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BRIDGING ACADEMIA AND INDUSTRY: ENGLISH COMMUNICATION TRAINING FOR GLOBAL CAREERS

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ABSTRACT

In today's global economy, English communication skills have emerged as a vital employability skill particularly for graduates seeking positions within multinational corporations (MNCs). This paper provides a comparison of the English language teaching programs of the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar and the Institute of Technology (IOT) Zakura to see how well they are aligned with the MNC requirements. The assessment used corporate communication skills benchmarks as a framework, focussing on the course syllabus, instructional materials, Language Laboratories, and assessment of skills. The findings of the research reveal that NIT Srinagar has more coverage for skills in their two-semester course with a dedicated language lab, more faculty resources compared to IOT Zakura which offered a one-semester course and had only limited faculty, and no language lab availability which restricted opportunities for developing oral and auditory skills - attributable skills often favoured by industrial recruiters. The study suggests that in order to assess graduate employability, a redesign of the existing curriculum, an improvement to faculty training, and technology enhanced language learning, will be required to improve engineering graduates employability globally.

Keywords: Curriculum, Employability Skills, Multinational Corporations (MNCs), Communication Skills, Language lab, Curriculum Evaluation, Industry Readiness, Engineering graduates

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1. Introduction

In today's competitive and globalized job market, English language proficiency is clearly recognized as a factor affecting employability, especially for graduates looking for employment with multinational corporations (MNCs) (Anderson, 2022). MNCs continue to talk about the need for people with communication skills; written and oral. This has implications for the hiring process, team work, and working with clients across cultural and linguistic boundaries (Cambridge English, 2020). With engineering and technology graduates making up a substantial amount of India's talent pool, they have the potential to facilitate individual and national economic growth as long as they meet corporate communication standards (Aspiring Minds, 2019).According to a range of studies, the corporate world is advancing research acknowledging MNCs desire a blend of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, with an emphasis on active listening and the benefits of real time communication in multicultural teams (Deloitte, 2021). However, employability studies of Indian engineering graduates, whilst there are examples of variability, show that whilst the individual technical skills correlate with industry expectations and demands, as a whole, the language and communication skills lag behind. As a result, engineering graduates are disadvantaged with a smaller range of top firms willing to recruit them (Aspiring Minds, 2019). These employer expectations are critical to bridge, requiring higher education institutions to align their language curricula with corporate needs.

The National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar and the Institute of Technology (IOT) Zakura represent two different institutional models concerning English language education in engineering programs. NIT Srinagar has a two-semester English curriculum and a dedicated language laboratory with four qualified faculty. Practicum lessons are used for both listening and speaking and grew out of pedagogy intended to develop more interactive communication in line with industry needs. IOT Zakura presents English language as a semester-long course that has no language lab and only one contracted faculty member, whose course focuses primarily on reading and writing. One important consideration during curriculum evaluation is the assessment/testing methodology. For both sites, assessment approaches value the testing of reading and writing skills with little assessment of speaking skills, and no assessment of listening skills. This is misaligned with MNC hiring practices that require candidates' verbal fluency and accent neutrality, and comprehension of listening skills. This misalignment presents graduates from programs with limited oral/aural skill experience a disadvantage (Cullen, 2022). This research compares and contrasts the two institutions' English language curricula in relation to the English communication requirements of MNCs. By analysing and evaluating the curriculum but also syllabus design, specific teaching benefits, coverage of skills, and evaluation/testing methodology, this research hopes to identify strengths, weaknesses, and offer actionable recommendations for further development.

Literature Review

English language proficiency has become an essential requirement for all graduates' employability in multinational companies (MNC), especially in knowledge-based industries such as information technology, engineering, and management (Kumar & Jain, 2020). MNC recruiters are concerned with communication skills next to technical skills, as communication skills help with collaboration, representation of customers and managing the project scope in the global environment (Cambridge English, 2020; Deloitte, 2021).

In India, Aspiring Minds' (2019) report reveals that only 20% of engineering students had employable communication skills, yet lacked listening comprehension and oral fluency, defined as essential skills in the global corporate environment where English is the primary communication medium (Anderson, 2022).The design of curriculums is a solution to potentially fill these skill gaps. Richards (2017) considers an integrated syllabus for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) which incorporates the four key language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, on which learning outcomes are based on the expectations of workplace communicative tasks. The evaluation of graduates from institutions that provide a two-semester English course and a language laboratory, students were found to be more competent in applying two communicative skills i.e., oral and interactive skills (Ganesan & Raja, 2019).

Language laboratories, in particular, provide a valuable environment for pronunciation, accent neutrality, and listening comprehension improvement using audio-visual materials and activities (Sharma & Kapoor, 2021). The use of a facility at NIT Srinagar in line with best practice in language pedagogy is supported by comparative research that demonstrated speaking and listening outcomes with language labs were better than with text-based instruction alone (Das & Varma, 2018). While language labs are a highly effective pedagogical method for language institutions with a short intervention in language, one semester, limited facilities including no language lab are likely to have a concentration on reading and writing skills at the expense of oral and aural skill development (Rao, 2020). Helpful at this stage to see and understand that the rationale of students graduating with strong writing, but poor oral communication results in learning obstacles for graduates in real-time corporate communication (Chakraborty, 2019).

Availability of quality faculty was another factor in determining curriculum effectiveness. Other factors are teacher-student ratio, additional opportunities for individualized feedback, speaking in small groups, and varying teaching and learning activities (Paul & John, 2018). NIT Srinagar was likely to facilitate better and more meaningful pedagogical engagement with students, whereas IOT Zakura engaged a single contracted faculty member, as the literature revealed a language learning cost penalty from an insufficient number of faculty (Ahmed & Khan, 2021).Assessment practices influence learning outcomes in skill acquisition. A vast amount of literature points out that if assessments typically weight reading and writing and do not value listening or speaking, students will not be able to engage with a full set of skills (Ali,

2017). This is something to worry about because MNC employment processes typically use spoken talent processes, group discussion tasks, and listening performance (Pathak & Jain, 2021).

International research has again indicated the notable benefit of including both listening and speaking processes into assessment to enhance transferrable skills, such as communicative competence. For example, Li and Wang (2019) refer to students who received assessment processes during their studies that weighted listening and speaking tasks evenly not only achieved higher levels of communicative competence but also greater confidence in professional contexts. Moreover, the cultural and linguistic diversity that exists in classrooms (NIT Srinagar has diverse representation, for instance), may also be utilized as a pedagogical resource for developing intercultural competence, which is increasingly in demand in global organizations (Byram, 2020).

This diversity is also in contrast with the student group at IOT Zakura, who are mostly homogenous culturally, and thus may require some effort to effectively facilitate any sort of multicultural communication experience (Thomas & Raj, 2018).

The need of the hour is to understand the minor intricacies of the curriculum development in alignment with the needs of the corporate firms since majority of the students are studying to get placed in the high-paying jobs across the various sectors but the archaic curriculum, not just limited to English, is downweighing the development of their skill & eating up their precious time which is mis-invested in learning things of little to no industrial relevance.

Methodology

Using a comparative curriculum analysis design, this study investigated the degree of comparability of NIT Srinagar's and IOT Zakura's English syllabi with the communicative competence requirements of multinational corporations (MNCs). The analysis comprised of qualitative and quantitative analysis to determine syllabus design, instructional materials, skills covered as well as assessment practices.

Data Sources

Primary Sources

- Official English language syllabi for NIT Srinagar (two semesters, separate Language Lab syllabus) and IOT Zakura (one semester, no Language Lab)
- Faculty strength and status (permanent vs contractual) from institutional records.

Secondary Sources

- Academic literature on workplace communication skills in MNCs with a focus on global employability standards (Singh & Gera 2015, Sharma 2019, OECD 2022).
- Benchmarked skill requirements from credible reports including the World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report 2023 and NASSCOM Employability Skills Survey 2022.

Variables for Comparison

The following key variables were identified for syllabus evaluation:

Table 1: Variables for Syllabus Evaluation

Variable	NIT Srinagar	IOT Zakura	Relevance to MNC Requirement
Number of Semesters	2	1	Longer exposure promotes deeper skill acquisition.
Language Lab	Yes (separate syllabus)	No	Enhances listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills, crucial for MNC interviews and presentations.
Skill Coverage	Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking (balanced)	Primarily Reading & Writing	MNCs demand all four skills; omission of listening & speaking reduces readiness.
Evaluation Focus	Reading, Writing, limited Speaking	Reading & Writing only	Narrow evaluation may overlook practical communication abilities.
Teacher Strength	4 (permanent)	1 (contractual)	Higher faculty strengthenables personalized instruction and consistent mentoring.
Student Demographics	Multilingual, multicultural	Mostly local	Multicultural exposure aligns better with diverse workplace settings.

Analytical Framework

A comparative scorecard was developed with variable being assigned numeric scores (1–5) based on the degree of MNC skill set. Each parameter was measured according to employability impacts identified in the literature, (e.g., Listening and Speaking parameters were weighted more heavily due to the requirements of global business communication). The framework is designed by taking inspiration from Tyler's Curriculum model which is a linear deductive model for curriculum development which involves a four-step process pertaining to the four fundamental questions of the rationale of the curriculum. The steps include defining learning objectives which clarify that what educational purposes should the course seek to attain(Q1) followed by selecting learning experiences, a step which informs the institution to realize the experiences which can facilitate the achievement of the objectives(Q2). In the next step, the model proposes the effective organization of the selected experiences(Q3) by the institution before finally, devising a way

for evaluating that whether the educational purposes or learning objectives set in the first step have been successfully achieved or not(Q4).

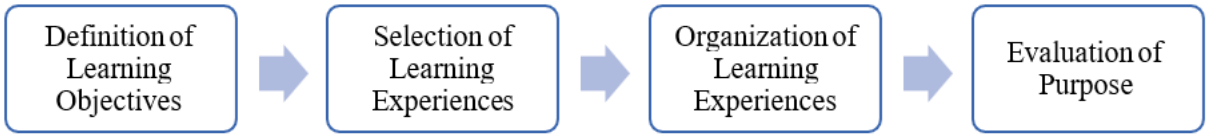


Figure 1: Steps in the Tyler's Model of Curriculum Development

The steps illustrated in the infographic above pertain to questions asked before developing the curriculum. While Tyler's model is one of the best-known models for the curriculum development, the proposed analytical framework builds upon the questions it asks to go beyond its limitation & develop a framework for the curriculum evaluation in the modern context of the requirements of the multi-national companies. The proposed evaluation framework is mapped to the one of the questions of the Tyler's model of curriculum.

Table 2: Mapping the Proposed Methodology with Tyler's Model

Framework Variable	**Relevance to Tyler's Model**	**Expounding the Relation**
Curriculum Coverage	Q1, Q4	Understanding the extent of the curriculum design in context of making students corporate ready
Skill Balance	Q1, Q4	Determining that whether the objectives of the curriculum are holistic & wholesome for imbuing industry-readiness into the students
Practical Exposure	Q2, Q3	Feasibility & Applicability of the curriculum's learning experience in the real-world professional communication scenarios
Faculty Strength & Expertise	Q2, Q3	Efficiency & ability of the faculty to create a learning experience at par with the corporate standard
Student Diversity	Q2	Consider the learning experience from the lens of cultural diversity
Industrial Relevance	Q1, Q2	Ascertain the relevance of the curriculum to the requirements of the industry
Assessment Variety	Q4	Evaluation methodology at par with the recruitment process of the MNCs

Data Analysis Tools

Microsoft Excel was used for data analysis. Task performed using the software included data tabulation and comparative scoring. Data visualization was also performed using bar charts and radar plots to visually highlight syllabus strengths and weaknesses. The conditional formatting from the Microsoft Excel was used to identify syllabus weaknesses, compared to the MNC benchmarks.

Ethical considerations

Only syllabus documents and data from institutions which were publicly available were reviewed, thus reducing the researchers moral responsibility included in academic research considerations.

4 Results & Discussions

The comparison of the English Language Teaching curriculum was done using the evaluation variables selected to answer the research questions in the methodology. The evaluation of the English curriculum provided information related to multiple parameters that included curriculum coverage and skill balance, practical experience, faculty strength, diversity of students, industrial relevance and a variety of assessments. A score between one and five was developed, with a reasoned score based professional & corporate's communication needs.

Table 3: Scoring Framework for Curriculum Evaluation

	Definition	**Scoring Criteria**	**Score Range**
Curriculum Coverage	Extent to which the syllabus addresses reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.	1 = Covers only 1–2 skills; 3 = Covers 3 skills; 5 = Balanced coverage of all four skills.	1–5
Skill Balance	Relative emphasis placed on each communication skill in the curriculum.	1 = Strong bias toward one skill; 2 = Bias toward a subset of skills, 3 = Moderate bias 4 = Slight bias towards a subset of skills 5 = Equal emphasis across all skills.	1–5
Practical Exposure	Opportunities for students to apply language skills in	1 = No lab/industry interaction; 2 = Limited Practical Exposure with little to no industry connect	1–5

	practical/real-world contexts.	3 = Practical Exposure only with Project-based learning & sporadic industry collabs 4 = Regular labs, projects, and industry-linked activities. 5 = Industry-catered projects & art-of-state labs & innovative projects fostering practicality	
Faculty Strength & Expertise	Number of qualified English instructors and their professional teaching background.	1 = No permanent faculty - only contractual instructors with limited experience 2 = Experienced & well-trained contractual teaching professionals 3 = Limited permanent staff with mixed set of experience	1–5
		alongside contractual staff 4 = Adequate permanent faculty with relevant experience in professional English teaching. 5= Eminent teaching professionals & renowned research scholars amongst the teaching staff	
Student Diversity	Diversity of linguistic and cultural backgrounds among students.	1 = Homogeneous local student population; 2 = Slightly diverse students from across the state, particularly neighbouring districts 3 = Some diversity – students from across the state & a few neighbouring states 4 = Significant diversity – students from across the nation 5 = High diversity from different nations, fostering cross-cultural communication skills.	1–5
Industry Relevance	Degree of alignment between curriculum content and MNC communication needs.	1 = Outdated content; 2= Content with few relevant topics, 3 = Content which partially covers the professional communication & industry requirements 4 = Significantly industry-based content with minor shortcomings 5 = Up-to-date, industry-oriented content including professional communication scenarios.	1–5
Assessment Variety	Range and type of assessment methods used to evaluate communication skills.	1 = Only written exams; 2= Written exams & a few project-based evaluations 3 = Mostly written + Project + Limited Oral 4 = Oral, Written& listening assessments with project-based approach 5 = Balanced written, oral, listening, and project-based assessments, industrial training.	1–5

To create an objective and learned comparison between NIT Srinagar and IOT Zakura, evaluation framework was used in Table 1 and evaluated both institutes using it. The seven key parameters were

curriculum coverage, skill balance, practical exposure, faculty strength and expertise, student diversity, industry relevance, and assessment variety. Each of the chosen parameters reflects competencies that multinational corporations (MNCs) claim to consider at the time of recruitment.

NIT Srinagar has a curriculum that extends over two semesters, which includes a dedicated language laboratory program. Consequently, the curriculum has broader coverage of listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and it can provide general practical exposure through the lab exercises. Faculty at the institution include four English faculty and good provision of diversified instruction. NIT Srinagar has a multicultural and multilingual student base that offers potential for the development of cross-cultural communication and use of English as a second language, as called for by MNCs conducting business globally. The assessment in the course module still favours reading and writing, but it is less constrained than that conducted by IOT Zakura, with some elements of oral assessment included.

In contrast, IOT Zakura provides English language teaching in just one semester and has no language lab. The student cohort is rather homogeneous and does not provide much opportunity to interact with people from diverse backgrounds. Adding to this issue, with only one contract-based faculty member responsible for the course, alternative teaching methods would be impossible let alone providing individualized instruction to students. In addition, a lack of structured practical exposure to professional communications systems i.e. labs or industry-related communication projects limits the readiness of students for the kind of work-ready professionalism expected by MNCs. The evaluation found that assessment practices in IOT Zakura, were heavily weighted towards written skills and, in particular, the speaking aspect had no formal assessment, nor formal feedback and the listening skills part was not assessed.

The application of scoring criteria detailed in Table 1 to IOT Zakura and NIT Srinagar exposed consistent differences. NIT Srinagar had relatively higher scores in most scores (the skill balance, practical exposure, faculty strength and student diversity) which suggest a better alignment to the needs of MNCs. IOT Zakura, while providing some foundational reading and writing practice, lacks a systematic approach to provide students with effective communicative competence or opportunities to practice the use of English in appropriate contexts.

Table 4: Comparative Scores of NIT Srinagar and IOT Zakura on MNC Readiness Parameters

Parameter	**Weightage (%)**	**NIT Srinagar (Score out of 5)**	**Weighted Score (NIT)**	**IOT Zakura (Score out of 5)**	**Weighted Score (IOT)**
Curriculum Coverage	20	4.5	0.90	3.0	0.60
Skill Balance (LSRW*)	20	4.0	0.80	2.0	0.40

Practical Exposure (Labs/Projects)	15	4.5	0.675	1.5	0.225
Faculty Strength & Expertise	15	4.5	0.675	2.0	0.300
Student Diversity & Cultural Exposure	10	4.5	0.45	2.0	0.20
Industry Relevance of Syllabus	10	4.0	0.40	3.0	0.30
Assessment Variety	10	3.5	0.35	2.5	0.25
Total Score	100	—	4.25	—	2.33

The comparative analysis clearly indicates that NIT Srinagar outperforms IOT Zakura in almost all parameters of MNC readiness. NIT's strengths lie in its well-distributed curriculum, emphasis on all four language skills, and integration of practical exposure through a language lab. The presence of multiple experienced faculty members and a diverse student community enhances its alignment with the professional communication needs of global companies. In contrast, IOT Zakura, while providing basic reading and writing proficiency, lacks adequate facilities, diversity, and practical training opportunities, resulting in a lower overall score.

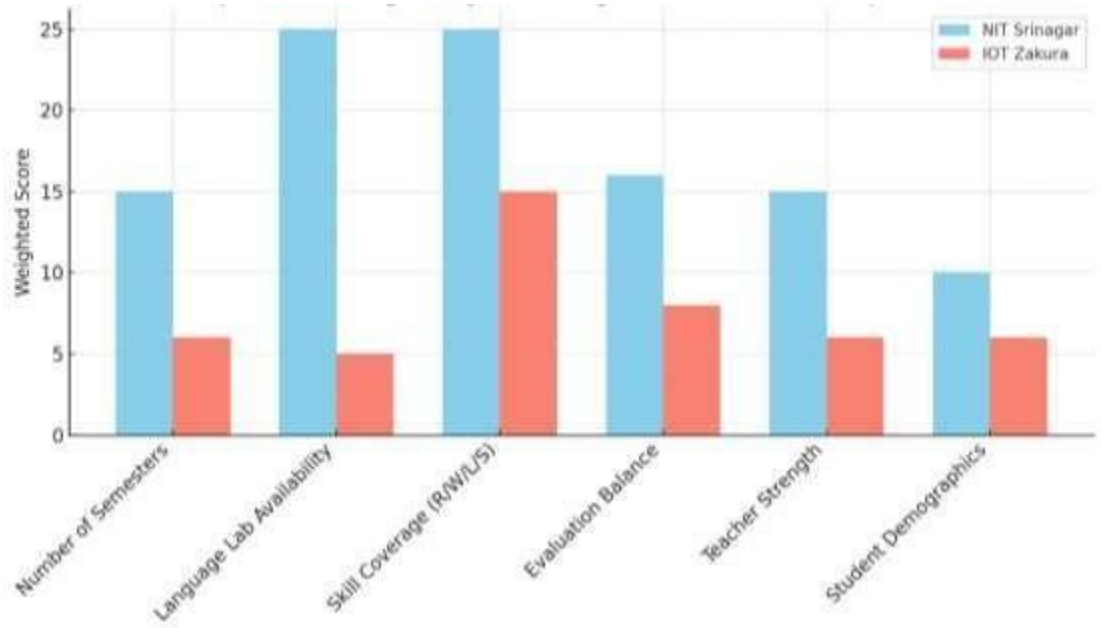


Figure 5: Comparison

The figure above compares the scores of MNC readiness parameters for NIT Srinagar and IOT Zakura. The image depicts that NIT Srinagar outperforms IOT Zakura on all evaluated components. The differences between institutions were most striking in terms of faculty strength and practical exposure, faculty

recommendations and their integration of listening skills with speaking and other communication skills. The structured programs in NIT Srinagar had greater provision for the teaching and support from multiple faculty members. It was expected that IOT Zakura would only receive a similar or greater benefit from its reliance on one contractual teacher, support and a language lab. The relatively better performance by both institutions on reading and writing skills indicates that NIT was still better. However, this may be attributed to the fact that NIT Srinagar had a two-semester program with cumulative university experience and greater cultural exposure while IOT Zakura relied on a contractual basis in private practice context.

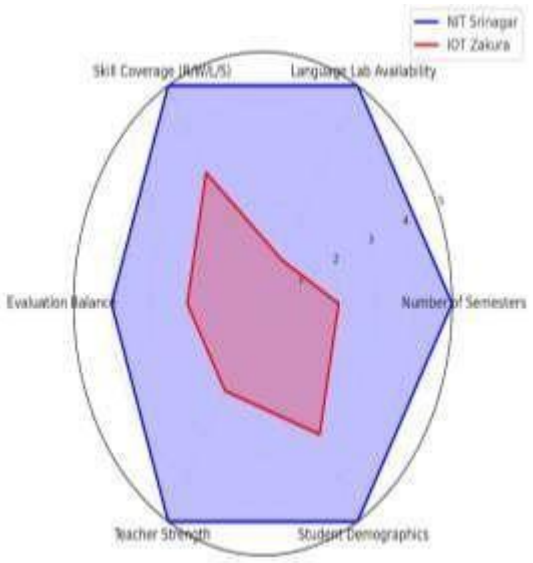


Figure 6: Radar Chart of Syllabus Strengths

It provides a multi-dimensional perspective of performance gaps for disputes in comparing scores. The radar chart in above figure shows the balanced and relatively greater values for NIT Srinagar as compared to the (uneven) values for IOT Zakura, and its narrow/non-holistic overall skill competencies even on the four scale parameters. The radar chart captures the strength of the syllabus and its delivery model as providing all four core language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) with a more focused delivery and assessment on both listening and speaking skills, skills that are often paramount to MNC recruiters. IOT Zakura had greater focus on reading and writing skills and at least significantly underdeveloped and more likely unassessed listening and speaking skills. This performance gap can be incidental and limit employment opportunities for graduates from either of the institutions when searching.The critical comparative study of NIT Srinagar and IOT Zakura presents identifiable differences in English language teaching/learning and future impact on multinational corporation (MNC) employability. In the global job market, language proficiency, especially English, has become an essential skill that complements technical skills. MNCs are looking for employees who are able to work effectively with various teams, interact with global clients, and work in a multicultural development environment (British Council, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2023).

The data in Table 2 and Figures 1-2 showed that NIT Srinagar, with a two-semester curriculum and a fully operational language lab, enjoys a more holistic way of teaching the four most important skills in communication - listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The data also provided qualitative evidence of a holistic teaching approach in integrating the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) definition of receptive and productive skills to be assessed in workplace readiness (Council of Europe, 2020). The four English faculty members at NIT Srinagar created opportunities for checking for understanding and differentiating instructional models and opportunities for feedback, which is crucial in the MNC's employment process.Both MNCs and English-Medium programs require listening skills and performance, but there is no clear focus on listening skills evaluation, or any, in both institutes. This is a very serious shortcoming because in MNC recruitments, for example, the real-time tasks such as group discussions, telephonic interviews, video client simulations are weekend observations of listening and speaking communication processes (NASSCOM, 2022). So there definitely are gaps in listening skill development in English-Medium programs specifically and "communication skills" education, in general. There is no doubt that in the world of work, especially in a diverse entry-market environment as India, listening comprehension skills are really paramount; i.e. workers/logistic staff understanding complex instructions, participating in virtual meetings while listening, and recognizing diverse accents and listening to varied speech contexts. In fact, in Cambridge English's 2021 Employability Report, listening is presented as equal to speaking fluency as the top predictive skill for communicating effectively in the workplace. The positive feedback from institutions like NIT Srinagar is that curricular improvements must extend beyond simply teaching skills in a prescriptive response, and written assessment. Reforms like teaching of a real-life simulation, role plays, industry guest speakers, and listening comprehension exercises using technology as scaffold, may address skill gaps.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The relative evaluation of syllabi and instructional materials of the English language at NIT Srinagar and IOT Zakura has shown major differences in the extent to which the syllabi meet multinational corporation (MNC) employability-related needs. NIT Srinagar's relatively more comprehensive framework for developing practical skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing, integrated into a two-semester curriculum, allows for a more competitive position in the global job market for its students. The absence of a complete language lab and having only one contractual faculty member limited IOT Zakura to a single semester course, and the considerable level of communication skills the college could develop for students, especially listening and speaking skills, was therefore limited.Both colleges had strengths in reading and writing skills; however, without a structured listening assessment and limited spoken skill practice, both colleges were very weak. As MNC's increasingly emphasize interactive communication skills in

recruitment processes (such as with group discussions, telephones and/or video interviews, and dealing with customers from different cultures), such weaknesses in listening and speaking skills may limit students to achieve global employability outcomes. It is advisable that University Grants Commission (UGC) take an active stance to resolve the issue for which a few recommendations might include the standardization of the minimum number of faculty & mandating a minimum one functional language lab to allow the holistic development & assimilation of the skills with consistency & longitudinal exposure.

Recommendations

Curricular Enhancement - Both institutions should expand curriculum enhancements to include a balanced focus upon all four language skills which address the CEFR levels, so graduates' communications skills meet international standards. The proposed curriculum should formally include assessment of listening and speaking.

Technology Enabled Solutions - Institutions which lack physical language labs, like IOT Zakura, should use similar principles by relying on virtual language lab software and AI pronunciation and listening tools to provide an opportunity for immersive teaching & learning experiences daily.

Industry Collaborations - Collaborate with MNCs to develop short-term communication skills programs with workshops and mock interviews prior to academic learning pertaining to industry professional needs.

Expansion of Course- ELT should be expanded throughout the course even if for lesser number of credits.

Faculty Recruitment- the Faculty with linguistics background should be prioritized during recruitment as the syllabus is not literature oriented.

Overall, both NIT Srinagar and IOT Zakura can develop stronger communication skills for the learners to meet the demands of the global corporate world with a greater level of employability. Consequently, both institutions will benefit not only students, but also in increasing their overall reputation as an institution for industry-relevant education. The actionability of the recommendation & their proper implementation is another crucial factor which will reduce the gap between English which is taught & the English which is applied in the professional contexts.

It is important here to address the applicability of the proposed framework, which is not limited to two institutions; rather it can be used to evaluate the industry-readiness of the English curriculum of any institution. The framework is designed in such a manner that it can be easily extended & applied for different subjects with minor adjustments. Not even limiting to colleges, the framework can be applied to any educational institution or even professional training institutions to understand that whether their curriculum is at par with the requirements of the multinational corporations. Using the calculated score, the institution or the researcher can introspect that whether the alumni of the evaluated educational institutions are ready to dive head on in the corporate as evaluation &feedback are the most important parts of any process.

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