



FROM DEGREE FACTORIES TO EMPLOYABILITY HUBS

The Evolution of Indian Higher Education Institutions

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FOREWORD



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For decades, India's higher education system focused on a central promise: expanding access to degrees at scale. That promise mattered, and it still does. But the context has changed. Today, the true test of higher education is no longer enrolment or completion alone, but whether education meaningfully improves a student's ability to participate in the economy.

The National Education Policy 2020 acknowledged this shift by placing employability, skills, and experiential learning at the heart of academic reform. What it set in motion was not a compliance exercise, but a deeper question for institutions: Are we organised around delivering degrees, or around enabling careers? This report seeks to explore how institutions are responding to that question in practice.

What emerges from the voices of academic leaders is a system in transition. There is growing consensus that employability must be embedded within academic design rather than addressed at the margins. At the same time, the pace and depth of adoption vary widely. Some institutions are beginning to build integrated employability systems, while others continue to rely on fragmented initiatives that struggle to scale.

At TeamLease EdTech, we work closely with universities navigating this journey. Our experience suggests that employability is not solved by adding more programs, but by redesigning how education connects with work through curriculum, exposure, partnerships, and outcome measurement. This report is not a verdict or a ranking. It is a reflection of where the system stands today, and a prompt for the choices that will shape the next phase of Indian higher education.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marked a clear shift in India's higher education agenda placing employability at the centre of academic outcomes. Five years into this transition, institutions have broadly aligned with the intent of the policy. The more pressing question today is no longer whether employability matters, but how deeply and consistently it is being embedded within academic systems.

This report is based on 1,071 responses from senior faculty members, university leadership, and faculty across public, private, and deemed universities, as well as autonomous and affiliated colleges. The findings offer a system-wide view of how employability is being designed, delivered, and prioritised across institutional types.

KEY FINDINGS



Internships and experiential learning are no longer fringe initiatives, but access remains inconsistent, with only about half of institutions ensuring internship opportunities across all academic programs.



Curriculum alignment with industry needs is underway, yet remains uneven, with most institutions implementing changes at the departmental or program level rather than through institution-wide redesign.



Career readiness and soft-skills training are widely recognized as essential, though institutions differ significantly in how systematically and continuously these are delivered.



Digital and emerging technologies have entered the curriculum, but integration is selective, resulting in varied levels of digital preparedness among graduates.



Live industry projects and applied learning are yet to become the norm, with only a minority of institutions reporting frequent use of real-world projects as part of coursework.



Employer partnerships and alumni engagement exist across institutions, but are often limited in depth, serving specific functions rather than acting as integrated components of academic design and delivery.



Graduate outcomes remain highly uneven, with fewer than one in five institutions placing over 75% of students within six months of graduation, highlighting a persistent gap between intent and outcomes.



The direction of travel is clear, as over 90% of institutions indicate that employability outcomes are likely to take precedence over traditional academic metrics in the next three years.

Taken together, these findings point to a higher education system that has embraced the employability mandate in principle, but is still navigating the shift from isolated initiatives to institution-wide execution. The next phase of reform will be defined by how effectively institutions embed employability into curriculum design, pedagogy, partnerships, and governance—moving decisively from degree factories to employability hubs.



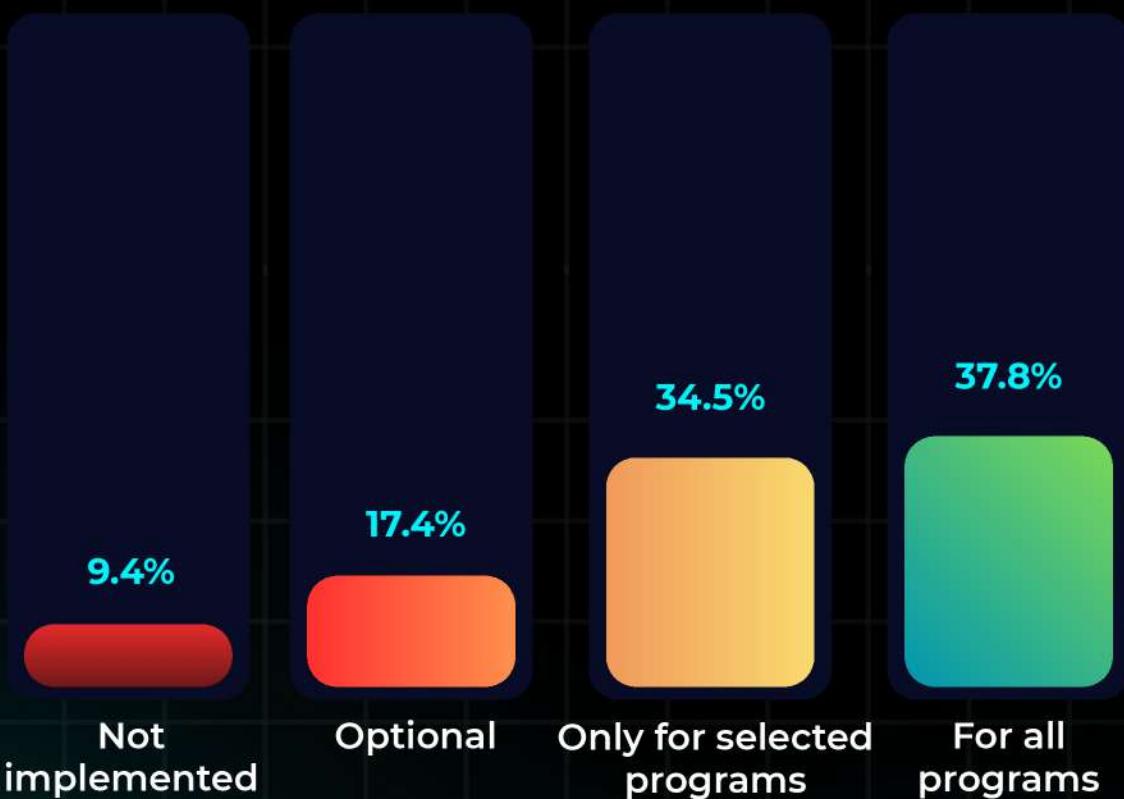
SIGNALS FROM THE SYSTEM:

EVIDENCE FROM ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

The following section presents evidence from academic leadership on how employability is being designed, delivered, and prioritised across institutions.

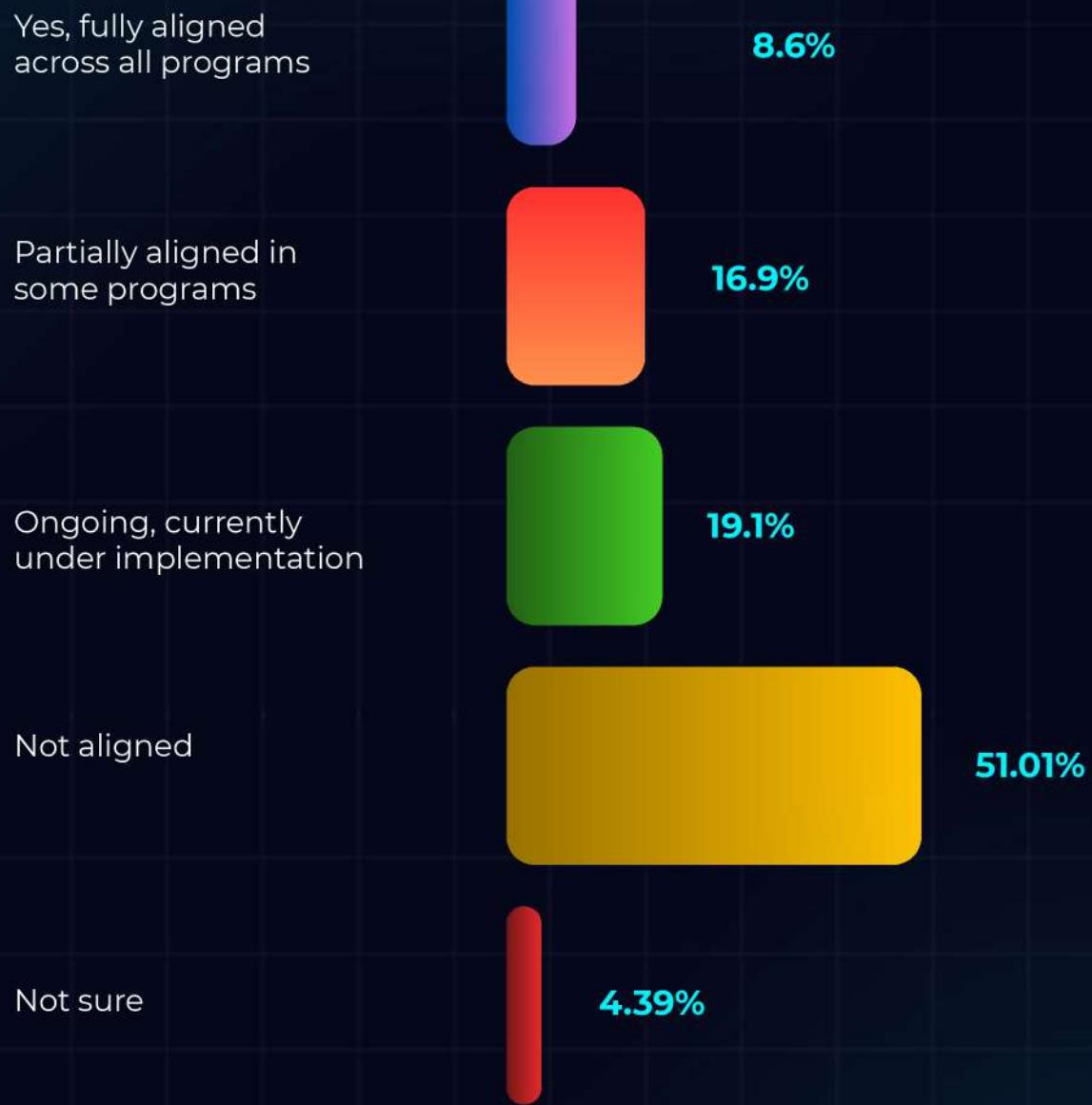


Over 26% of Institutions Have Integrated Internships Across or Within Academic Programs



Internship integration is taking shape within institutional programs, with **9.4% of institutions offering internships across all programs and 17.4% enabling them within selected programs**. This represents positive progress toward embedding experiential learning within curricula, while also underscoring that significant expansion is still needed to ensure broader and more consistent student access.

About 75% of HEIs in India are still not aligned with the needs of the Industry!



Just 8.6% of institutions report that their curriculum is fully aligned with industry needs across all programs, while another 16.9% indicate partial alignment in select programs. Together, this 25.5% reflects early movement toward industry relevance, but also highlights that curriculum alignment remains limited in scale and consistency. This signals a positive start, yet substantial system-wide transformation is still required for industry alignment to become the norm rather than the exception.

SOFT SKILLS

HARD SKILLS

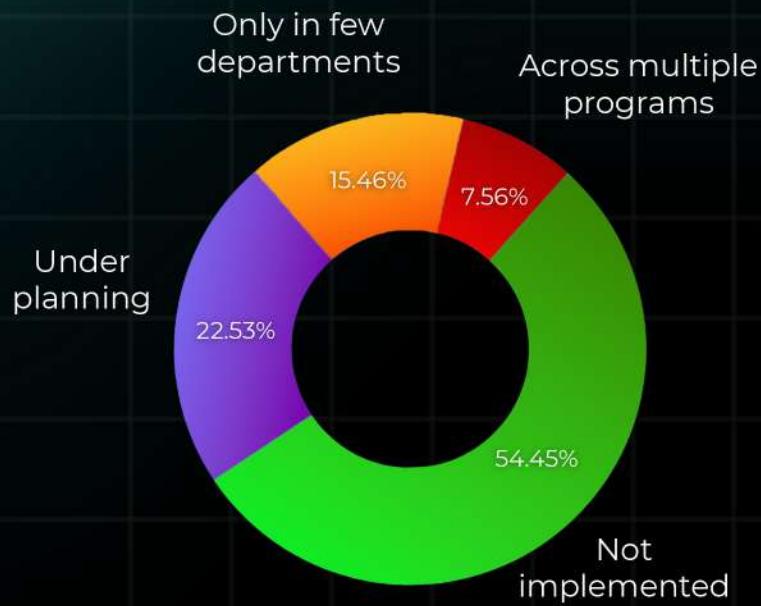


Only 36% of the HEIs have embedded Soft Skills into their curriculum.



Soft-skills and communication training are being actively integrated by a growing share of institutions, with 15.75% delivering these through continuous programs and 19.95% offering them via short-term workshops. Together, this reflects an emerging institutional commitment to career readiness beyond placements. While adoption is still uneven, emphasis on soft skills indicates clear momentum toward embedding employability skills more intentionally within the student experience—progress is visible, though significant headroom for expansion remains.

Only 23% of the HEIs have engaged Industry Professionals for training their students!



Industry participation in teaching remains limited in scale, with just 7.56% of institutions integrating Professors of Practice across multiple programs, and a further 15.46% restricting adoption to a few departments. While these pockets indicate early experimentation, the model is yet to transition from selective use to institution-wide practice.





More than 60% of the HEIs haven't explored embedding Industry Certifications into their curriculum; 25% have included them as optional!



Yes, embedded
within the
curriculum

Yes, offered as
optional/add-
on programs

No

Despite growing interest in industry-linked credentials, only 15.09% of institutions have embedded certifications directly within the core curriculum. This indicates that while experimentation with external credentials exists, deep academic integration remains the exception rather than the norm.

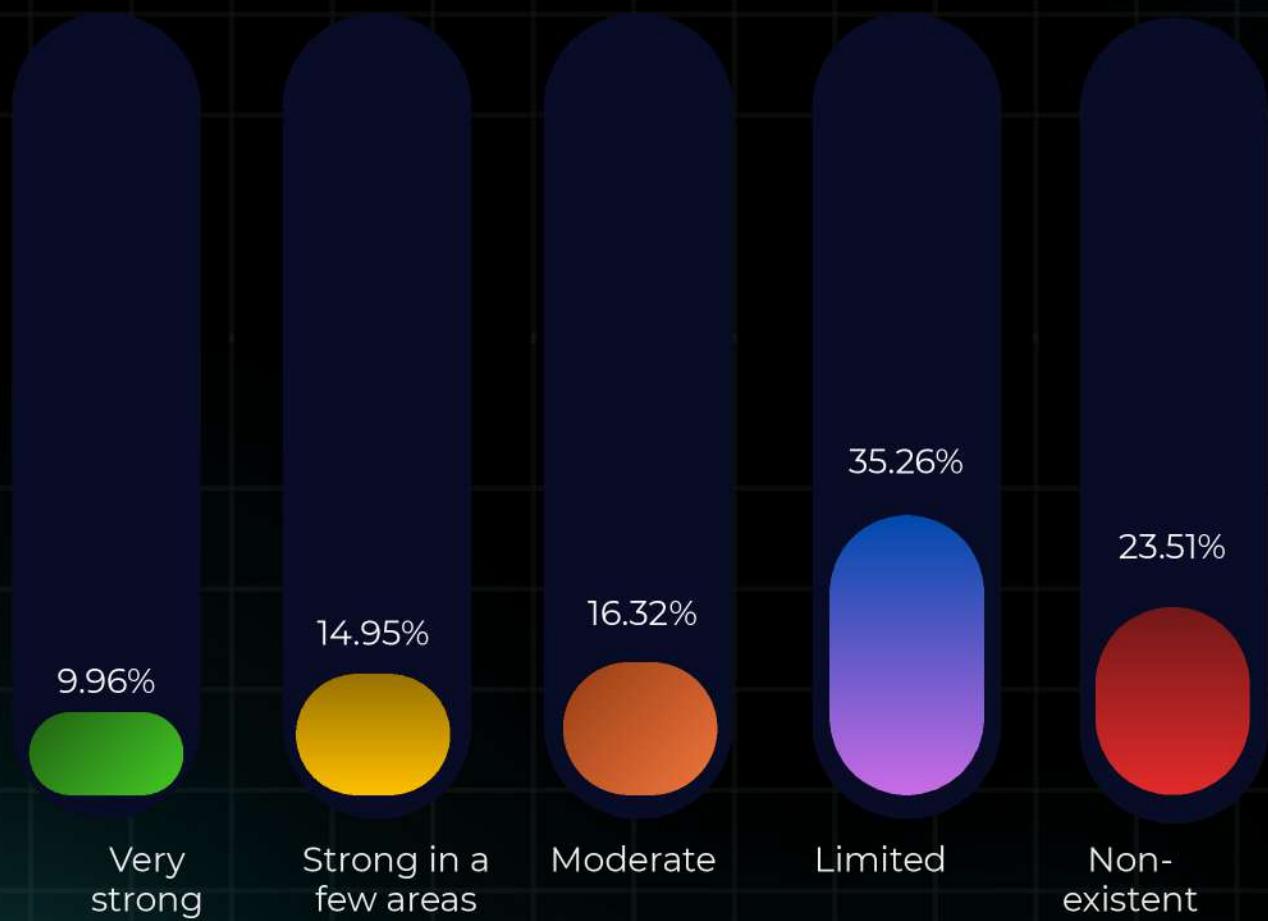


Applied learning is still nascent with only 25% of the HEIs using Live Projects to train their students.



Live industry projects are beginning to take root as a learning approach, with 9.68% of institutions integrating them very frequently and 14.84% doing so frequently. This combined 24.52% reflects early but meaningful adoption of applied learning models. While many institutions still rely on occasional exposure, the growing presence of regular industry projects signals positive movement toward experiential pedagogy.

Employer Partnerships Lack Depth, with Only 25% of Institutions Reporting Strong Engagement



Employer engagement remains limited in depth, with just 9.96% of institutions reporting very strong partnerships and an additional 14.95% describing their employer ties as strong. Together, this indicates that only one in four institutions has achieved meaningful employer collaboration.

About 80% of HEIs have not yet explored the potential of their Alumni Networks to improve employability of their students.



15.09%

Highly engaged



22.81%

Fairly engaged



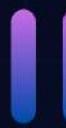
13.16%

Limited engagement



13.16%

Minimal engagement



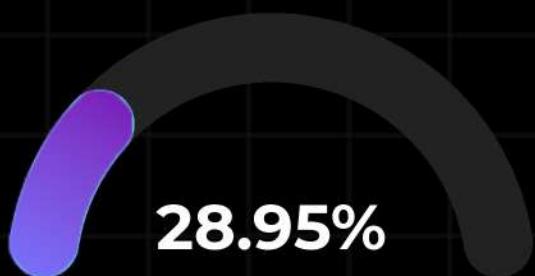
43.51%

No engagement

Alumni engagement remains underdeveloped across institutions, with just 5.44% reporting highly engaged alumni networks and a further 15.09% describing engagement as fairly active. This means only one in five institutions has been able to mobilise alumni in a meaningful way. For the majority, alumni relationships remain limited, minimal, or absent.



Fewer Than 1 in 5 Institutions Achieve 76–100% Placement Within Six Months of Graduation



0–25% Placement rate



26–50% Placement rate



51–75% Placement rate



76–100% Placement rate

High placement outcomes remain rare, with only 16.67% of institutions reporting placement rates between 76–100% within six months of graduation. While 31.58% achieve mid-range outcomes of 51–75%, a significant 28.95% place fewer than 25% of students, highlighting wide disparities in graduate employment outcomes across institutions.

High Intent has still not translated into action - Over 90% Institutions Plan to Put Employability First; however the facts on the ground tell a different story!

48%

42%



2%



7%

0%

Very unlikely



A strong shift in institutional priorities is evident, with 48.25% of institutions reporting they are very likely and 42.11% likely to prioritise employability initiatives over traditional academic metrics in the coming years. This combined 90.36% signal reflects broad recognition that graduate outcomes must play a central role in institutional success going forward.



RECOMMENDATIONS

MOVING FROM INTENT TO
INSTITUTION-WIDE EMPLOYABILITY

These findings point to clear actions institutions must take to move from intent to execution.

Make Employability a Core Academic Outcome, Not a Peripheral Function



Define employability explicitly as an institution-level academic outcome, on par with learning and research.



Anchor accountability with academic leadership and governance structures, not only placement or training teams.



Review employability outcomes regularly at Academic Council / Board of Studies level.

Ensure Every Student Has Structured Exposure to the World of Work



Embed credit-linked internships, apprenticeships, or live industry projects across all programs.



Standardize work exposure requirements so employability does not depend on department or discipline choice.



Assess work exposure formally to ensure quality, relevance, and learning outcomes.

Redesign Curriculum Around Outcomes and Application



Shift curriculum design from content coverage to clearly defined graduate outcomes.



Align teaching methods and assessments with real-world application, not only theoretical mastery.



Involve industry practitioners meaningfully in outcome definition, project design, and assessment.

Integrate Skills and Industry Credentials Into Degree Pathways



Embed digital, professional, and industry-relevant skills within the core curriculum.



Integrate recognized industry credentials into degree programs rather than offering them as add-ons.



Ensure all students graduate with demonstrable, market-relevant capabilities, not just academic credits.

Build Deep, Long-Term Engagement with Employers and Alumni



Focus on fewer but deeper partnerships that span curriculum input, projects, work-based learning, and hiring.



Activate alumni systematically as mentors, project sponsors, and career guides.



Treat employers and alumni as co-creators of employability, not just end-point recruiters.

In Summary



Move from initiatives to systems



Replace departmental silos with institution-wide standards



Shift focus from intent to execution

Institutions that succeed in the next phase of higher education reform will be those that design employability by default embedding it into curriculum, pedagogy, partnerships, and governance. The shift from degree factories to employability hubs is no longer optional; it is a leadership imperative.



HOW TEAMLEASE EDTECH ENABLES UNIVERSITIES TO BECOME EMPLOYABILITY HUBS

Embedding Employability as a Core Academic Outcome

TeamLease EdTech supports universities in institutionalising employability as an academic priority rather than a peripheral function.



Works with academic leadership to design institution-wide employability frameworks aligned to governance structures.



Helps integrate employability outcomes into curriculum approval, review, and quality processes.



Supports universities in moving employability ownership beyond placement cells to Academic Councils and Boards of Studies.

Enabling Structured Work Exposure at Scale

Ensuring every student gains meaningful exposure to work requires coordination across employers, faculty, and academic schedules.



Enables credit-linked internships, apprenticeships, and work-integrated learning models across programs.



Supports standardisation of work exposure design, supervision, and assessment.



Helps universities scale work exposure without placing additional operational burden on faculty.

Supporting Outcome-Driven Curriculum Redesign

TeamLease EdTech assists universities in shifting from content-heavy curricula to outcome-oriented academic design.



Facilitates industry participation in defining graduate outcomes, applied projects, and assessment frameworks.



Supports curriculum redesign that balances academic depth with workplace relevance.



Helps embed applied learning and real-world problem-solving into formal coursework.

Integrating Skills and Industry Credentials into Degrees

Rather than treating skills as optional add-ons, TeamLease EdTech helps universities embed them within degree pathways.



Supports integration of digital, professional, and role-aligned skills into curriculum structures.



Enables embedding of industry-recognised credentials aligned with academic outcomes.



Ensures skills development reaches all students, not only those who opt into external programs.

Supporting Outcome-Driven Curriculum Redesign

TeamLease EdTech assists universities in shifting from content-heavy curricula to outcome-oriented academic design.



Leverages employer networks to support curriculum input, live projects, work-based learning, and hiring.



Helps universities move from transactional employer engagement to strategic partnership models.



Supports structured alumni involvement in mentoring, exposure, and career guidance initiatives.



Provides an integrated Alumni Management System (AMS) that helps institutions systematically engage alumni, track participation, and scale mentoring, networking, and career support initiatives across programs.

In Summary

TeamLease EdTech's role is to enable an institution's evolution from an Education Provider to a Career Factory. By helping institutions embed employability into curriculum, delivery, and partnerships, TeamLease EdTech supports universities in moving from isolated initiatives to cohesive, institution-wide employability systems.

This partnership-led approach allows universities to strengthen graduate outcomes while retaining academic independence, accelerating the transition from degree factories to employability hubs.

METHODOLOGY

Classification by The Type of Educational Institution



Classification by The Type of Major Discipline Offered



This report draws on insights from 1,071 responses provided by senior faculty members, academic leaders, and faculty representing public, private, and deemed universities, as well as autonomous and affiliated colleges across India. The study employs a structured, close-ended survey to assess how institutions are embedding employability within their academic systems.

Key areas of analysis include curriculum alignment with industry needs, internships and work-integrated learning, digital and professional skills, industry engagement, alumni involvement, placement outcomes, and future institutional priorities. Data was collected through voluntary and anonymous digital participation and analysed using percentage-based insights to identify system-level patterns and trends, without ranking institutions or inferring causality.



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