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## RAMANAND ARYA D.A.V. COLLEGE

Bhandup (E), Mumbai- 400042

(NAAC: 'A' Grade with CGPA 3.19)

### One Day International Interdisciplinary Conference on

# Enhancing **Employability** through Educational Restructuring and Technological Upgradation



*S. Lawa*



Organised by  
**Department of Self Financing Courses**

**Saturday, 1st Oct 2016**

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and Technological Upgradation”

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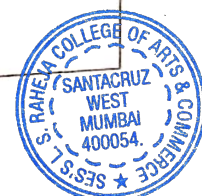
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## AN INVESTIGATION OF 'EMPLOYABILITY' IN CROSS CULTURAL CONTEXTS: INDIA & CHINA

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### ABSTRACT:

*The employability of graduates has emerged as a critical issue for emerging economies. As developing economies shift from a reliance on agriculture and manufacturing to the services sector, demand for highly skilled workers grows.*

*However, evidence of a mismatch between the skills, knowledge and attributes of graduates and the demands of the labour market is growing in many emerging economies. This has led to graduate employment being a major concern for such emerging economies across Asia.*

### KEYWORDS:

Employability, Cross Culture, Vocational Skill and Educational restructuring.

### INTRODUCTION:

The growth in knowledge economies has led to changing skill and knowledge requirements while the massification of higher education has resulted in an expanding supply of tertiary educated graduates entering the workplace. For employers, globalisation has resulted in greater international competition. Graduate employability is now a priority for universities. Employability is generally defined as encompassing the discipline knowledge, skills and personal attributes that give an individual graduate the ability to gain and maintain employment.

In a competitive graduate labour market, employers are looking beyond the degree in their search for 'work ready' graduates. There is growing emphasis on generic skills and personal attributes as well as discipline related work experience.

Emerging research suggests generic skills are culturally specific or even discipline specific.

### LITERATURE REVIEW:

This scoping study draws on Hofstede's 'Six Dimensions of National Culture' in order to identify how employability is understood in different cultural contexts. Using data from over 40 different countries and a variety of companies and industries, Professor Geert Hofstede identified systematic differences in values between nations. Hofstede defines values as "broad preferences for one state of affairs" (Hofstede, 1985, p.347). Hofstede found that these country values grouped themselves into four clusters: ways of coping with inequality, ways of coping with uncertainty, and the relationship of the individual with her or his primary group, and the emotional implications of having been born a girl or a boy (Hofstede, 2011). From these value groupings, Hofstede developed his dimensions of national culture: 'Power Distance', 'Uncertainty Avoidance', and 'Individualism' versus 'Collectivism' and 'Masculinity versus Femininity' (Hofstede, 2011) in the 1980s. A fifth dimension, 'Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation' was added in the same decade based on the research



Michael Harris Bond. In the 2000s a sixth dimension, 'Indulgence versus Restraint', was included drawing on research by Michael Minkov.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of the study are to provide a broad sweep of current and emerging research specific understandings of employability in two distinct cultural contexts: China, India.

(i) How employability is understood in different cultural contexts and what differences exist between employability attributes valued in different geographical and cultural settings;

(ii) How expectations of employability vary between different professions and different categories of employer in each of the countries under investigation;

(iii) Gaps in current research and priority areas for future research

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The data and information have been collected from secondary sources like business newspapers, journals, reports, text-books and websites.

### **LIMITATIONS:**

The investigation is made on the basis of secondary data alone.

## **Understandings of Employability in the Two Nations**

### **1. China**

#### **1.1 The context:**

The economic, political and social reform that began in 1978 has transformed China from a state-planned economy to one that is market-driven and government controlled. In the intervening decades, China has shifted from acting as the workshop of the world to being a services powerhouse in one of the world's largest economies.

However, despite China's rapid economic and social development, the nation remains a developing country and faces significant social and economic challenges. China's ageing population; vast social inequalities and environmental pressure pose a threat to the nation's continued growth and prosperity.

#### **1.2 Impact of Chinese culture on employability:**

Differences in how graduate employability is perceived in China compared with western nations can be explained in part by Chinese cultural values. According to Hofstede, China is a highly collectivist society that scores high on 'masculinity' and 'long term orientation'.

Chinese society is driven by competition, achievement and success often at the expense of leisure time, family life and individual desires.

#### **1.3 Factors influencing employment pathways and employability:**



Despite the opening up of the Chinese economy and greater commercial opportunities in the private sector, a job in the Chinese civil service remains an attractive option for many young Chinese.

The current popularity of the Chinese civil service is due to the stability of jobs and benefits offered by the positions held (bonuses and benefits in kind). Importantly, a position in the civil service is also synonymous with power.

#### **1.4 Employability attributes valued by Chinese employers:**

In China, the concept of employability remains relatively under-researched. The rapid economic, social and political shifts occurring in China, suggest that the demands of the labour market may also be undergoing significant change.

The impact of globalisation on China's labour market and the recent slowing of economic growth have led to a mismatch between students' and employers' expectations.

The skills valued for employability differ among disciplines. Engineering and other Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) fields are critical to China's future prosperity and the Chinese government is boosting investment in science and technology in order to expand knowledge-based sectors to supplement the booming manufacturing sector.

#### **1.5 Business and Management:**

Reports suggest China continues to experience an on-going shortage of qualified business managers indicating a need for improved business education.

Employers are commonly dissatisfied with business and management graduates' performance and criticise the fact that current graduates have high exam scores yet low ability and transferrable skills. In the past, university graduates were assigned a job upon graduation suggesting little need to compete in the job market.

In recent times the lack of local capacity has resulted in multinational and Chinese firms recruiting managers from Hong Kong or seeking candidates who have studied abroad.

#### **1.6 Multinational Corporations**

Multinational corporations operating in China require staffs to have skills and competencies that allow them to operate in both the international and local milieu. Companies require people who can understand local market needs and practices without compromising the business ethics of the MNC subsidiary.

It might be assumed that the repatriation of graduates trained abroad would alleviate skill shortages, providing employers with a pool of talent schooled in western business practices but possessing key linguistic and cultural knowledge.

However, a number of reports refer to Chinese employers' dissatisfaction with overseas returnees. Lack of China-specific knowledge is considered a significant constraint among employers in industries such as real estate, construction, law, finance and manufacturing.

## **2. India**

### **2.1 The context:**



The Indian economy has grown rapidly over the past two and a half decades. Most recently, the services sector, which accounts for over half of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), has been a key driver of growth. Two thirds of students with tertiary level of education enter service sector.

According to the Labour Ministry, one in three graduates up to the age of 29 is unemployed. The Indian press is awash with stories of graduates unable to find work while at the same time employers complain of the lack of graduates with the skills and competencies required in the labour market.

Many lay the blame on the tertiary education system, which is struggling to meet the growing demand with enrolments in higher education rising from 6% in 1983 to 18% in 2014.

## **2.2 Impact of Indian culture on employability:**

According to Hofstede's 'Six Dimensions of National Culture, India scores high on 'Power Distance' reflecting the hierarchical nature of Indian society (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Indian society is highly stratified and in the work context employees are often dependent on the employer.

Communication in the workplace is top down with employees expected to be highly directed by their employer, a practice that discourages initiative.

## **2.3 Factors influencing employability in India:**

A British Council study found that 'integrity' was a highly ranked graduate attribute among Indian employers, suggesting that, like in China, traditional Indian values may also play a role in graduate employability.

Geography also plays a role in determining graduate outcomes. The standard of education varies dramatically between institutions, and those located in major cities are often better resourced than those in regional areas, where 70% of the population resides.

## **2.4 Employability attributes valued by Indian employers:**

A review of the literature indicates that Indian employers are seeking graduates with analytical thinking, problem solving and critical reasoning skills.

Employers prefer employees who are not only technical proficient, but also score high on softer skills such as working in diverse intercultural contexts which are important to thrive in a global work environment. Indian

## **2.5 Engineering:**

A World Bank study of the employability of newly graduated engineers in India classified skills into three categories: core employability skills, communication skills, and professional skills. The study found that employers rated core employability skills as more important than the professional skills and communication skills.

Soft skills (core employability skills and communication skills) were rated significantly more important than the professional skills.



## 2.6 Information Technology:

Despite Bangalore being considered India's answer to Silicon Valley, the sustainability of the sector is highly dependent on a pipeline of employees with high technological capabilities. One report suggested that traditional IT companies in India have focused around services and consulting requiring 'generalist' graduates who can adapt to different technologies depending on the type of project.

## 2.7 English language proficiency:

English fluency is one of the key qualities Indian recruiters look for during the interview process (ICEF Monitor, 2015). Issues of limited English proficiency were found across the higher education spectrum in India, including at the country's top-ranked institutions for engineering studies, the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and National Institutes of Technology (NITs).

One study found a positive correlation between large metropolitan areas and English proficiency with students in cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore demonstrating better spoken English skills, compared to those in Hyderabad and Chennai, who were found to have the most limited speaking and listening proficiency (ICEF Monitor, 2015).

## CONCLUSION:

The study reveals that there are clear similarities between the types of skills and attributes valued by employers in the countries under investigation with those in developed nations such as the UK and Australia.

Communication and interpersonal skills, team work and problem solving abilities appear to be valued across cultures.

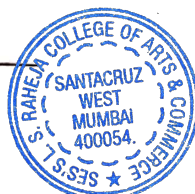
However, there are also differences. The study highlights the role of culture in determining what is valued and why in the workplace.

## Scope of the study:

This study provides a preliminary examination of employability in two different cultural contexts. There is limited available research in the field and a pressing need for greater in depth quantitative and qualitative research into employability across cultures.

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