

INDUSTRY-READY DESIGN GRADUATES: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CURRICULUM ADMINISTRATION IN ART AND DESIGN INSTITUTIONS.

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ABSTRACT

The rapid transformation of the creative industries has significantly changed the professional competencies expected from graduates of art and design institutions. Contemporary design professionals are required to demonstrate not only artistic and conceptual abilities but also technological proficiency, communication skills, problem-solving capabilities, project management, collaboration, entrepreneurship, adaptability and an understanding of professional practice. This has created a growing need to examine whether existing curricula and curriculum-administration practices in art and design institutions adequately respond to the expectations of the professional design industry.

This research examines the relationship between academic curriculum and professional requirements in art and design education, with particular emphasis on the effectiveness of curriculum administration in producing industry-ready graduates. The study investigates the extent to which curriculum content, pedagogy, assessment methods, industry exposure, internships, live projects, software training, portfolio development and professional interactions contribute to graduate employability. It also examines the perspectives of students, faculty members, industry professionals and academic administrators regarding existing curriculum–industry alignment.

A mixed-method research design may be adopted, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and curriculum analysis. The study proposes a comparative framework through which academic learning outcomes can be mapped against professional competencies required by contemporary creative industries. Particular attention is given to emerging areas such as digital design, user experience, social media communication, artificial intelligence, sustainability, interdisciplinary collaboration and freelance entrepreneurship.

The study is expected to identify areas of alignment as well as gaps between curriculum provisions and workplace expectations. It argues that curriculum administration should be treated as a continuous, evidence-based process involving industry consultation, periodic curriculum review, faculty development, experiential learning and systematic graduate-employability feedback. The research concludes that industry readiness should not mean reducing art and design education to vocational training; rather, institutions should establish a productive balance between creative thinking, theoretical understanding, artistic development and professional competence.

Keywords: Art and Design Education, Industry Readiness, Curriculum Administration, Employability, Design Education, Professional Competencies, Industry–Academia Collaboration, Graduate Skills, Curriculum–Industry Alignment.

1) INTRODUCTION

This research-paper-ready framework for the topic “Industry-Ready Design Graduates: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Curriculum Administration in Art and Design Institutions – Curriculum vs. Professional Requirements.” have been structured to develop particularly in the context of Art & Design / Applied Art / Visual Communication / Design education in India.

The topic is especially relevant because contemporary higher education is increasingly expected to connect learning outcomes with employability, workplace competencies and changing professional practices. UNESCO’s SDG 4.4 explicitly emphasizes relevant technical and vocational skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship, while recent research argues that employability requires changes not only in

curriculum content but also in teaching, learning and assessment. (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org>)

Art and design education occupies a distinctive position within higher education because it combines creativity, cultural understanding, technical knowledge, critical thinking and professional practice. Unlike conventional academic disciplines where theoretical knowledge may constitute a substantial component of professional preparation, design education requires students to continuously translate ideas into visual, material, digital or experiential outcomes.

The contemporary creative industry, however, has undergone considerable transformation. Digital technologies, artificial intelligence, social media, e-commerce, immersive media, user-experience design, sustainable design practices and interdisciplinary collaboration have expanded the professional roles available to design graduates. Consequently, employers increasingly expect graduates to demonstrate a combination of **creative, technical, interpersonal and professional competencies**.

Recent research on higher education employability also indicates that embedding employability requires changes in curriculum design as well as teaching, learning and assessment practices.

For art and design institutions, therefore, curriculum administration should move beyond periodic syllabus revision. It should involve a continuous process of:

Industry requirements → curriculum planning → teaching and learning → practical exposure → assessment → graduate outcomes → industry feedback → curriculum revision.

The present study proposes to examine this cycle and determine whether it effectively produces **industry-ready design graduates**.

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2) LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1 Curriculum and Employability

The concept of employability has increasingly become an important dimension of higher education. Employability does not simply mean obtaining employment; it includes the capacity of graduates to apply knowledge, adapt to changing professional circumstances, communicate effectively and continue learning.

Recent research on Education 4.0 argues that employability needs to be incorporated into curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment rather than treated as an additional activity outside the curriculum.

For art and design education, this is particularly important because professional practice is characterized by continuous technological and cultural change.

2.2 Curriculum – Industry Alignment

Curriculum–industry alignment refers to the degree to which academic knowledge, competencies and learning outcomes correspond with professional expectations.

An effective curriculum should therefore answer three questions:

What does the student learn?

What can the student actually do?

What does the profession expect the graduate to be able to do?

A curriculum can be academically comprehensive yet professionally inadequate if it does not provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge under realistic professional conditions.

2.3 Experiential Learning

Design education is inherently practice-oriented. Students learn through:

- studio projects;
- workshops;
- demonstrations;
- critiques;
- field visits;

- internships;
- live briefs;
- collaborative projects;
- exhibitions;
- competitions;
- client-based assignments.

Work-integrated learning is particularly valuable because it exposes students to workplace expectations. UNESCO similarly recognizes workplace learning, internships and apprenticeships as mechanisms for building relevant skills and improving employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

2.4 Industry-Academia Collaboration

Strong relationships between educational institutions and industry can improve curriculum relevance.

Potential mechanisms include:

- industry experts on Boards of Studies;
- guest lectures;
- visiting professionals;
- industry-led workshops;
- internships;
- live client projects;
- mentorship programmes;
- joint research;
- industry-sponsored projects;
- portfolio reviews;
- placement partnerships.

The earlier Indian policy discourse around professional education also emphasized stronger industry–institution interaction, including industry participation in curriculum-related bodies, adjunct faculty and internships.

2.5 Digital Transformation

Digital transformation has fundamentally altered design practice.

Contemporary design graduates may need competence in:

- Adobe Creative Cloud;
- UI/UX tools;
- motion graphics;
- 3D visualization;
- digital illustration;
- prototyping;
- web design;
- social media content creation;
- data visualization;
- AI-assisted design;
- digital publishing;
- emerging immersive technologies.

Therefore, curriculum revision cannot merely involve adding another software subject. Institutions need to consider **how digital technologies transform the entire design process**.

2.6 Soft Skill and Professional Skills

Professional success depends upon more than technical competence.

Important employability competencies include:

Academic / Technical Competencies Professional / Soft Competencies

1. Drawing	2. Communication
3. Typography	4. Teamwork
5. Illustration	6. Leadership
7. Photography	8. Problem-solving
9. Digital design	10. Time management
11. Branding	12. Adaptability
13. UI/UX	14. Presentation
15. Animation	16. Client interaction
17. Visual communication	18. Negotiation
19. Portfolio development	20. Professional ethics

3) BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Traditionally, art education has placed strong emphasis on drawing, painting, aesthetics, art history, visual composition, creativity and studio practice. Design education subsequently expanded this foundation by incorporating communication design, typography, illustration, advertising, photography, digital media, animation, branding, user experience and related disciplines.

However, the professional environment has developed faster than many academic curricula.

A graduate may possess strong drawing or design skills but still encounter difficulties in:

- working according to a professional brief;
- meeting deadlines;
- presenting concepts to clients;
- preparing professional portfolios;
- communicating with multidisciplinary teams;
- understanding production processes;
- estimating project costs;
- negotiating with clients;
- using contemporary software and digital tools;
- understanding intellectual property and copyright;
- responding to feedback;
- managing multiple projects;
- working within commercial constraints;
- using emerging AI-assisted design tools;
- understanding sustainability and ethical design;
- developing entrepreneurial or freelance practices.

This indicates that academic competence and professional competence are related but not identical.

The central concern of this research is therefore the curriculum–professional practice gap.

4) STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the increasing demand for skilled creative professionals, art and design institutions may experience a gap between academic preparation and workplace expectations.

The problem can be stated as follows:

To what extent does the curriculum administration of art and design institutions effectively prepare graduates with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and professional competencies required by the contemporary design industry?

5) AIM OF THE STUDY

The primary aim of the study is:

To evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum administration in art and design institutions in developing industry-ready graduates and to identify the gaps between academic curriculum and contemporary professional requirements.

6) OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the existing curriculum structure of selected art and design institutions.
2. To identify the professional competencies currently expected from design graduates.
3. To compare academic learning outcomes with industry requirements.
4. To assess the adequacy of technical and digital skills provided through the curriculum.
5. To examine the effectiveness of internships, workshops, live projects and industry interactions.
6. To study the perceptions of students regarding their preparedness for employment.
7. To examine faculty perceptions regarding curriculum relevance and industry expectations.
8. To investigate industry professionals' perceptions of the competencies demonstrated by design graduates.
9. To examine the role of curriculum administration in updating and implementing industry-relevant content.
10. To recommend strategies for strengthening curriculum–industry alignment.

7) RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What competencies do contemporary employers expect from art and design graduates?
2. To what extent does the existing curriculum address these professional competencies?
3. What gaps exist between academic learning and workplace requirements?
4. How effective are internships, live projects and industry interactions in developing professional readiness?
5. How do students, faculty and industry professionals perceive the employability of design graduates?
6. How effectively does curriculum administration respond to technological and professional changes?
7. What curriculum-administration strategies can improve the industry readiness of art and design graduates?

8) CURRICULUM VERSUS PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Curriculum component	Academic provision	Professional requirement	Gap
Drawing	Strong	Required	Low
Design fundamentals	Strong	Required	Low
Typography	Moderate/Strong	Required	Medium
Digital tools	Varies	High	Medium/High
UI/UX	Emerging	High	High
AI tools	Emerging	Increasing	High
Portfolio development	Moderate	Essential	Medium
Client interaction	Limited	Essential	High
Project management	Limited	Essential	High
Presentation skills	Moderate	Essential	Medium
Internship	Available in many institutions	Essential	Medium
Entrepreneurship	Limited	Increasingly important	High

Copyright/IP	Limited	Important	High
Freelancing	Limited	Important	High
Sustainability	Increasing	Increasing	Medium
Industry projects	Variable	Essential	Medium/High

9) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

9.1 A mixed-method research design is opted because the research involves both measurable perceptions and qualitative experiences.

The quantitative component can measure:

- student perceptions;
- faculty perceptions;
- employer perceptions;
- curriculum relevance;
- skill preparedness;
- internship effectiveness.

The qualitative component can explore:

- curriculum gaps;
- professional expectations;
- institutional constraints;
- experiences of graduates;
- suggestions from industry professionals.

Recent research on curriculum–industry alignment in Indian higher education has similarly employed mixed methods to combine survey evidence with qualitative feedback from students and educators.

9.2 Population

The study may include four major stakeholder groups:

Group A - Students

Final-year students of BFA/B.Des./Applied Art/Design programmes.

Group B – Faculty

Teachers involved in studio, theory and professional subjects.

Group C – Industry Professionals

Creative directors, art directors, designers, advertising professionals, UX professionals, illustrators, animators, photographers and related practitioners.

Group D – Academic Administrators

Principals, heads of departments, curriculum coordinators and members of Boards of Studies.

9.3 Sampling

A purposive or stratified sampling technique adopted.

- 150–250 students;
- 30–50 faculty members;
- 20–40 industry professionals;
- 10–20 academic administrators.

9.4 Data Collection Tools

A. Student Questionnaire

Dimensions:

1. Curriculum relevance.
2. Technical competency.
3. Digital competency.
4. Portfolio preparedness.
5. Communication.
6. Internship experience.
7. Industry interaction.
8. Professional confidence.
9. Entrepreneurship.
10. Overall employability readiness.

A five-point Likert scale used:

1 – Strongly Disagree

2 – Disagree

3 – Neutral

4 – Agree

5 – Strongly Agree

B. Faculty Questionnaire

Questions were focus on:

- curriculum flexibility;
- syllabus revision;
- industry consultation;
- faculty development;
- technology integration;
- assessment methods;
- practical learning;
- internships;
- industry participation.

C. Industry Questionnaire

Industry professionals evaluated graduates on:

- creative thinking;
- technical skills;
- software proficiency;
- conceptual ability;
- visual communication;
- problem-solving;
- teamwork;
- presentation;
- professionalism;
- time management;

- client handling;
- adaptability;
- portfolio quality.

D. Semi – Structured Interviews

Interviews conducted with selected:

- principals;
- heads of departments;
- faculty;
- industry experts;
- alumni.

E. Curriculum Analysis

The actual curriculum/syllabus analysed according to:

Learning Outcome → Subject → Skill → Practical Application → Industry Relevance → Assessment

10) ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

An Industry Readiness Index (IRI).

Industry Readiness =

- Technical competence – 20%
- Creative/problem-solving ability – 20%
- Digital competence – 15%
- Communication/presentation – 10%
- Professional practice – 15%
- Teamwork/adaptability – 10%
- Entrepreneurship/business awareness – 10%

Classified graduates as:

- Highly Industry Ready
- Industry Ready
- Moderately Industry Ready
- Needs Professional Development
- Significantly Underprepared

11) FINDINGS

The study investigated the possibility of several recurring gaps:

Gap 1: Academic knowledge versus practical application

Gap 2: Traditional skills versus digital skills

Gap 3: Individual creativity versus collaborative practice

Gap 4: Academic assessment versus professional evaluation

- problem-solving;
- usability;
- client objectives;
- deadlines;
- technical feasibility;

- commercial effectiveness.

Gap 5: Portfolio versus professional portfolio

Gap 6: Internship versus meaningful work experience

12) RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 To Establish Industry Advisory Panels

Every art and design institution should consider establishing an active **Industry Advisory Panel** consisting of professionals from relevant creative sectors.

Its role should include:

- curriculum review;
- identification of emerging skills;
- industry feedback;
- internship development;
- live projects;
- portfolio evaluation.

12.2 To Strengthen Live Projects

Students should work on authentic design briefs involving:

- branding;
- advertising;
- publication;
- social media;
- packaging;
- events;
- public communication;
- UI/UX;
- community projects.

12.3 To Introduce Professional Practice Modules

A dedicated professional-practice module could cover:

- freelancing;
- contracts;
- copyright;
- intellectual property;
- client management;
- quotations;
- invoicing;
- project management;
- professional ethics;
- entrepreneurship;
- personal branding.

12.4 Faculty Industry Exposure

Faculty development should include:

- industry internships;
- professional workshops;
- certification programmes;
- collaborative industry projects;
- conferences;
- research collaborations;
- technology up skilling.

Faculty industry exposure is particularly important because curriculum relevance depends heavily on the people who interpret and deliver it.

13) DISCUSSION

Art and design institutions have a broader educational responsibility. They must cultivate:

- creativity;
- cultural awareness;
- critical thinking;
- experimentation;
- aesthetic sensitivity;
- ethical awareness;
- independent thought.

At the same time, graduates must be capable of translating these qualities into professional contexts.

Therefore, the objective should not be:

Curriculum = Industry

but rather:

Curriculum + Creative Foundation + Professional Exposure + Continuous Industry Feedback = Industry-Ready Graduate

14) CONCLUSION

The increasing complexity of the creative economy has made the relationship between art and design education and professional practice an important area of academic inquiry. The contemporary design professional is expected to possess considerably more than artistic or technical competence. Creativity must increasingly be combined with digital literacy, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, project management, professional ethics, entrepreneurship and adaptability.

The effectiveness of an art and design curriculum should therefore not be judged exclusively by the number of subjects offered or by successful completion of examinations. It should also be evaluated according to whether graduates can transfer academic knowledge into authentic professional situations.

The study proposes that curriculum administration should become a dynamic and continuous process involving students, faculty, administrators, alumni and industry professionals. Industry interaction, internships, live projects, portfolio development, faculty development and systematic curriculum review should become integral components rather than supplementary activities.

Ultimately, an effective art and design curriculum should maintain a balance between artistic foundations and professional relevance. The goal is not simply to produce graduates who can obtain their first job, but graduates who can think creatively, solve problems, adapt to technological change, communicate professionally and continue learning throughout their careers.

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