



CORPORATE CONNECTION: A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING INDUSTRY-READY INDIVIDUALS

Subtitle: A Multi-Institutional Study on Collaborative Pedagogy and Leadership Development

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Abstract

This study investigates the critical gap between academic curricula and industrial expectations in India. Compiled during the "Nurturing Future Leadership Development Program" at IIM Nagpur (Jan 2026), this paper presents a synthesized framework titled "Corporate Connection." The research draws upon long-term data from three distinct initiatives: (i) An Industry-Powered Curriculum implemented over five years with Mahindra & Mahindra and Ador Welding, (ii) Joint Industrial Research for placement enhancement (2013-2018), and (iii) A copyrighted model for facilitating live industry projects. The findings suggest that structured, dual-mentorship ecosystems significantly reduce the graduate "training gestation period" and enhance institutional strategic competitiveness.

Index Terms — Corporate Connect, Industry-Academia Gap, NEP 2020, Skill Development, Live Projects, Leadership.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of Industry 5.0 and the digital transformation of business models have necessitated a shift in how higher education institutions (HEIs) prepare students. This paper is the outcome of a collaborative effort by five academicians under the *Madan Mohan Malviya Mission Teacher Training FDP* at **IIM Nagpur**. The central premise is that "Industry Readiness" cannot be achieved through sporadic guest lectures but requires a deeply integrated "Corporate Connection" that influences curriculum, research, and experiential learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on Indian higher education frequently cites the "Employability Crisis."

- **The Gap:** Sodi (2017) argues that while technical knowledge is prevalent, "contextual intelligence" is missing among graduates.
- **Curriculum Co-creation:** Studies by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) suggest that when industry leaders sit on the Board of Studies (BoS), the relevance of the program increases by 40%.

- **Experiential Learning:** Pedagogy like "Live Projects" is recognized as a high-impact practice. However, as noted by Kawday (2019), without a formal framework, these projects often lack academic rigor.
- **Indian Context:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes vocational integration and industry internships, making the "Corporate Connection" model highly relevant for contemporary Indian HEIs.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a **Qualitative Multi-Case Study** approach, analyzing three specific initiatives executed by the authors:

1. **Longitudinal Case Study:** Analyzing the 5-year execution of the Industry Powered Curriculum.
2. **R&D Analysis:** Reviewing the impact of the 2013-2018 Joint Research project with Mahindra & Mahindra.
3. **Model Validation:** Evaluating the efficacy of a Copyrighted Model for Live Projects across Marketing, Finance, and Engineering domains.

IV. CASE STUDIES AND INITIATIVES

4.1 Industry Powered Curriculum (IPC)

Implemented with **Mahindra and Mahindra Truck and Bus Division (Pune)**, **Ador Welding Ltd.**, and **Bajaj Steel Industries**. This initiative moved beyond traditional syllabus-setting.

- **Key Outcome:** The curriculum was "powered" by real-world case studies and shop-floor problems, resulting in students being "day-zero" ready for the specific needs of the automotive and manufacturing sectors.

4.2 Joint Research for Placement Attraction

A strategic initiative was undertaken with **Mahindra and Mahindra, Tractor Division (Nagpur)** from 2013 to 2018.

- **Process:** Faculty and students engaged in solving technical bottlenecks for the industry partner.
- **Impact:** This created a "Trust Bridge," leading to a consistent pipeline of high-package placements, as the industry partner viewed the institution as a solution-provider rather than just a recruitment source.

4.3 Copyrighted Model for Live Projects

Dr. Jyoti Jakhete and team proposed and copyrighted a formal framework to institutionalize student-industry engagement.

- **The Framework:** It involves 4 key stakeholders (Institute, Industry, Student, Faculty Mentor) and a structured 8-week timeline.
- **Innovation:** The model includes a "Proposal Template" and "Dual Mentorship," ensuring that the project outcomes are both academically rigorous and industrially viable.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The synthesis of these initiatives at the IIM Nagpur FDP led to several key conclusions:

1. **Sustainability:** Corporate connections are most effective when they span 3–5 years (as seen in the IPC and Joint Research cases).
2. **Scalability:** The copyrighted model allows the institution to replicate success across diverse branches like HR, Finance, and Business Analytics.
3. **Leadership Development:** Students involved in these projects demonstrated higher emotional intelligence (EQ) and problem-solving skills, aligning with the "Future Leadership" objectives of the MMMNMTT mission.

VI. CONCLUSION

To develop industry-ready individuals, HEIs must move from "Transactional" to "Transformational" industry relationships. The "Corporate Connection" framework presented here provides a validated roadmap for this transition. We recommend that institutions adopt copyrighted frameworks to standardize internships and joint research, thereby securing a competitive edge in the global academic landscape.

