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"Only 6% of engineering students employable"

Sruthi Krishnan

Says a study that covered 10,000 students in 150 colleges

Most failed the tests in communication, problem solving and technical skills

Add-on and self-financing programmes conducted with industry's involvement will help

CHENNAI: Only six per cent of 10,000 students across 150 engineering colleges were found to be employable, according to a recent study.

The study conducted by PurpleLeap, an entry-level talent management firm, tested the students in three areas – communication, problem solving and technical skills. It was found that 56 per cent failed in all three areas. Six per cent were found employable; rest failed in one or more of the three areas. The study included 1,000 students from 12 colleges in Tamil Nadu.

These findings paint a similar picture as the NASSCOM-McKinsey Report published in 2005. The report on 'Extending India's Leadership of the Global IT and BPO Industries' had said, "Currently only about 25 per cent of technical graduates and 10-15 per cent of general college graduates are suitable for employment in the offshore IT and BPO industries respectively."

Given the current economic situation, when companies are focusing sharply on cutting flab and ensuring quality, lack of adequate skills exacerbates the situation further for students. "Students need to up-skill, upgrade and retrain themselves, rather than get disappointed," said Sandhya Chintala, Director of the Education Initiative of NASSCOM. The good news was that colleges were focusing on quality, rather than numbers given the current situation, she added.

"Transfer skills" was an area which colleges were trying to address, said Ms. Chintala. Such skills are generic, which can then be applied to a particular situation, she said. For instance, communication skills were taught for a particular situation, but once acquired, they helped in different situation. Problem solving skills were another instance of "transfer skills," she said. If candidates did not possess such skills, it became difficult for them to adapt themselves with the industry's changes, she said.

In the short term, add-on programmes and self-financing programmes conducted with the industry's involvement would help improve employability of students, she said. Universities were becoming more open in allowing

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colleges to be more flexible, she said, adding that some Universities allowed colleges to run short-term courses without additional approvals and others waived the approval process if the University's name was not associated with the course.

"There are avenues to address this within the existing system," she said, adding that instead of blaming the educational system and waiting for an entire overhaul, such short-term measures could be adopted.

In the long-term, the mode of assessment had to be changed, said Ms. Chintala. There was no correlation between the grades the student obtained to the learning experience, she said, adding that the assessment had to capture the learning and provide a meaningful insight, rather than be based on rote learning.

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