to enhance the skills of commerce students as well as others students. The important responsibility of education system is to develop the students for the present and future conditions in global market. The policy makers of education sector must provide insights through curriculum formation with inclusive methodology of skills enhancement concepts. This research study addresses the social concern by promoting social and economic growth through potential skilled workforce. This research is very significant to develop comprehensive research framework on employability skills. The present study can through insights on design and requirement of curriculum and standardised policy for students and institutions.

Objectives

- This study examines the relevance and quality of commerce education curriculum in relation to job market requirements.
- The impact of institutional focus on employability on graduates' job prospects will be investigated.
- The role of support systems, including teachers, friends, and neighbours, in enhancing graduates' skills and employability will be analysed.
- To investigate the relationship between personal factors and job availability among commerce graduates.

Hypothesis

- H₁:** There is a significant positive relationship between commerce education curriculum relevance and job market requirements.
- H₀:** There is no significant relationship between commerce education curriculum relevance and job market requirements.
- H₁:** Institutional focus on employability has a significant positive impact on graduates' job prospects.
- H₀:** Institutional focus on employability does not have a significant impact on graduates' job prospects.
- H₁:** Support systems (teachers, friends, neighbours) significantly enhance graduates' skills and employability.
- H₀:** Support systems do not significantly enhance graduates' skills and employability.
- H₁:** Personal factors have a significant positive correlation with job availability among commerce graduates.
- H₀:** There is no significant correlation between personal factors and job availability among commerce graduates.

Research methodology

Research Design

- Descriptive research aims to describe and summarize the characteristics of a population or phenomenon

Data Collection Methods

- Survey questionnaire: Online, targeting commerce graduates, employers, and academics.

Population and Sample

- **Population:** Commerce graduates, employers, and academics from selected institutions.
- **Sample size:** 251 survey respondents
- **Sampling strategy:** convenience sampling.

Data Analysis

- **Descriptive statistics:** Summarizing survey data (means, frequencies).
- **Inferential statistics:** Analysing relationships between variables (correlation) to test hypotheses.

Table 1: Analysis and interpretation

Demographic Profile					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	99	39.4	39.4	39.4
	Female	152	60.6	60.6	100
	Total	251	100	100	
Present occupation	Private Sector	62	24.7	24.7	24.7
	Government sector	20	8	8	32.7
	Temporary Work	23	9.2	9.2	41.8
	Unemployed	146	58.2	58.2	100
	Total	251	100	100	
Family members	Farmers	163	64.9	64.9	64.9
	Business	26	10.4	10.4	75.3
	Government employee	11	4.4	4.4	79.7
	Private Company Employee	14	5.6	5.6	85.3
	Any other	27	10.8	10.8	96
	Depends on my job	10	4	4	100

	Total	251	100	100	
Qualification	B. Com	152	60.6	60.6	60.6
	M.Com	99	39.4	39.4	100
	Total	251	100	100	

Source: Primary Data

Table:1 reveals that, The sample consists of 251 respondents, with 39.4% (99) being male and 60.6% (152) being female. This indicates that the sample has a slightly higher proportion of females. In terms of present occupation, the majority of respondents (58.2%, 146) are unemployed. This is a significant proportion, indicating that many respondents are currently without a job. The remaining respondents are employed in various sectors, including private (24.7%, 62), government (8%, 20), and temporary work (9.2%, 23). The family members' occupation reveals that the majority of respondents (64.9%, 163) come from farming backgrounds. This is followed by business owners (10.4%, 26), government employees (4.4%, 11), private company employees (5.6%, 14), and others (10.8%, 27). In terms of qualification, the majority of respondents (60.6%, 152) hold a B. Com degree, while 39.4% (99) hold an M. Com degree.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.879	0.894	25

As evident from Table:2 The reliability statistics indicate a high level of internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.879). This suggests that the instrument is measuring the intended construct consistently. The standardized Cronbach's Alpha (0.894) further confirms the reliability of the instrument. With 25 items, the instrument demonstrates good reliability. Overall, the results indicate that the instrument is reliable for measuring the intended construct.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	Curriculum	Quality Of Education Institution	Socio Economic Factor	Personal Factor	Job Availability Factor
Valid (N)	251	251	251	251	251
Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	7.5618	8.5060	8.2470	8.8247	8.0677
Median	8.0000	8.0000	8.0000	9.0000	8.0000
Mode	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00
Std. Deviation	1.83062	2.06179	2.25627	2.08642	1.95125
Minimum	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Maximum	14.00	16.00	16.00	15.00	15.00

Table: 3 Indicates that, The Curriculum statistics indicate a moderate level of satisfaction, with a mean score of 7.56. The SD 1.83 suggests moderate variability in responses, indicating that some respondents may have had concerns about the curriculum. The Quality of Education Institution statistics reveals a high level of satisfaction, with a mean of 8.51. The SD 2.06 suggests moderate to high variability in responses, indicating that some respondents may have had differing opinions about the quality of education. The Socio-Economic Factor statistics show a moderate to high level of satisfaction, with a mean value of 8.25. The high standard deviation of 2.26 indicates high variability in responses, suggesting that respondents may have had differing opinions about the impact of socio-economic factors on their career prospects. The Personal Factor statistics indicate a high level of satisfaction, with a mean score of 8.82. The SD 2.09 suggests moderate to high variability in responses, indicating that some respondents may have had differing opinions about the importance of personal factors. The Job Availability Factor statistics reveal a moderate to high level of satisfaction, with a mean score of 8.07. The SD1.95 suggests moderate variability in responses, indicating that some respondents may have had concerns about job availability.

Table 4: Correlation between Curriculum Relevance and Job Availability Factor

		Curriculum	Job Availability Factor
curricula	Pearson Correlation	1	0.127*
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		0.044
	N	251	251
Job availability factor	Pearson Correlation	0.127*	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	0.044	
	N	251	251

*. Correlation Is Significant at the 0.05 Level (2-Tailed).

As presented in Table: 4 This study investigated the relationship between commerce education curriculum relevance and job market requirements. The results support the alternative hypothesis (H1), indicating a significant positive correlation between curriculum relevance and job availability ($r = 0.127$, $p = 0.044$). Although the correlation is weak, it suggests that as curriculum relevance increases, job availability tends to increase. The statistically significant correlation ($p < 0.05$) indicates that there is a significant relationship between commerce curriculum (UG level) and job market requirements. However, the weak correlation coefficient ($r = 0.127$) suggests that other factors also influence job availability.

Table 5: Correlation between Quality of Education Institution and Job Availability Factor

		Job Availability Factor	Quality Of Education Institution
Job Availability Factor	Pearson Correlation	1	0.322**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	251	251
Quality Of Education Institution	Pearson Correlation	0.322**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	251	251

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table:5 Highlights that, this study examined the impact of institutional focus on employability on graduates' job prospects. The results strongly support the alternative hypothesis (H1), indicating a significant positive correlation between institutional focus on employability and job availability ($r = 0.322$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that institutions prioritizing employability significantly enhance graduates' job prospects. The statistically significant correlation ($p < 0.001$) confirms that the relationship is very significant. The moderate correlation coefficient ($r = 0.322$) implies a substantial positive impact of institutional focus on employability.

Table 6: Correlation between Socio Economic Factor and Job Availability Factor

		Socio Economic Factor	Job Availability Factor
Socio Economic Factor	Pearson Correlation	1	0.291**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	251	251
Job Availability Factor	Pearson Correlation	0.291**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	251	251

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As demonstrated in Table: 6 This study examined the role of support systems in enhancing graduates' skills and employability. The results strongly support the alternative hypothesis (H1), indicating a significant positive correlation between socio-economic factors (including support systems) and job availability ($r = 0.291$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that support systems, such as teachers, friends, and neighbours, play a crucial role in enhancing graduates' skills and employability. The statistically significant correlation ($p < 0.001$) confirms that the relationship is very significant. The moderate correlation coefficient ($r = 0.291$) implies a substantial positive impact of support systems.

Table 7: Correlation between Personal Factor and Job Availability Factor

		Personal Factor	Job Availability Factor
Personal Factor	Pearson Correlation	1	0.502**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		0.000
	N	251	251
Job Availability Factor	Pearson Correlation	0.502**	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	0.000	
	N	251	251

** . Correlation Is Significant at the 0.01 Level (2-Tailed).

According to Table :7, The study identified a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.502$) between personal factors and job availability for commerce graduates. This significant relationship ($p < 0.001$) highlights the crucial role personal attributes, skills, and experiences play in securing employment. Effective communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills significantly enhance graduates' employability. The correlation's statistical significance ($p < 0.001$). This evidenced that there is significant relationship between personal factors and job availability for commerce graduates.

Findings

- The education of commerce students is just behind engineering-based educations, meaning that the students' skills and personal development is directly correlated with curriculum. The study of this matter shows that transcendental employability opportunities are influenced by curriculum design. The persistent evolution of curriculum with sophisticated, technical, and skill-based subjects is a boon that allows students to compete confidently in the global job market. Today, competencies and skills are increasingly more important than grades.
- This study demonstrates how there is a direct correlation between the institutional support and concentration to forge opportunities focused on employability for the graduates. Financially focused, employability is the focal point of every academic institution in providing opportunities to their graduates. The institution provides students with Real-time simulated scenarios based on prospective occupations.
- The study supports the claim that help systems are crucial to a graduate's skill development and employability. Having the backing of family and community greatly improves a graduate's job prospects. Along with family and community support, this system provides timely guidance, resources, encouragement with a strong sense of community and motivation. The help systems also tend to the graduate's emotional, financial, and professional support, fostering well-rounded development.
- The research established a strong positive relationship in personal factors such as a graduate's Communication skills, Teamwork, along with their education level, gained Skills, and any previous Experiences and work opportunities available to them. How well one communicates, works as a team, and solves problems also greatly improves a graduate's chances of being employed. This relationship underscores why such skills should be emphasized.

Suggestions

- "Commerce curriculum must teach practical skills and technical knowledge to help students get opportunity. Update the courses frequently to match global market needs. Focus on skills, not just grades. This will help students succeed in the job market."
- Institute should support students to develop employability skills and create real-world learning experiences matching market requirements. Focus on skills, not just academics. This helps graduates get hired.
- Institutions play a significant role in enhancing graduate employability and holistic development of education system. To achieve this, they should provide comprehensive support through mentorship programs with industry experts integration, networking opportunities like alumni events and job fairs, and career counselling services. Community partnerships offering internships, job shadowing, and employment opportunities are also crucial. Additionally,

emotional and financial support services should be available to address graduates' overall well-being.

- Commerce graduates, enhance career readiness by developing key skills, with effective communication skill and teamwork are important for success. graduates can enhance their skills through training, courses, and hands-on experience, this will increase their employability and career growth opportunities.

Conclusion

Commerce education plays a important role in preparing graduates for the workforce. Our research points out four key areas that make a difference: curriculum design, institutional support, support systems, and personal factors. To reduce the gap between education and employment, institutions need to focus on practical skills, technical knowledge, and skills development. This means continuously updating course materials to match industry needs, providing mentorship, networking opportunities, and career guidance. collaboration with local businesses can also make a big difference, offering students internships, job shadowing, and job opportunities. In collaborative effort employers, institutions, and graduates can increase employability and career potential. Institutions should make sure their courses are suitable to industry needs and provide real-world learning experiences. Employers should look for skills and personal qualities when hiring. Graduates should focus on acquiring key proficiencies valuable skills, networking, and finding mentors. Ultimately, this Joint effort will help commerce education better meet industry needs, producing graduates with the skills they need to thrive in the modern workplace

Limitations

- The scope of the study is restricted by the small participant pool
- The study's applicability is geographically restricted to Karnataka
- The study's findings are based solely on self-reported survey data, which could be subject to reporting biases

Scope for Future Research

- Future research should investigate the career progression of commerce graduates over an extended period.
- Conducting a comparative analysis of Workforce preparation among commerce graduates from various universities.
- Future studies should investigate the development and specific competency, such as digital marketing skills, among commerce graduates.
- A study could investigate how the integration of technology in commerce education affects graduate employability.
- Analysing the correlation between participation in extracurricular activities and enhanced employability.

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