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Employability and Higher Education in India: An Empirical Analysis of Uttar Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Uttar Pradesh is one of the highest youth populated state of India and the greater challenge of the state is to prepare our larger lot of the educated graduates from the common education streams for the emerging skills requirements of employable youth. The key objective of the present paper is to explore the common perception of higher education graduates about their education for their realistic lives and also investigate the relationship between higher education and employability in Uttar Pradesh. Employability in higher education graduates is a key concept and often used to assess the quality of the university provision; in spite of that employability and employment are the two different concepts. The study is based on secondary as well as primary evidences of employability. The present paper tries to builds a conceptual understanding of employability, relating to definition and measurement and model of employability along with evolving higher education system in Uttar Pradesh. The discussion reveals that the system of higher education in Uttar Pradesh has been changed gradually from government higher institution to private higher education institutions. The evidence also indicates that the traditional education/ program are being transferred towards skill, value added and employability programme/ courses. Moreover, there is a gap between employers' expectation for higher education and the government's employability programme. The study suggested that education system in the state must engage its strength for the expansion of higher education system and fuel structural reforms in employment and employability directions. In this direction, career guidance, placement cell, work experience training, training of new skills development program etc. should be provided by the higher education institutions to the students for enhance the employability.

Keywords: Employability, Higher education, Employment, Student perception, Uttar Pradesh

INTRODUCTION

The education system and skills are the key foundation elements of the nation's economic growth and global leadership. Qualified and skilled human capital leads to the overall development of the economy. The current economic challenges worldwide are forcing employers to seek competent human resource (Khare, 2019). In an economy, there is a strong correlation between endowment of skilled labour and its ability to generate higher levels of gross domestic product (GDP) per worker. Many countries are facing economic challenges at the moment and hence immense pressure is now being put on higher education to produce quality graduates that can turn around economies with their specialised knowledge and skills (Fallows and Steven, 2000).

Employability skills are those basic skills which are necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job (Robinson, 2000). Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST, 2004) defines employability skills as skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions.

The world is changing tremendously in terms of technological development; companies are mushrooming like never before and thus most work needs to operate globally in order for the organization to survive in this immense competition and dynamic environment. This situation makes mandatory for both the employers and the employees, especially higher education graduates, to get themselves equipped with highly advanced technological, management and communication skills to compete in this global arena (Jailani *et al*., 2005). The two greatest concerns of employers today are finding competent employees and to train them as per their requirement. The difference between the skills needed on the job and those possessed by Fresh Graduates, called the Employability Skills Gap, is of real concern to the employers looking to hire competent employees. Employers prefer to hire people who are trained and ready to go to work; otherwise, they have to provide the specialized, job-specific training necessary for those lacking skills. Hence, a more flexible workforce with advanced technical skills coupled with well-developed generic skills such as creative thinking, problem-solving and analytical ability is greatly needed in order to meet the challenges faced in the business.

The concept and the employability measurement are given in the following charts:

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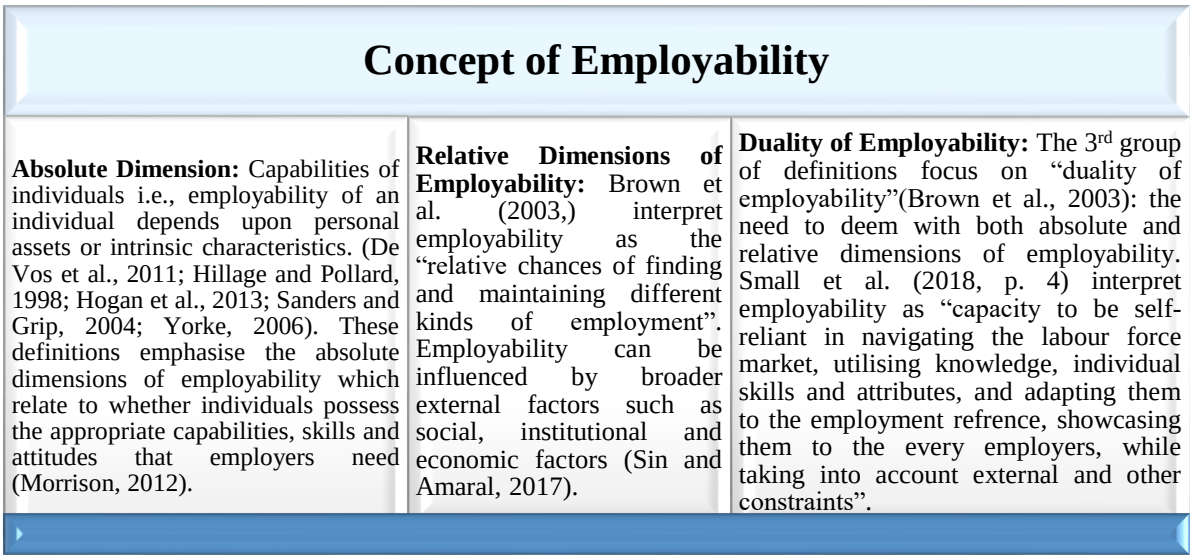

Figure1: *Concept of Employability*

Employability: Generally, employability can be categorised into three major groups of academician. The first group of academician emphasises the capabilities of individuals (De Vos et al., 2011; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Hogan et al., 2013; Sanders and Grip, 2004; Yorke, 2006). The second groups of academician description drew attention to the relative dimensions of employability. For instance, Brown et al. (2003) construe employability as the "relative chances of finding and maintaining different kinds of employment". The third group of academician emphasise the "duality of employability" viz., the need to understand both absolute and relative dimensions of employability(Brown et al., 2003).According to Yorke (2006) "*employability is a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations*".

Measuring Employability: The lack of one decided definition of employability of higher education has led to various approaches offered to measure employability. European Council adopts a standard which conceives employability as the per cent of graduates employed between 20 and 34 years old three years after graduation, at 82 per cent or above (Christelle and Margarida, 2014). The methods of measurement of employability as per European Council are given in below chart:

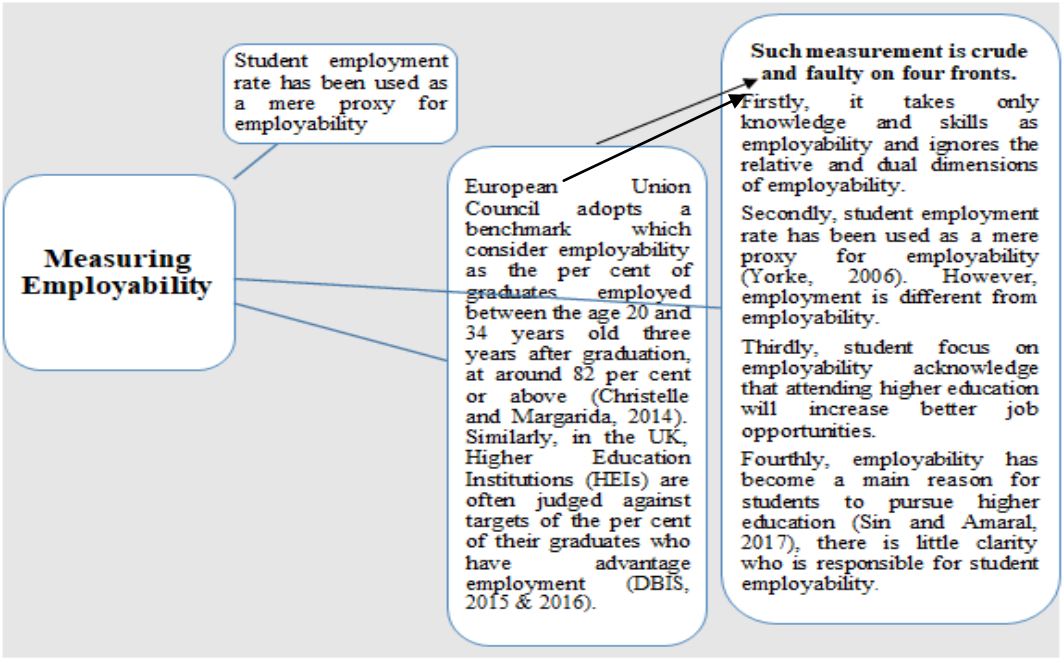

Figure 2: *Author Construct of Measurement of Employability*

Models of Graduate Employability: A number of studies have led to the development of various models of graduate employability that include the elements discussed relating to employability. Fugate et al. (2004) depict employability in their Heuristic model (Figure 3) that "*employability embodies a synergistic combination of career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital.*" Therefore, an individual's employability in higher education system subsumes a host of person-centred and psycho-social constructs, or else characteristics that foster adaptive cognition and actions. The present study tries to include some other dimensions viz., personal soft skills, functional technical skills, positive approach, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy in the model for sustainable employability

Figure 3: Heuristic Model of Employability in Higher Education

Employability of graduates is a significant factor in determining the success of higher education effort in country as well as in Uttar Pradesh (Khare, 2014). In this context, it needs to be understood that role of higher education or for that matter education at all levels in inculcating human values to build democratic civil societies is very important and obvious. These aspects need to be integrated with education at all levels through New Education Policy-2020. Higher education system trains people to take up diverse economic roles in society and spurs technological innovation that determines economic growth of the nation. It is important that the country's capacity in higher education is aligned to the demand for skills from the economy, which would include the demand for teachers from the education system itself. Since higher education itself cannot create jobs; a mismatch between the demand and the supply of quality and number of graduates would lead to unemployed graduates and / or a shortage of graduates with certain kind of skills.

At the present scenario, more than 50.0 per cent of the total Indian population is under the age of 25. It is expected that about one million people will look for jobs to be a part of the work force over the next 10 years. If these people fail to acquire productive skills and become a part of country's work force then it will affect the stability and efficiency of the economy. In case of UP, population of the state was 16.62 crores as per 2001 Census which rose to 19.98 crores during 2011 Census and in next census, it is expected to be around 20 crores. In the present era literacy and skill development are considered to be one of the most dominant indicators of the socio-economic development of a region, state or the country. Uttar Pradesh is found to be one of the states in the country where rate of literacy is recorded lower at higher education level. The State of Uttar Pradesh is scattered with high quality higher education institutions.

Students' perception also plays an important role in evolving the higher education system and thus we cannot be ignored as students are an important pillar of the education system. Students' perceptions towards education are influenced by their diverse academic and cultural backgrounds. Taking into consideration the fact that students potentially help in the growth of the economy, there is a need to analyse their responses with regards to their stand on the present scenario of their respective place of study coupled with taking remedial measures in order to plug the loopholes. The suggestions will come from the student fraternity can help to improve the education system to a great extent in the state. It is in this context, the present paper made an attempt to collate the students' perception about employability in order to come up with a true picture of the higher education system in Uttar Pradesh. The major objectives of the present paper are to discuss the evolution of higher education system in Uttar Pradesh and also analysis the trends and patterns of various components in higher education system. This study also discusses the concept, measurement and model of employability. Moreover, the present study tries to analysis the students

perceptions about employability, employability skill gap, on campus/ off campus employability support and identify institutional barriers on Employability in higher education with the help primary data.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on both database viz., primary and secondary database. The secondary database has been retrieved from All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India. The primary information has been collected through the structured student's questionnaire and students are the units of investigation for primary database. In order to analyse the student perception about employability in higher education, a survey was conducted in Uttar Pradesh across two universities viz., one public and one private and four colleges (public and private 2 each).A total sample of 400 students was surveyed with the help of a structured questionnaire. Some statistical technique has been used for the analysing the database.

RESULT DISCUSSION

Evolution of Higher Education System in Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh higher education system depends on speedy wheels of social transformation that faced change with time, way of living, and structure of society. Uttar Pradesh higher education system depends on speedy wheels of social transformation that faced change with time, way of living, and structure of society. It is essential to backtrack ancient and medieval era which exhibit Gurukuls in Vedic times, where children/students were admitted from childhood after performing vidya prarambh sanskar and they stay in Gurukuls till completion of education till the 25 years for tracing the development of higher education system in the state. Ancient education system at higher level was also provided to students by religious priest known as rishi – munis. After the gurukuls system evolution process higher education move towards the rise of Buddhism, where monasteries and vihars were centre of education system in India to provide higher education in subjects of medicine, military science, religion, philosophy. Higher education system in Uttar Pradesh has gradually evolved from the gurukul system to Mughal era system, where Madarsa system became the important medium for the publicity of education. Moreover, Christian missionaries played an incredible role in evolution of the education system from primary to higher education. The processes of evolution of higher education in Uttar Pradesh are shown in Figure 4.

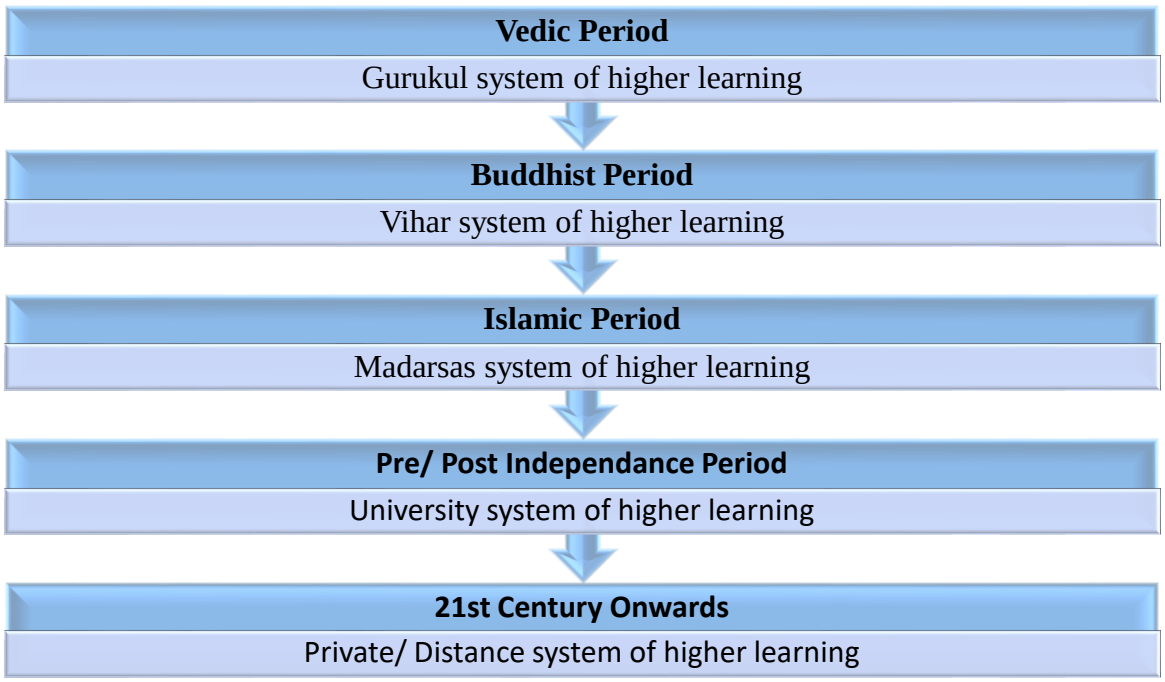

Figure 4: Author's construct the Process of Evolution of Higher Education System in Uttar Pradesh

Performance of Higher Education System in Uttar Pradesh and India

The procedure of development of higher education system in Uttar Pradesh is highly credible on state government, socio- religious groups, and private sector to play their crucial role in growth of higher education system as well as economic development. In this direction Uttar Pradesh government has setup various universities, and plays vital role in granting scholarship to students. At all India level, enrolment in higher education increases to 4.14 crore, crossing the

4.0crore mark for first time; increase of 7.5 per cent from 2019-20 and 21 per cent from 2014-15 and female enrolment reaches 2.0 crore mark, increase of 13.0 Lakh from 2019-20 (AISHE-2021). It is also found from AISHE-2021 that Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Telangana and Kerala are the top 10 States in terms of number of colleges and the top 6 states in terms of student enrolment are UP, Maharashtra, TN, MP, Karnataka and Rajasthan. The results of All India survey on higher education AISHE 2020-21 of Uttar Pradesh as well as India are presented in Table 1.AISHE-2021 report of Ministry of Education, found that there are84 universities in Uttar Pradesh, out of 1113 universities at all India level which makes to 7.55 per cent of the total share of universities. Uttar Pradesh (rank 2nd) succeeded Rajasthan (rank 1st) when compared according to number of universities in State. The state stood at 1st rank with 8114 colleges (18.53per cent) in the state out of 43796 colleges in India. There were 32 colleges per Lakh population in Uttar Pradesh, which is below par national average (31 colleges per Lakh population). There were 13 states preceding Uttar Pradesh when it comes to no. of colleges per Lakh capita. On an average 4980913 (17.59per cent) students were enrolled in colleges in Uttar Pradesh out of 28311559 students at all India level. According to the report, Uttar Pradesh ranked 2nd in terms of enrolment in colleges. Similarly 6,31,538 (13.39per cent) students were enrolled in postgraduate courses and 28,20,340(16.84per cent) were enrolled in graduate courses out of 47,16,649 and 1,67,47,674 students respectively. Gross Enrolment Ratio was found to be 23.2 for Uttar Pradesh (ranked at 24) which is below national average of 27.3. With regards to Gender Parity Index, Uttar Pradesh is positioned at 18th place with 1.09 score as compared to 1.05 score at national level. The pupil teacher ratio (PTR) in Uttar Pradesh is 38 students per teacher as compared to national average of 27. The rank of Uttar Pradesh is 32 out of 36 states in terms of PTR. The rank of Uttar Pradesh in terms of average enrolment, number of colleges per Lakh population, GER, GPI and PTR is not satisfactory as compared to other frontier states of India. Therefore, there is need to improve these parameters of higher education in Uttar Pradesh, to uplift the quality standards of higher education system and to make it more employability oriented.

Table 1: **Parameters of Higher Education Status in Uttar Pradesh and India: AISHE 2020-21**

Parameters	**Uttar Pradesh**	**Rank**	**All India**
No. of Universities	84 (7.55)	2	1113 (100.0)
No. of Colleges	8114 (18.53)	1	43796 (100.0)
No. of Colleges per Lakh Population	32	14	31
Average Enrolment	614	17	646
Enrolment in Colleges	4980913 (17.59)	2	28311559 (100.0)
Enrolment in Post Graduate	631538 (13.39)	1	4716649 (100.0)
Enrolment in Graduate	2820340 (16.84)	1	16747674 (100.0)
Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)	23.2	24	27.3
Gender Parity Index (GPI)	1.09	18	1.05
Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)	38	32/36	27

Note: Parenthesis () indicates Share of Uttar Pradesh in all India

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE-2020-21), Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India

Figure 5 depicts the trends of average enrolment per college in Uttar Pradesh and India. From the Figure it can be perceived that there is gradual fall in Average Enrolment per college at all India level. In 2016-17, the average enrolment at India level was 659; however, it fell to 646 in a span of 5 years (2016-2021). In case of Uttar Pradesh, the average enrolment showed a drastic decline from 776 to 614 during the time period 2016-2021. This significant decline in average enrolment in Uttar Pradesh indicates serious loopholes in imparting quality education to the students. This signifies that there is an urgent need on the part of government to address this shortcoming by introducing various job-oriented, industry-ready, skill imparting and value enhancing courses so as to improve the average enrolment in Uttar Pradesh. At pan India and state level, deviations from the projected average enrolment should be addressed to increase the number of average enrolment in colleges. The quality enhancing and skill imparting courses would improve the enrolment ratio and will help students to grab more employment opportunities.

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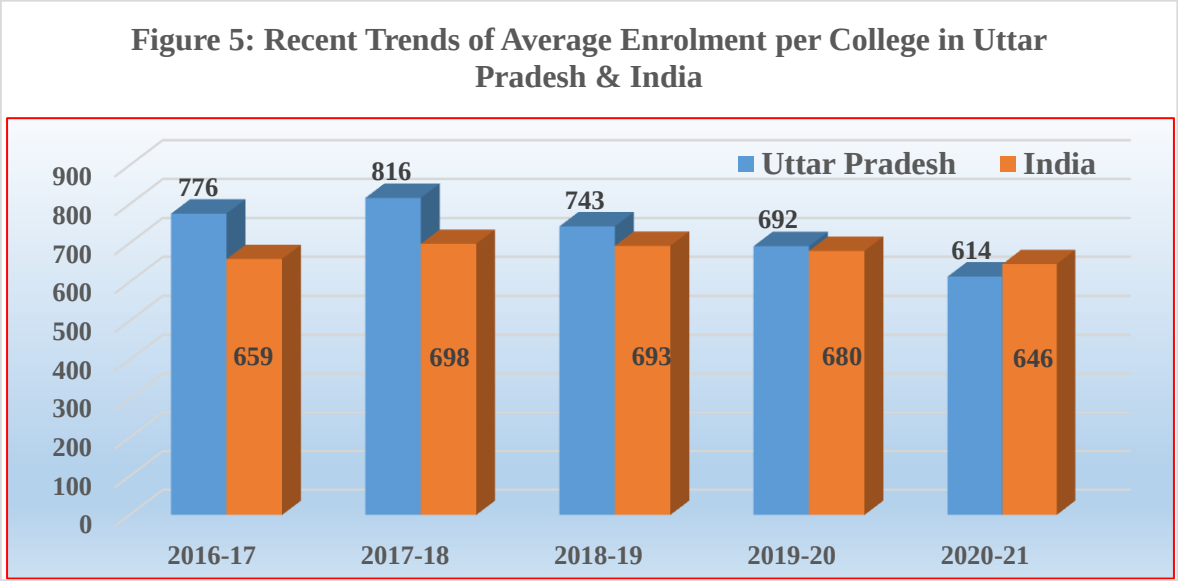
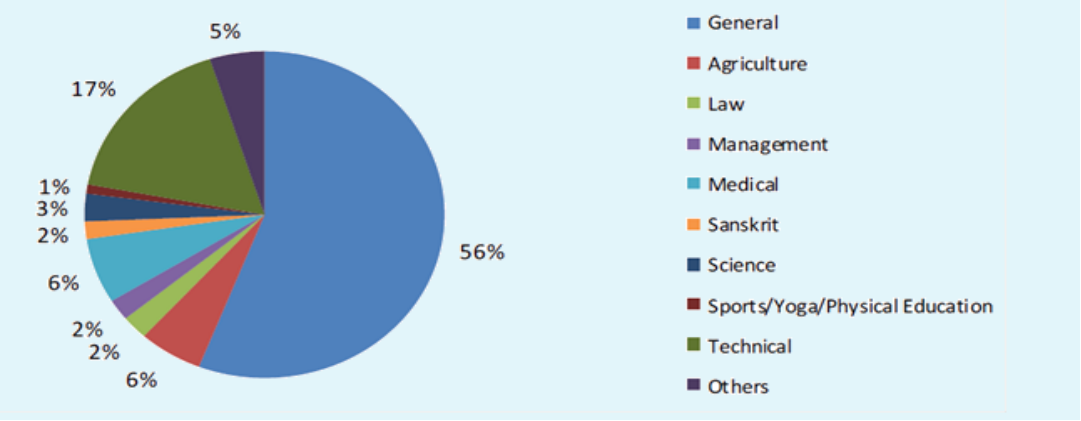


Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE-2020-21), Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India

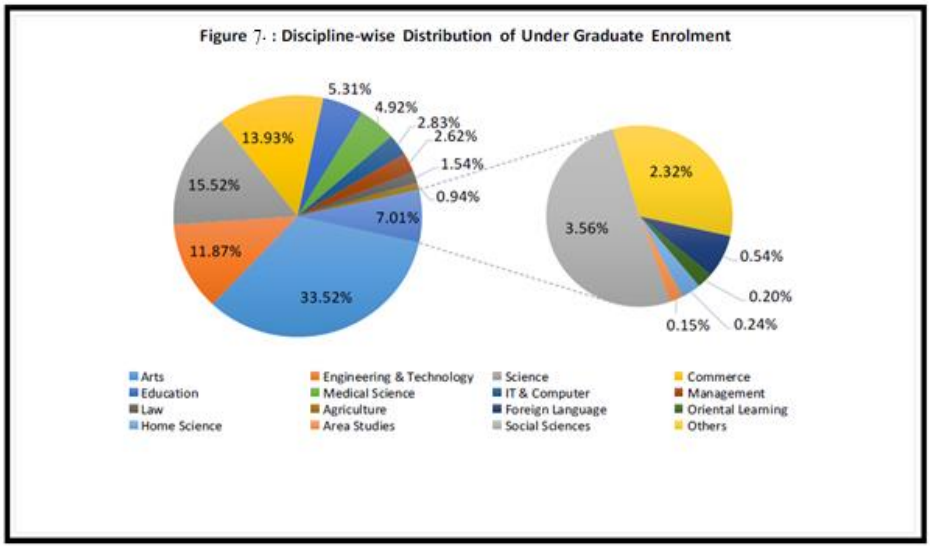
Figure 6 represents the percentage of distribution of responding universities as per specialisation in India. 56 per cent universities are of general nature, 17per cent universities are technical, 6.0 per cent medical, 6.0 per cent agriculture, 5.0 per cent management and 3.0per cent other. The result concluded that the share of universities offering professional and management courses is far from satisfactory level. The majority of the universities offer courses which are general in nature. These types of courses does not make students job oriented. In an economy like India where the service sector is growing at a faster pace, it is expected and required for universities to make skill enhancing and service oriented courses available to the students. When the share of specialised and professional courses will increase than only the students become more skilled and employment opportunities will increase. There is an eminent need to establish new universities and courses which are aligned with the goal of increasing the employability of students, simultaneously decreasing employability gap.

Figure 6 shows thePercentage of distribution of Responding Universities as per Specialisation in India



Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE-2020-21), Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India

Figure 7 depicts the discipline-wise distribution of under graduate enrolment at national level. As per the data, highest numbers of students are enrolled in Arts courses (33.52 per cent), followed by Science (15.52 per cent), Commerce (13.93 per cent) and Engineering and Technology (11.87per cent). The courses with least number of students enrolled are Area studies (0.15per cent), Oriental learning (0.20per cent) and foreign languages (0.54 per cent). This indicates that student's enrolment is not aligned with the current requirement of the secondary and tertiary sector especially corporate and private enterprises. To fill this void government should focus more on industry oriented curriculum and more importantly on the development of placement capacity in educational institutions. This might increase the employability among students of higher educational institutions.



Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE-2020-21), Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India

Student's Perception about Employability in UP: Evidences from Primary Survey

Table 2 shows the job industry preferences among the students during the study period in Uttar Pradesh higher education. The table reveals the industries preferred by the students for pursuing a job in the future.

Table 2: Student's Response about Job Industry Preference in Future

Options/ Student's Opinion	1st preference		2nd preference		3rd preference	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture and Allied Activities	1.98	1.48	0.50	0.89	0.00	1.18
Manufacturing and Production	19.80	3.55	2.97	1.33	1.49	2.36
Social Services (Health and Sanitation)	11.88	17.73	1.49	0.89	0.50	2.51
Financial Services	32.18	34.42	9.90	6.06	0.99	1.77
IT/ITES	4.46	7.09	3.47	3.40	4.95	0.74
Education/Training/Research	17.33	26.00	4.46	6.06	2.48	2.51
Travel/Tourism/Entertainment	5.94	4.58	0.99	0.74	2.48	1.62
Any Other	6.44	5.17	1.49	0.30	0.99	0.30
No Response Given	0.00	0.00	74.75	80.35	86.14	87.00

Sources: *Author's calculations based on primary survey database*

In the job industry preference, students' first job industry preference was financial services with 32.18per cent of males and 34.42 per cent of females respectively preferring it, followed by manufacturing and production as the second option in the preference of an industry. On the second place 19.80 per cent of males while 26.0 per cent females preferred education/training/research. The percentage figures depicting preferences faded along the second preference as more than half of the students preferred not giving any response for the same during the study period.

Table 3: UG & PG Student's Response about Job Industry Preference in Future

Options/ Student's Opinion	1st preference		2nd preference		3rd preference	
	PG	UG	PG	UG	PG	UG
Agriculture and Allied Activities	2.08	1.41	1.25	0.63	1.67	0.63
Manufacturing and Production	12.50	5.32	2.92	1.25	1.67	2.35
Social Services (Health and Sanitation)	10.00	18.78	1.25	0.94	2.50	1.88
Financial Services	33.75	33.96	6.25	7.20	1.25	1.72
IT/ITES	7.92	5.95	3.33	3.44	1.67	1.72

Education/Training/Research	23.33	24.26	7.08	5.16	3.75	2.03
Travel/Tourism/Entertainment	6.25	4.38	0.83	0.78	5.42	0.47
Any Other	4.17	5.95	0.42	0.63	0.42	0.47
No Response Given	0.00	0.00	76.67	79.97	81.67	88.73

Sources: *Author's calculations based on primary survey database*

Table 3 represents UG/PG student's response about job industry preference in future in the selected universities and colleges. Across level of study as well, a similar pattern was witnessed in the job industry preferences as was seen across gender. While 33.75per cent of PG students had financial services industry as their first preference, 33.96per cent of the UG students preferred the same as their first preference. The industry preferences however waned across the second preference as majority of both UG and PG graduates preferred giving a no response. Thus, results based on the primary survey indicate that across level of study, students prefer financial services as possible future job industry.

Table 4:Student's Response Regarding Efforts for Job Market along Level of Study

Options/ Student's Opinion	**1st preference**		**2nd preference**		**3rd preference**	
	PG	**UG**	**PG**	**UG**	**PG**	**UG**
Joined special/ skill development course	44.17	34.27	13.33	7.67	15.83	15.34
Company Internship	27.50	10.64	33.75	39.59	11.67	13.77
Summer Schools	1.25	4.38	6.67	8.61	3.75	7.36
Though case study/assignments/ projects as part of course curriculum	9.17	12.99	14.17	8.29	4.58	7.98
Computer Course	14.58	24.41	20.42	25.20	27.50	24.26
Field/ Educational trips	3.33	6.57	11.25	9.55	31.67	22.69
Any other (please specify)	0.00	4.38	0.00	0.00	3.75	1.72
No response given	0.00	2.35	0.42	1.10	1.25	6.89

Sources: *Author's calculations based on primary survey database*

Across level of study, we see that in the first preference, 44.17 per cent PG students and 34.27 per cent UG students made efforts to join a special/ skill development course before entering the job market followed by 27.50 per cent PG students opting company internship and 24.41 per cent UG students opting computer course respectively as their second option. The second preference was however towards company internship among both UG and PG students. Thus, the result shows that across level of study i.e., UG and PG, students believe in making efforts towards joining a special skill development course only.

The important part student's survey was relating to self rating skills, which was the most challenges task for the student during survey. The results of self rating skills for employability are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Student's Response about Self Rating Skills for Employability (in per cent)

Variables	**Excellent**	**Very Good**	**Average/ Neutral**	**Good**	**Poor**
Academic Excellence	20.02	33.11	27.53	19.34	0.00
Technical	11.38	35.95	33.22	17.41	2.05
Communication	18.43	36.18	25.82	17.18	2.39
Computer	11.60	29.92	33.45	18.89	6.14
People Related	16.61	38.57	22.30	18.32	4.21
Managerial	16.04	36.41	24.80	19.80	2.96
Conceptualizing	18.20	36.75	22.98	19.45	2.62
Personal	37.32	36.06	14.56	11.60	0.46
Citizenship	20.36	41.18	22.30	14.56	1.59
Numeric	13.42	26.28	30.49	23.66	6.14
Foreign Language	7.74	17.86	35.27	22.64	16.50
Sector Specific	8.53	17.63	38.79	21.62	13.42
Ability Adapt Situation	17.52	34.24	23.55	19.80	4.89

Sources: *Author's calculations based on primary survey database*

The table indicate that the average means of the skills which have been self-rated by the students during survey. It is found that skills like academic, technical, communication, people related, managerial, conceptualizing, citizenship and ability adapt situation have attracted a "very good" response as against other skills. Computer skills, numeric knowledge, foreign language and sector specific skills have however generated an average/ neutral response.

Conclusion

The present study indicates that the rank of Uttar Pradesh in terms of average enrolment, number of colleges, gender enrolment ratio, gender parity index and pupil teacher ratio is not satisfactory as compared to other frontier states of India. Therefore, there is need to improve these parameters of higher education in Uttar Pradesh, to uplift the quality standards of higher education system and to make it more employability oriented. As per AISHE-2021, there is significant decline in average enrolment in Uttar Pradesh during last five years and it reflects serious loopholes in imparting quality education to the students. There is also a need to get better quality of education at the all levels viz., primary, secondary and higher secondary level. Recently, New Education Policy-2020 has been introduced by the government to bridge the gap between higher education institutions and employability.

The primary survey result shows that the major reason for choosing a particular course is for attaining better higher education followed by greater job opportunities among gender. While across level of study, better higher education opportunities and greater job opportunities again seems to be highly preferred by the students. Moreover, in future job industry, it is found that across level of study, students prefer financial services as possible future job industry and in terms of making job efforts level of study, students join a special skill development course only. In terms of preference of skills, all thirteen skills are perceived highly among the students. It is also found that the perception of skills among employers is higher than the students. In addition, the self-rated skills of the students have a higher mean than their perception of the skills.

Therefore, the study suggests that this is the responsibility of HEI's as well as policy maker to address this shortcoming by introducing various job-oriented, industry-ready, skill imparting and value enhancing courses so as to improve the average enrolment in Uttar Pradesh. The quality enhancing and skill imparting courses would improve the enrolment ratio and will help students to grab more employment opportunities as well as employability.

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