

The Role of Soft Skills in the Startup Ecosystem: Are Indian Graduates Ready for Entrepreneurial Workplaces?

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Abstract: This paper explores the readiness of Indian graduates, particularly those from economics backgrounds, to thrive in the rapidly evolving startup ecosystem, with a specific focus on the critical role of soft skills. As India has emerged as a global leader in startup growth, government initiatives have fostered innovation and adaptability within entrepreneurial workplaces. However, a significant gap persists between the technical competency of graduates and their preparedness for the dynamic demands of startups. Despite producing one of the world's largest cohorts of technically skilled graduates annually, India faces a paradox: a surplus of degree-holders who often lack essential soft skills such as critical thinking, communication, teamwork, adaptability, and leadership. These competencies are increasingly valued in startups, where employees must quickly assume multifaceted roles, make real-time decisions, and engage effectively across diverse teams and cultures. The prevailing education system, with its emphasis on rote learning and examination performance, frequently overlooks the cultivation of these crucial interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities. Efforts such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 have begun to address this gap, advocating for a more holistic, multidisciplinary approach to learning.

Nevertheless, the translation of policy into practice remains uneven across educational institutions, especially outside metropolitan areas. This disconnect contributes to a persistent employability gap, where graduates excel academically but are less equipped for the collaborative, innovative, and pressure-driven environments characteristic of startups. By analysing the expectations of startup employers and the current state of graduate training in soft skills, this paper highlights the urgent need for educational reform and targeted interventions better to prepare Indian graduates for successful integration into entrepreneurial workplaces.

Keywords: *Soft Skills, Indian Graduates, Startup Ecosystem, Employability Gap, Education Reform, Entrepreneurial Workplaces.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background Context

As per the Startup India 2023 report [1], India has emerged as one of the most dynamic startup support systems in the world in recent times. In terms of the number of startups, it ranked third, a significant achievement. Initiatives from the government, such as Digital India and Startup India, have catalysed digital adoption and unleashed

the entrepreneurial spirit in the country. The startup culture has played a critical role in shifting companies from the conventional way of working to a more adaptable and creative approach. Consequently, employee involvement and initiatives at every level have increased exponentially. A problem-solving approach by teams helps startups make faster decisions and makes them more responsive to evolving business dynamics. There is a stronger focus on soft skills like critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and

leadership than on academic achievement or technical skills [2]. Growing stress on these intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies has raised important issues concerning the readiness of Indian graduates to add substantial value to such innovative business environments.

Even as India churns out one of the largest batches of technically competent graduates every year, especially in the areas of engineering and management, they are not adequately equipped to meet the demands of working in startups. This apparent paradox of a surplus of graduates and the shortage of employment-capable talent is rooted in the education system's overconcentration on straight theoretical education and examination performance, to the detriment of the cultivation of necessary soft skills. According to the National Employability Enhancement Mission report (2022) [3], close to 47 per cent of Indian graduates lack basic communication and problem-solving skills, which reduces their attractiveness to employers, particularly within nimble, results-driven environments like startups.

Unlike conventional corporations, where new employees are promised structured learning and well-defined job functions, startups anticipate new employees to be ready to run within a day of joining the company, not only with domain knowledge but with situational awareness and collaborative work ethics. Employees should be flexible to multitask and remain open to feedback. They need to perform effectively under pressure while maintaining proactive communication with all stakeholders. As Indian startups expand into international markets, there is a greater emphasis on understanding and managing cross-cultural sensitivities for effective communication [4].

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 [5] has recognised the need for soft skills and is promoting a holistic and multidisciplinary educational methodology in education. Yet, the policy-to-practice gap remains uneven across institutions, particularly beyond metropolitan centres. The dominant pedagogy in most higher educational institutions is still built around rote learning, with limited space for students to develop adaptive, interpersonal, and leadership skills needed to drive startup success.

The changing work environment in India, characterised by novel entrepreneurial cultures, highlights the necessity to rethink how we prepare graduates for the job market. As startups influence the direction and pace of work, soft skills are becoming increasingly relevant. This paper thus examines whether economics graduates in India are well prepared to respond to the needs of startup environments and address any gaps in education and training that limit their preparedness in soft skills.

B. Problem Statement

India's startup scene is growing rapidly and creating numerous new job opportunities for young graduates. However, many of these jobs stay vacant not because of a lack of technical skills but because candidates often lack soft skills like teamwork, adaptability, and communication [6]. This mismatch happens because training institutions tend to

focus more on exams and memorisation rather than promoting critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration.

As a result, while many graduates may excel in tests, they may struggle to handle real-world work that requires emotional resilience, initiative, and effective interpersonal skills [7].

Many industry reports and studies have shown that in India, there is an "employability paradox" [8] where students have official certifications but lack important workplace skills. According to the 2023 India Skills Report [9], less than half of Indian graduates are considered employable by hiring managers, mainly due to missing skills in speaking, making decisions, leading others, and working in teams. These findings demonstrate a notable discrepancy between the outputs of higher education and actual professional requirements, especially in high-stress, dynamic environments, such as those found in startups every day.

In addition, the difficulty is further exacerbated by a lack of standardisation in teaching, testing, or even recognition of soft skills at Indian universities [10]. Soft skill development is frequently relegated to the periphery as an afterthought if it is covered at all. It is usually taught through short-term workshops or voluntary seminars, but not as a part of the primary curriculum. This method does not afford students consistent, contextualised opportunities to use and hone these critical skills [11]. As such, even the best of educational reform efforts have not translated into quantifiable gains in graduate readiness.

Startups are now key to economic growth and creating jobs, especially in India's digital economy. It's important to find out if today's graduates have the skills needed to succeed in startups. If we don't act soon, the gap between what graduates know and what startups need could harm young people's chances of finding jobs and hurt the growth and success of India's startup industry [12].

The present study, then, aims to determine the extent and nature of the soft skills gap among Indian graduates in the context of working in startups. It also intends to investigate structural, pedagogical, and institutional causes behind this gap as well as suggest strategies for improving soft skill preparation.

C. Research Objectives

This study highlights the need for graduate skills to match the soft skills needed in India's growing startup scene. Startups need people who can think critically, adapt quickly, work well with others, and communicate clearly in busy, changing environments. Although India trains many technically skilled graduates, many are not ready for these important non-technical skills.

The main goal of this research is to find out if Indian graduates have the soft skills needed to succeed in startup workplaces, which are quite different from traditional organisations. The study aims to better understand the gap

between what students learn and what industries expect when it comes to soft skills.

The research aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

➤ *To Identify the Key Soft Skills Most Valued in Indian Startup Environments.*

The research intends to identify which particular soft skills, like communication, flexibility, emotional intelligence, innovative thinking, and collaboration, are given priority by founders, HR managers, and startup coaches in nascent firms.

➤ *To Assess the Readiness of Indian Graduates to Fulfil these Soft Skill Requirements*

This goal is to assess how well Indian graduates perform in important areas and how this impacts their ability to integrate and succeed in entrepreneurial settings.

➤ *To Examine the Systemic and Educational Barriers that Hamper Soft Skill Development in Higher Learning Institutions*

The study will set out to determine the structural failures in curriculum development, pedagogy, faculty development, and assessment systems that lead to the existing shortage of soft skills.

➤ *To Research Existing Institutional and Industry-Level Interventions to Improve Soft Skill Development in Graduates*

The research looks at models of best practice, such as incubation centres, entrepreneurship cells, private certification schemes, and government-supported initiatives facilitating the development of soft skills in a startup environment.

➤ *To Develop Evidence-Based Suggestions for Incorporating Soft Skills Training in Higher Education Systems with Applicability to Startup Careers*

The long-term vision is to establish workable, scalable, and contextualised strategies for filling the soft skills gap and improving the readiness of Indian graduates for startups.

This research aims to help improve education and employability by providing useful information to policymakers, teachers, and industry leaders. It focuses on how graduates' skills can better match the changing needs of India's startup economy.

D. Research Questions

The changing character of work in India's startup sector challenges pressing questions regarding the readiness of India's graduates. Technical expertise is still a priority requirement for hiring, but more startup entrepreneurs and recruiters today are placing emphasis on soft skills that measure a candidate's capacity to operate in team-based, ambiguous, and high-performance settings. Against this background, this study aims to investigate fundamental questions that cover the theoretical as well as practical aspects of the soft skills-employability link.

The subsequent research questions frame the scope and focus of this study:

➤ *What do Indian Startups Value Most in the Fundamental Soft Skills When Recruiting New Graduates?*

This question looks at what particular non-technical skills are deemed to be critical for success in startup positions. It also looks at whether these vary between sectors like fintech, edtech, healthtech, and other growth areas.

➤ *To What Extent are Indian Graduates Equipped with these Soft Skills as they Enter the Job Market?*

It's based on the perceived preparedness of graduates in communication, flexibility, emotional intelligence, creativity, and collaboration from the employer's and graduates' sides.

➤ *What are the Structural Gaps in Indian Higher Education Institutions that Inhibit the Development of Soft Skills?*

The question examines how factors such as curriculum, teacher training, learning spaces, and assessment methods influence students' readiness in soft skills.

➤ *What Models or Interventions Already in Place are Being Utilised Presently in India to Close the Soft Skills Gap Among Graduates?*

This question names and assesses institutional, private, and public efforts that have tried to tackle the employability challenge via soft skill development programs.

➤ *How can Indian Higher Education Institutions Most Effectively Mainstream Soft Skills Training to Accommodate the Changing Needs of Startup Work Environments?*

Posing the last question is meant to elicit practical suggestions that can be used to guide policy change, curriculum design innovation, and cooperative industry-academia endeavours to prepare graduates for entrepreneurial roles.

Collectively, these questions present the analytical framework adopted for this study. They not only facilitate the existing literature review and empirical data but also influence the study's contributions towards both scholarly insights and practical applications within India's education and employment industries.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Stakeholders such as scholars, educators and entrepreneurs agree on the value of soft skills in the workplace. The Indian economy is undergoing rapid transformation through the advancement of new digital technologies and the emergence of numerous startups. As a result, individuals are placing more emphasis on a wide range of skills that help them secure employment and

promote their career growth, rather than focusing on technical skills. This section discusses studies and research on soft skills, startup employment, and the preparedness of graduates to enter the labour market, particularly in India.

A. What are Soft Skills and How to Categorise them

Soft skills, in a broad sense, refer to non-technical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills that accompany hard

skills. Soft skills enable individuals to perform effectively in social and workplace situations, as well as with others [13]. Common soft skills are communication, emotional intelligence, flexibility, problem-solving, critical thinking, time management, and leadership [14]. There is no single way to categorise these skills, but they tend to be classified into thinking skills, personal qualities, and social abilities [15]. In startups, where the roles can shift and things happen fast, these skills are all the more critical.

Table 1 Perceived Level of Importance of Each soft Skill Attribute in Today's Workplace (N=57)

| Soft Skill Attribute | Not Important | | Not Very Important | | Somewhat Important | | Very Important | | Extremely Important | |
|----------------------|---------------|---|--------------------|-----|--------------------|------|----------------|------|---------------------|------|
| | 1 _____ | | 2 _____ | | 3 _____ | | 4 _____ | | 5 _____ | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Integrity | | | | | | | 4 | 7.0 | 53 | 93.0 |
| Communication | | | | | | | 5 | 8.8 | 52 | 91.2 |
| Courtesy | | | | | 2 | 3.5 | 7 | 12.3 | 48 | 84.2 |
| Responsibility | | | | | 5 | 8.8 | 11 | 19.3 | 41 | 71.9 |
| Interpersonal skills | | | | | 9 | 15.8 | 13 | 22.8 | 35 | 61.4 |
| Professionalism | | | | | 7 | 12.3 | 23 | 40.4 | 27 | 47.4 |
| Positive attitude | | | | | 6 | 10.5 | 25 | 43.9 | 26 | 45.6 |
| Teamwork skills | | | 1 | 1.8 | 16 | 28.1 | 15 | 26.3 | 25 | 43.9 |
| Flexibility | | | 1 | 1.8 | 12 | 21.1 | 20 | 35.1 | 24 | 42.1 |
| Work ethic | | | | | 14 | 24.6 | 22 | 38.6 | 21 | 36.8 |

Table 2 Mean and standard Deviation of Each Soft Attribute Relative to Perceived Level of Importance (N=57)

| Soft Skill Attribute | M | SD |
|----------------------|------|------|
| Integrity | 4.93 | 0.26 |
| Communication | 4.91 | 0.28 |
| Courtesy | 4.81 | 0.48 |
| Responsibility | 4.63 | 0.64 |
| Interpersonal skills | 4.46 | 0.75 |
| Positive attitude | 4.35 | 0.66 |
| Professionalism | 4.35 | 0.69 |
| Flexibility | 4.18 | 0.82 |
| Teamwork skills | 4.12 | 0.88 |
| Work ethic | 4.12 | 0.77 |

In Tables 1 and 2 above, Robles [2] found that all 57 executives (100%) agreed that integrity and communication are the top two soft skills needed by employees today, rating them as very or extremely important. Over 84.2% of respondents considered courtesy extremely important, and more than half (71.9% and 61.4%) viewed responsibility and interpersonal skills as extremely important. The response frequencies and importance levels assigned by business executives are detailed in **Table 1**.

Table 2 shows the mean scores and standard deviations for each soft skill, all scoring at least 4.12 on a 5-

point scale, where 5 is extremely important and 4 is not important. No soft skills were rated as not important; however, teamwork and flexibility each received one response indicating they were not very important, from different respondents.

B. Soft Skills and Employability in India

In India, the job readiness of graduates is a significant concern. Most studies indicate that, although Indian graduates possess thorough subject matter knowledge, they often lack essential skills such as effective communication, teamwork, and other soft skills [16]. The 2023 India Skills

Report [9] reveals that fewer than half of the graduates are employable, and the skills that are most in need of improvement are speaking, decision-making, and critical thinking.

The disconnect between school learning and employer expectations arises from an education focused on exams. The majority of engineering, management, and science courses rarely offer practical training and self-reflection, which means they do not develop essential soft skills [17]. Graduates may thus not struggle with technical interviews within the workplace, but they may be unable to cope with startup demands that require teamwork, quick thinking, and self-motivation.

C. Startup Culture and Soft Skill Needs

Startups are worlds apart from established firms in terms of work culture, structure, and the speed of decision-making. They operate on thin capital, require innovation in bulk, and even expect employees to multitask. In such cultures, employees must exhibit self-leadership, learnability, and emotional regulation qualities that aren't even cultivated via formal education [18]. According to a survey conducted by Deloitte (2022) [19], Indian startup founders value adaptability, problem-solving, and collaboration over academic credentials or technical qualifications.

In addition, as Indian startups become increasingly integrated into global markets, the need for cross-cultural communication, customer understanding, and people diplomacy skills intensifies [20]. Yet, few of them are equipped to handle such scenarios, especially those from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, who may lack access to English-medium education or digital exposure.

D. Education Policy and Institutional Interventions

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 [5] recognises the need to build students with twenty-first-century abilities such as communication, critical thinking, and creativity. It advocates for shifting from memorisation-based learning to a multidisciplinary, holistic approach to education. Its implementation, however, is inconsistent, with the majority of institutions continuing to consider soft skills training an extracurricular exercise rather than a core component of the curriculum [21].

Some forward-thinking institutions and private universities have adopted creative solutions. For example, Ashoka University and FLAME University incorporate critical thinking and problem-solving at the undergraduate level through seminars, case studies, and group work. Additionally, the Atal Innovation Mission, established by NITI Aayog, promotes entrepreneurial skill-building through tinkering labs and incubation centres with limited outreach [22].

E. Industry-Led Soft Skill Initiatives

Several programs have been created to develop soft skills. Organisations like NASSCOM FutureSkills, Aspiring

Minds, and TCS iON offer training camps, assessments, and certifications to build communication, collaboration, and adaptive thinking skills. They are, however, utilised once students enter the workforce and not in school.

School-startup partnerships are also occurring. Projects such as hackathons, internships, and live projects provide students with direct exposure to entrepreneurship, helping them develop the necessary soft skills. However, these initiatives are primarily targeted at students from top schools, making it challenging for students from state universities and rural colleges to access them.

F. Global Comparisons and Best Practices

Several countries have recognised the importance of integrating soft skills into education policy. Finland, Singapore, and Australia have developed national skill frameworks that consider students not only based on academic skills but also emotional intelligence, active citizenship, and problem-solving [23]. India lacks a national system to quantify soft skills; therefore, it is challenging for the country to track progress or allocate resources efficiently. There are also concerns, including a lack of qualified instructors and inadequate assessment tools. Although some Indian colleges provide soft skills training, these are more taught in a lecture mode that lacks practical experiences or individualised feedback [24].

III. KEY FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature ensures a multi-dimensional understanding of the growing significance of soft skills in entrepreneurial organisations and the ongoing weaknesses of the Indian higher education system. These findings suggest that, while there is an increasing concern over the role of soft skills, systemic limitations, disjointed implementation, and socio-economic inequalities continue to hinder the creation of a genuinely job-ready graduate population for India's startup economy. The following thematic outcomes have been identified through the review of the literature:

A. Indian Startups' High-Demand Soft Skills

Fast iteration, lean organisation, and ongoing necessity for innovation define startup cultures. In contrast to established corporate entities with structured hierarchies and formal training pipelines, startups depend on flexible teams where every team member is expected to play a dynamic and cross-functional role. As a result, specific soft skills are always emphasised in startup recruitment processes.

Foremost among these are flexibility, problem-solving, communication, and teamwork. Research indicates that startup founders prefer individuals who can think on their feet, clearly communicate regardless of position, and provide innovative solutions within tight timeframes [19] [25]. Emotional intelligence and resilience are also essential due to the uncertainty and pressure involved in startup settings [26]. These qualities contribute to successful

conflict resolution, improved leadership capabilities, and the skill to thrive in unpredictable scenarios.

B. Shortcomings in Graduate Soft Skill Readiness

Even with seeming demand, Indian graduates in general are inadequately prepared for the soft skills required by startups. Several national surveys point to this discrepancy. The India Skills Report 2023 identifies that most recent graduates have poor interpersonal and business communication skills. It also points to a need for increased appreciation of teamwork and critical thinking among young professionals. This finding aligns with the results of academic research, which attribute poor soft skills to conventional pedagogic procedures and examination-led education systems [27] [28].

Graduates from smaller Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities face an extra disadvantage. They often have little exposure to English-speaking contexts, international digital tools, or actual-world collaborative work. These lacunae are especially pronounced in remote startups or international client-facing startups, where intercultural communication, as well as professional self-presentation, become essential [29].

C. Structural and Educational Barriers

One of the ongoing themes within the literature is that existing institutional systems fail to encourage the development of soft skills. Indian universities predominantly retain a rote-learning approach, with few instances of incorporating reflective or experiential teaching practices that build interpersonal skills [30]. Academic staff are seldom trained to teach soft skills modules, and student evaluations rarely incorporate behavioural or communication-based metrics.

Additionally, soft skills are frequently seen as additional activities, such as extracurriculars or optional workshops, rather than being fully incorporated into the academic curriculum. This peripheral treatment conveys the message to students that these skills are secondary to their academic scores, hence lessening their will to take a serious interest in soft skill development [31].

D. Unequal Access to Industry Exposure

Practical experience through internships at startups, participation in hackathons, or launching entrepreneurial ventures often tends to favour students from certain institutions. Students from private universities and urban areas are more likely to have exposure to startup environments. In contrast, students attending state colleges or rural campuses often miss out on valuable hands-on experiences [32].

This imbalance contributes to creating an uneven playing field, where only a minority of graduates can acquire applied soft skills through experiential learning. In addition, the lack of scalable models for cooperation

between startups and non-urban universities further widens this gap.

E. Emerging Efforts and Innovations

Despite all these challenges, several encouraging initiatives are underway. Universities like Ashoka University and Shiv Nadar University have led the way in implementing integrated liberal arts models that put critical thinking, collaboration, and creative expression at the centre of learning. Others, such as NASSCOM's FutureSkills platform and the Atal Innovation Mission, provide industry-relevant content and mentoring to enhance graduate employability [22].

However, these interventions are still dispersed and have a narrow scope. The absence of a national system to evaluate, certify, or track soft skill capabilities across institutions limits the long-term effect. Furthermore, there is a lack of cooperation between startups and universities to co-design applicable learning experiences that mimic entrepreneurial dilemmas [33].

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research indicates that India's startup industry requires graduates with enhanced soft skills. While policies like NEP 2020 provide general guidance, real progress depends on changes in systems, institutions, and the industry to deliver better, integrated, inclusive, and sustainable soft skill training. The following are the suggested recommendations to address the current gaps and develop a more startup-ready workforce in India.

A. Infuse Soft Skills in Core Curricula

Higher education institutions need to break out of the tokenistic practice of including soft skills as ancillary sessions or non-credit courses. Soft skills ought to be included within the core curriculum, especially in undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Schools can employ a learning approach that focuses on developing skills such as critical thinking, negotiation, decision-making, and leadership over several semesters. Teaching methods should include projects, group presentations, teamwork, and reflections to help students grow both socially and personally. This way, students will see soft skills as an essential part of their professional identity, not just an extra.

B. Improve Industry-Academia Partnerships

To fill the employability gap, institutions need to form closer linkages with startup companies and industry players. Co-designed courses, boot camps organised by startups, mentoring schemes, and live capstones can provide students with a rich exposure to entrepreneurial work culture and expectations.

Startups can also become members of academic advisory boards to align education outcomes with market requirements. These associations need to go beyond top-tier institutions and be incentivised for Tier 2 and Tier 3 institutions, where exposure is restricted. Forms like incubation cells of startups within campuses or inter-

institutional startup networks can enable continuous interaction and co-creation.

C. Support Experiential Learning and Applied Training

Learning through doing must be at the heart of any soft skills training program. Colleges should create simulation labs, entrepreneurship challenges, and virtual startup spaces that mimic the unpredictability and flexibility of real workplaces. Activities such as role-playing, peer review, and design thinking workshops can help students enhance their communication, creativity, empathy, and time management skills in a safe and supportive environment. Internships with early-stage startups, especially those that expose students to various roles, should be encouraged and organised with credit-based assessments. Integrating internship diaries and supervisor feedback into coursework marking can also encourage students to take these opportunities seriously.

D. Invest in Faculty Development

One of the key soft skills training bottlenecks is the lack of adequately trained faculty. Most teachers are experts in their subject matter, but often lack experience with startup environments or teaching soft skills. Schools should allocate resources to training programs that emphasise student-centred teaching, emotional intelligence, inclusive facilitation, and engagement with industry. Activities such as joint immersion programs with startup incubators and cross-sector workshops can provide teachers with the knowledge and skills they need. Additionally, encouraging teachers from different fields, such as humanities and business, to collaborate on creating and teaching courses can lead to more well-rounded and engaging learning experiences.

E. Ensure Everyone has Fair Access and can be Tailored to Local Needs

When planning improvements for education in India, it's imperative to remember that students come from all sorts of different situations. This includes their family's financial background and the various languages they speak. To ensure more students can benefit, online learning tools such as MOOCs (online courses), mobile apps, and websites that teach critical soft skills should be available in all regional languages. This would make them much more accessible.

Another positive step would be for the government to collaborate with emerging educational technology companies. Together, they could develop learning solutions specifically tailored for students in rural villages and areas that currently lack sufficient resources. The training programs should focus on local startup scenes and entrepreneurial issues. For example, rural entrepreneurship programs, community innovation labs, and local incubation centres can help students see how soft skills apply in their communities.

F. Develop a National Soft Skills Competency Framework

There is an urgent need to create a national standard for checking and certifying soft skills. The standard should include the skills expected at different school levels, the

methods for assessing them, and official certificates that align with industry standards. Many groups, such as the Ministry of Education, startup organisations like NASSCOM, and schools, can collaborate to build this. This will help ensure efforts at the state, school, and private levels are coordinated and will set clear goals for improving soft skills over time.

V. CONCLUSION

The ever-changing nature of startup ecosystems requires an employee population that is not just technically competent but also flexible, emotionally intelligent, communicative, and collaborative. This study has established that, although India graduates a large number of technically competent graduates every year, most of them do not meet the soft skill requirements of startup employers. These voids are not random but are deeply ingrained within structural inadequacies in India's education systems, wherein pedagogical imperatives, evaluation paradigms, and faculty training tend to overlook the development of vital twenty-first-century skills.

Startups, as opposed to conventional corporate organisations, live off innovation, uncertainty, and lean architectures. Workers in these settings must be self-motivated, capable individuals who can learn quickly to take on changing roles, work across boundaries, and exchange ideas effectively. The literature and information considered in this research suggest that Indian graduates, particularly those from non-metropolitan areas, often lack adequate exposure and training to operate effectively within entrepreneurial environments. Obstacles such as rote-based syllabi, disconnected soft skills programs, and uneven access to industry exposures further exacerbate the issue.

Nevertheless, this research also spotlights nascent initiatives that show promise. India is revamping its education system through new policies and initiatives to focus on soft skills, which are a key criterion for employment. Initiatives like NASSCOM's FutureSkills and the Atal Innovation Mission are definitely valuable, but to truly make a difference, they need to be expanded so that more people across the country can benefit from them.

India needs to raise the standards of its academic education to the level of industry requirements. Students need more exposure to experiential learning with the most modern digital tools, and standardised tests should measure their progress in learning. It's equally important that students from villages and small towns have equal opportunities to access high-quality education. From a young age, learners need to be introduced to essential soft skills, such as communication and teamwork, that are crucial for workplace success.

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