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ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY THROUGH CURRICULUM INNOVATION: SECONDARY EVIDENCE ON STUDENT UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT
In today's rapidly evolving job market, employability is no longer defined solely by academic qualifications but by the ability to continuously adapt, upskill, and reskill. The growing gap between traditional curricula and industry expectations has compelled higher education institutions to rethink their academic frameworks. This secondary research paper explores how curriculum innovation enhances employability by analysing existing literature, reports, and empirical studies on students' perceptions of upskilling and reskilling initiatives.
Drawing upon scholarly articles, policy documents, and industry reports, the study synthesizes evidence on how students perceive the relevance, effectiveness, and practical applicability of competency-based and skill-oriented learning models. The findings indicate that students increasingly value experiential learning, interdisciplinary approaches, digital competencies, and industry-integrated programs. However, secondary evidence also highlights concerns regarding curriculum rigidity, limited practical exposure, and unequal access to quality upskilling opportunities.
Keywords: Employability, Curriculum Innovation, Upskilling, Reskilling, Skill Development, Higher Education.

INTRODUCTION
The contemporary employment landscape is characterized by rapid technological advancement, automation, and shifting industry demands. In this dynamic environment, traditional degree-based education is no longer sufficient to guarantee employability. Employers increasingly seek graduates who possess adaptable skills, practical competencies, and a mindset of continuous learning. As a result, higher education institutions are under growing pressure to innovate their curricula to better align with workforce expectations.This secondary research paper examines how curriculum innovation contributes to enhancing employability by analysing existing literature on students' perceptions of upskilling and reskilling initiatives. By synthesizing prior studies and reports, the paper explores how students evaluate skill-oriented programs, industry integration, and competency-based learning models, and how these perceptions influence career readiness. Through this lens, the study highlights the importance of shifting from content-focused education to competency-driven learning frameworks that prepare graduates for an evolving job market.

LITERATURE REVIEW
(Lavidas, 2023), International higher education institutions are now increasingly using Moodle, an open-source Learning Management System (LMS), to facilitate the implementation of innovative Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Moodle's flexible and modular system has been cited within the literature as its most prominent advantage, allowing it to incorporate multimedia resources, threaded discussions, and collaborative tools like forums and wikis to increase learner engagement and interaction. More recently, Moodle has been viewed within research circles for its ability to support active learning through quizzes, modular learning units, and continuous assessment tools, leading to evident and observable increases within student engagement and learning outcomes .Further research also suggests that Moodle can add to quality learning outcomes and aid the development and enhancement of professional skills within higher education institutions when properly and aligning integrated with overall institutional policies and pedagogies. Current research also remains relatively limited within its focus on technological aspects and implementation, leaving scope within the academic community for more research within pedagogical aspects and overall learning effects.
(Li, 2022), The financial sector is undergoing significant transformation driven by rapid advancements in digital technologies, compelling finance professionals to continuously upgrade their digital competencies (Li, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2023). The integration of technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and big data analytics has reshaped financial services through digital banking, automated trading systems, and the adoption of digital currencies. Existing literature consistently highlights the growing importance of digital skills, particularly data analytics, cybersecurity, AI literacy, and blockchain expertise, as essential for navigating this transformation (Gartner, 2023; PwC, 2019). While these studies emphasize the strategic relevance of digital capabilities, they largely adopt a macro-level perspective, indicating a need for more focused research on how finance professionals develop and apply these skills in practice.
(Halkias, 2021), The rapid pace of technological advancement associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution is significantly reshaping labor market requirements, creating an urgent need for reskilling and upskilling within management education (Iyer, 2020). Prior studies emphasize that business schools must redesign curricula to better align with future workforce demands by integrating technological competencies, soft skills, and a lifelong learning orientation (Halkias, 2021). However, existing literature largely discusses these changes at a conceptual level, highlighting the need for deeper empirical insights into how management education institutions implement such transformations in practice.
(Longhini, 2021), MOOCs have recently become leading scalable and flexible modes of education that specifically suit working professionals who need to upgrade their skills, finding a balance between time and geographical constraints. Despite their wide diffusion, the literature identifies low completion rates, limited personalization, and difficulties in aligning the course content with specific industrial competencies as several limitations of MOOCs. All these issues make MOOCs less effective as a workforce development tool. Recent research has indicated that integrating MLOs into the MOOC design can overcome these limitations. MLOs are bite-sized learning units that are focused on highly specific learning objectives and thus assure more effective learner engagement, supporting the mastery of competencies and offering individual learning pathways. When inserted into competency-based MOOC frameworks, MLOs can bridge the gap between the large-scale accessibility of MOOCs and the demand for targeted, skill-oriented training. This will lead to an improvement of learning relevance and consequently better workforce applicability.
(Mansori, 2020), Ongoing industry disruption driven by rapid technological change has created an urgent need for continuous workforce upskilling and reskilling across sectors. This shift has prompted a paradigm change toward lifelong learning, supported by the development of a strong and responsive skills ecosystem that enables individuals to remain employable in dynamic labor markets (Fung, 2020). Additionally, the expansion of the gig economy and the growth of location-independent employment models have fundamentally altered traditional talent requirements, emphasizing flexibility, digital proficiency, and self-directed learning. In response to these changes, the literature increasingly recognizes technology management as a critical organizational capability, highlighting the responsibility of training and educational institutions to continuously adapt and modernize their curricula in alignment with evolving industry needs.

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(Schwinghammer, 2020), The industrial workforce is increasingly challenged by rapid technological advancements and evolving market demands, which have intensified skill mismatches across industries .In response, upskilling and reskilling have emerged as critical strategies to maintain workforce competitiveness in the context of Industry 4.0.The literature identifies Competency-Based Education (CBE) as a particularly effective approach to addressing these challenges, as it emphasizes the acquisition and mastery of industry-relevant competencies rather than traditional time-bound learning structures .By aligning learning outcomes with workplace requirements, CBE enables learners to develop practical, job-ready skills that directly correspond to industry needs. Furthermore, prior studies highlight the role of innovative learning systems in supporting continuous workforce development, positioning CBE as a sustainable model for addressing ongoing skill gaps in dynamic industrial environments.

(Sridevi, 2020), The future of education and work is undergoing rapid transformation due to continuous technological advancements and evolving industry requirements. Existing literature highlights that management education faces significant challenges in addressing gaps between academic institutions and industry expectations, particularly in terms of curriculum relevance, practical exposure, and the development of essential soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and problem-solving. Weak industry–institution linkages often result in graduates who are inadequately prepared for dynamic workplace demands. Moreover, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has further intensified these challenges by reshaping job roles through automation, digitalization, and advanced technologies, thereby increasing the need for large-scale workforce reskilling and upskilling initiatives). Prior studies emphasize that management education institutions must proactively redesign curricula, integrate experiential learning, and adopt future-oriented skill development strategies to remain aligned with the changing nature of work. However, much of the existing research remains conceptual, suggesting a need for empirical investigation into how management education systems can effectively respond to these transformations

OBJECTIVES

- To analyse students' perceptions of the relevance of upskilling and reskilling courses in enhancing employability and career readiness.
- To examine students' satisfaction with the content, delivery methods, and practical applicability of upskilling and reskilling courses.
- To know the student's expectation about the curriculum of upskilling and reskilling.

➢ **RESEARCH DESIGN: -**

- This research is based on descriptive research.

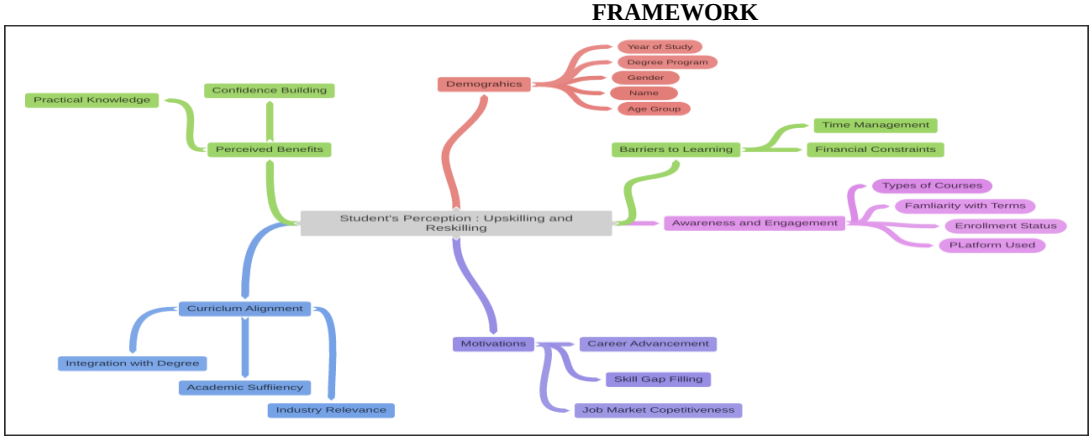
➢ **DATA COLLECTION METHOD: -**

- **Primary Collection**– Structured Questionnaire
- **Secondary Collection**– Research papers, journals, articles.

HYPOTHESIS

H0 (1): There is no significant relationship between students' perception of upskilling and reskilling courses and their perceived employability.
H1 (1): There is a significant relationship between students' perception of upskilling and reskilling courses and their perceived employability.
H0 (2): Upskilling and reskilling courses do not significantly influence students perceived career readiness.
H1 (2): Upskilling and reskilling courses significantly influence students perceived career readiness.
H0 (3): There is no significant association between practical applicability of upskilling courses and students' overall satisfaction.
H1 (3): There is a significant association between practical applicability of upskilling courses and students' overall satisfaction.
H0 (4): Students' satisfaction is not significantly affected by the quality of content in upskilling and reskilling courses.
H1 (4): Students' satisfaction is significantly affected by the quality of content in upskilling and reskilling courses.
H0 (5): Teaching and delivery methods of upskilling and reskilling courses have no significant impact on students' learning experience.
H1 (5): Teaching and delivery methods of upskilling and reskilling courses have a significant impact on students' learning experience.
H0 (6): There is no significant relationship between industry alignment of upskilling courses and students' employability perception.
H1 (6): There is a significant relationship between industry alignment of upskilling courses and students' employability perception.
H0 (7): Students' expectations regarding upskilling curriculum are not significantly different from the existing curriculum structure.
H1 (7): Students' expectations regarding upskilling curriculum are significantly different from the existing curriculum structure.
H0 (8): Experiential learning components (internships, projects, simulations) do not significantly affect students' satisfaction levels.
H1 (8): Experiential learning components significantly affect students' satisfaction levels.
H0 (9): There is no significant difference in perception of upskilling and reskilling courses across demographic variables (gender, specialization, academic level).
H1 (9): There is a significant difference in perception of upskilling and reskilling courses across demographic variables.
H0 (10): Students do not perceive a significant need for greater integration of upskilling and reskilling courses into the formal curriculum.
H1 (10): Students perceive a significant need for greater integration of upskilling and reskilling courses into the formal curriculum.

FRAMEWORK



The framework presented in the diagram reflects a simple but powerful idea: students do not see upskilling and reskilling as isolated activities—they see them as part of their journey toward becoming employable, confident, and future-ready professionals. Secondary evidence suggests that employability today is no longer guaranteed by a degree alone. Instead, it is shaped by how well students adapt, upgrade their skills, and connect their academic learning with real-world demands. This model therefore brings together the different factors

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that influence how students think and feel about skill development within innovative curricula.Students' backgrounds play an important role in shaping their perceptions. Factors such as year of study, degree program, age group, and gender subtly influence how seriously students approach upskilling. For instance, final-year students often feel a stronger sense of urgency about placements and career opportunities, which makes them more inclined to enroll in certification courses or practical training programs. Similarly, students from professional programs may naturally gravitate toward industry-oriented learning because it aligns with their career goals. In this way, demographics do not determine outcomes, but they shape readiness and responsiveness to skill-based initiatives.Awareness is another key element. Many students are interested in upskilling, but their level of engagement often depends on how informed they are about available opportunities. Familiarity with terms like "upskilling" and "reskilling," knowledge of different course types, enrolment experiences, and exposure to digital learning platforms all influence participation. Secondary research indicates that when institutions actively communicate and integrate such opportunities within the academic framework, students are more likely to view them as meaningful investments rather than optional extras. Awareness creates access, and access encourages action.Motivation lies at the heart of student engagement. Across studies, students consistently express that their primary reasons for pursuing additional skills include career advancement, bridging skill gaps, and improving competitiveness in the job market. Upskilling becomes a proactive strategy—a way to stay relevant, confident, and adaptable. This motivation reflects a shift in mindset, where students see themselves not just as learners, but as future professionals preparing for dynamic career landscapes.The alignment between curriculum and industry expectations significantly affects how students perceive the value of skill-based courses. When upskilling programs are thoughtfully integrated into the degree structure and linked to real-world applications, students report greater satisfaction and relevance. Practical projects, experiential learning, and industry collaboration strengthen their belief that what they are learning will truly matter outside the classroom. On the other hand, when such programs feel disconnected from academic content, they may appear as additional pressure rather than purposeful preparation. Curriculum innovation, therefore, must ensure coherence and practicality.Students also recognize tangible benefits from engaging in upskilling initiatives. Confidence building is particularly important, as it enhances self-efficacy and readiness for professional challenges such as interviews, internships, and workplace tasks. Secondary evidence consistently shows that competency-based learning supports both skill acquisition and psychological preparedness, reinforcing students' belief in their own capabilities.However, the journey is not without challenges. Time management issues, academic workload, and financial constraints often act as barriers to participation. Balancing regular coursework with additional certifications can feel overwhelming, and the cost of certain programs may discourage students from enrolling. These challenges highlight the need for institutions to create flexible, affordable, and inclusive models of skill development.Overall, the framework emphasizes that enhancing employability through curriculum innovation requires more than simply adding new courses. It demands an understanding of students' experiences, motivations, and limitations. Secondary evidence suggests that when institutions thoughtfully align curricula with industry needs, promote awareness, and reduce barriers, students are more likely to engage meaningfully in upskilling and reskilling. In essence, employability becomes not just an outcome, but a continuous process of learning, adapting, and growing—one that places students at the centre of curriculum transformation.

FINDINGS

OBJECTIVES	FINDINGS
1. To analyse students' perceptions of the relevance of upskilling and reskilling courses in enhancing employability and career readiness.	• Secondary literature strongly indicates that students perceive upskilling and reskilling initiatives as highly relevant in the current competitive employment landscape. Many students express concern that traditional academic curricula focus heavily on theoretical understanding while offering limited exposure to industry-specific competencies. As a result, they view skill-based courses as a bridge between classroom knowledge and workplace expectations. • Upskilling programs are commonly associated with strengthening technical expertise, digital capabilities, problem-solving abilities, and communication skills. Reskilling, on the other hand, is perceived as a necessary response to technological advancements and shifting industry demands. • Students increasingly recognize that career paths are no longer linear, and continuous learning is essential for long-term employability. • Overall, secondary evidence suggests that students connect participation in such programs with improved placement prospects, enhanced interview preparedness, and greater confidence in navigating professional environments.
2. To examine students' satisfaction with the content, delivery methods, and practical applicability of upskilling and reskilling courses.	• It reveals that students report higher satisfaction levels when courses are practical, interactive, and directly aligned with industry needs. Satisfaction tends to increase when learning includes case-based discussions, live projects, simulations, internships, certifications, and exposure to real business challenges. • Blended learning formats, workshops, and experiential training models are often preferred over traditional lecture-driven methods. • However, dissatisfaction emerges when course content is outdated, overly theoretical, or lacks hands-on application. Students also emphasize the importance of knowledgeable instructors, mentorship opportunities, and flexibility in scheduling to manage academic workload. • Overall, satisfaction is closely tied to the perceived usefulness and immediate applicability of skills in real-world contexts. Courses that clearly demonstrate workplace relevance are viewed more positively than those that appear disconnected from practical realities.
3. To know students' expectations about the curriculum of upskilling and reskilling.	• Secondary evidence highlights that students expect curriculum innovation to be structured, integrated, and continuously updated. Rather than treating upskilling courses as optional add-ons, students prefer them to be embedded within the core academic framework. • They expect stronger collaboration between academia and industry to ensure that course content reflects current market trends and technological developments. Affordability and accessibility are also significant expectations, as financial constraints can limit participation. Students further expect certification credibility, career counselling support, internship linkages, and mentorship integration within these programs. • Importantly, they seek a curriculum that prepares them not only for immediate job placement but also for long-term career adaptability and lifelong learning. • This reflects a growing awareness among students that employability is an evolving process requiring continuous skill enhancement.

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CONCLUSION

The study highlights that curriculum innovation is essential for enhancing employability in a rapidly evolving job market shaped by technological advancements and changing industry demands. Students increasingly recognize that traditional, theory-based education alone is insufficient to meet workplace expectations. Secondary evidence shows that upskilling and reskilling initiatives significantly contribute to career readiness, confidence building, and long-term adaptability. Learners particularly value experiential learning, digital competencies, competency-based education, and industry-integrated programs. Satisfaction levels are higher when courses are practical, updated, and aligned with real-world applications. However, challenges such as limited practical exposure, curriculum rigidity, time constraints, and financial barriers continue to affect participation. Students also expect structured integration of skill-based courses within the formal academic framework rather than as optional additions. Strong industry collaboration and credible certifications further enhance perceived employability outcomes. The findings reinforce that employability is a continuous process requiring lifelong learning and adaptability. Overall, innovative, flexible, and industry-aligned curricula are crucial for preparing graduates to thrive in dynamic professional environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Higher education institutions should integrate upskilling and reskilling courses into the core curriculum to ensure structured and mandatory skill development.

2) Stronger industry–academia collaboration should be established to keep course content aligned with current market trends and technological advancements.

3) Institutions should promote experiential learning through internships, live projects, simulations, and certification programs to enhance practical exposure.

4) Flexible scheduling and affordable learning models should be introduced to reduce financial and time-related barriers for students.

5) Continuous curriculum review mechanisms should be implemented to ensure relevance, innovation, and long-term employability outcomes.

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