Enriching Academia-Corporate Loop (ACL)—A Corporate

Social Responsibility Initiative

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Abstract

Corporate sector utilises societal resources. It is thus the duty of corporate sector to give back to the society in any form, which we know as corporate social responsibility. When we talk in this context, we generally take into account activities like educating the poor, helping old age homes, going green, reducing waste, sponsoring sports activities, giving donations etc. The problem of not getting employable manpower is a major issue of concern among the corporates. In this paper we propose a new dimension to corporate social responsibility—"Enhancing employability". By this the Academia-Corporate Loop (ACL) can be enriched. In our study we conduct a schedule amongst white collar employees of organizations in Delhi/NCR and record their responses. On this basis, we check the acceptability of this concept in corporates' mind and propose an action plan to bridge this gap statistically.

Keywords

CSR, academia corporate gap, employability

1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in simplest terms can be defined as the "responsibility of the corporate world to give back to the society in any form in lieu of what is takes from the society". CSR as a concept encompasses various dimensions like environmental protection, educating the poor, providing help during natural calamities, returning profits to its stakeholders and many more. If we talk specifically about education then corporate is observed to engage in activities like—schools for poor children, special education for physically and mentally disabled children, funding R&D, providing high end training specific to the nature of their work, adult literacy programs, occasional training programs etc. However a very few organizations like TCS, Jindal Steels, Infosys etc. include CSR activities like training the teachers & students, short term programs to expose higher education students to their industry etc. The prevalence of such initiatives is very less and in most cases these initiatives don't come free. Some kind of minimal fee for opting a course, a training program or workshop is charged which defeats the purpose of offering it as a CSR initiative.

On the other hand, if we talk about the quality of higher education in India then there is a lot to be

desired. In most of the world rankings of universities, no Indian university figures in the top 100. Even in the list of top 200 universities, the numbers are like a drop in the ocean. There are only a countable number that can head high in brilliance of all aspects pertaining to higher education. It is common knowledge that 90% of the graduates produced by Indian universities are unemployable. A continuous feedback about non-employable management graduates from corporate world can be observed in guest talks, articles, seminars etc. We often hear that classroom teaching is not applicable when it comes to real business environment.

This highlights a gap between academic delivery and corporate requirement. Due to this imbalance a huge chunk of society is educated but unemployed or underpaid. Academic institutions are trying their level best to bridge this gap. Since it is a growing social problem, we make an attempt to establish Academic Corporate Loop (in context of enhancing employability) through this paper. This loop explains that majority of corporate shall understand the importance of making society more employable and shall put strong footstep to bridge the gap between academics and corporate. By doing so, corporate will be able to cut on their cost of training as they will get ready to use manpower. In this paper, we show case the importance of this dimension to corporate social responsibility and propose ways for the better implementation of this concept.

2. Literature Review

Perez et al. (2014) discusses the formation process of CSR images from a customer perspective. They analyze the influence of company-CSR coherence, motivational attribution and corporate credibility in the way customers evaluate CSR images in the banking industry. Mattera et al. (2012) give insight on the effect CSR reporting initiatives and effective communication in customer's perception and knowledge of a company's brand. Khandelwal et al. (2014) explains the growth of CSR in India and the nuances of new CSR regulation along with emphasis on how public private partnership through the work of NGO can help in growth of CSR practices in India. Broomhill (2007) highlights key issues and debates in CSR. He presents debate on issues like, Does CSR support the bottom line? Is CSR contrary to the responsibilities of corporate directors?

3. Research Methodology

The study is undertaken at an exploratory level. Primary data is collected on a sample of size 30. We developed a questionnaire by regrows brain storming. Snowball sampling method is used for picking up respondents. Mail questionnaire and schedule method is used to collect data from Delhi-NCR region.

3.1 Questionnaire Flow

The detailed questionnaire is attached in Annexure.

Data is then fed into MS Excel and SPSS software to get necessary analysis and results.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Involvement in CSR

The proportion of companies which admitted involvement in CSR is 100 percent. Figure 1 below highlights the dimensions of CSR which are ranked the highest by the corporate professionals.
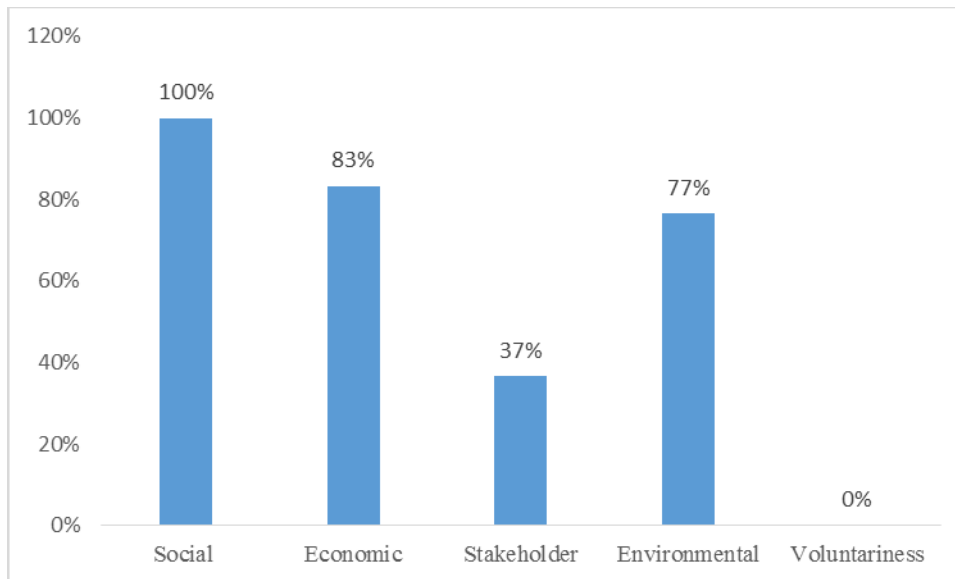

Figure 1. Proportion of CSR Dimensions Selection through Cumulative Percentage Representation

We asked the respondents to give top 3 ranks among various dimensions of CSR. The graph above represents that the corporate professionals give "Social factor" the maximum weight age while considering CSR. This is followed by Economic and Environmental dimension. This states that the corporate want to serve the social aspect before benefitting the stakeholders economically or the environment.

On diving deep into the dimensions, we asked them to mark the activities undertaken by their company while opting for CSR. Figure 2 below, shows the cumulative proportion of various activities that organizations adopt as CSR practices.
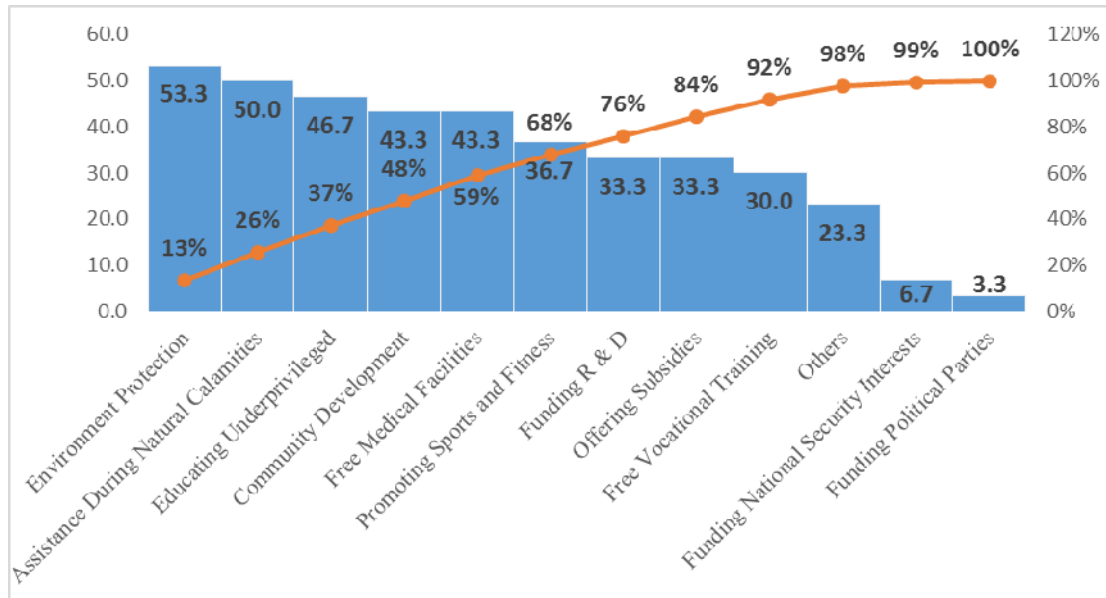
4.2 Importance of Education in CSR

Figure 2. Proportion of Specific CSR Activities through Pareto Chart Representation

Figure 2 signifies the proportion of various CSR activities undertaken in descending order of importance. According to the survey, 46.7% of the organizations mentioned that educating the under-privileged is a part of their existing CSR practices. This shows the importance of linking education with CSR in the corporate environment.

The activities which fall to the left of the orange line—Environmental protection assistance during natural calamities educating underprivileged and community development programs alone form approximately half the CSR activities list.

4.3 Linking Academia and Corporate

96.7% respondents mentioned that their organization hires PGDM/MBA students. Figure 3 shows a diagrammatic representation of the same. However the average score of satisfaction from the knowledge level of fresher PGDM/MBA recruits is just 3.4 out of 5.
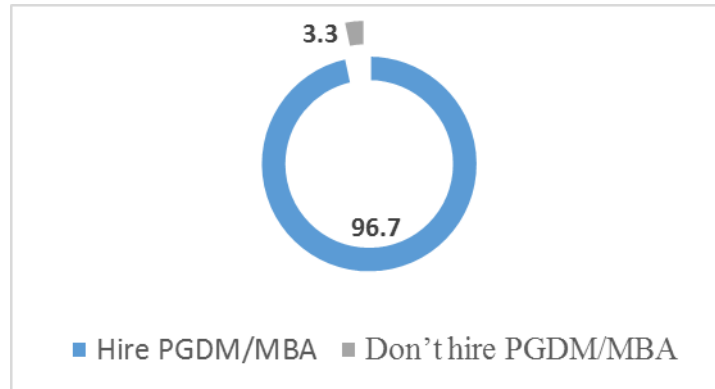
Figure 3. Proportion of PGDM/MBA Recruits through Ring Representation

If a significance of even 10% is assumed then the variation of 1.6 (5.0-3.4) is too high. This is an alarming situation which shows that corporate hire PGDM/MBA graduates despite low satisfaction with their knowledge level. This impacts the performance and then the productivity of the recruited student.

The respondents provided scores to the existing employees in their respective organizations on various skills. Figure 4 provides a mean score table for these skills.

Academic-Corporate Loop enrichment is thus proposed to increase employability of students enrolled in PGDM/MBA course.

On asking the respondents, 80% respondents said that it is the responsibility of the corporate to make students more employable. Table 1 below represents the mean scores of fresh recruits on various skills out of 5.

Table 1. Mean Scores of Students Assigned by Corporate Professionals on Various Skills

Skills	Mean Score (Out of 5)
Flexibility	3.2
Technical Strength	3.1
Integrity	3.1
Willingness to learn	3.0
Planning & Org	3.0
Communication Skills	3.0
Leadership	3.0
Initiative taking	2.8
Problem Solving	2.8
Commitment	2.8
Self-Management	2.8

Analytical Decision making	2.7
Teamwork	2.7

From the Table above it is evident that corporate is not satisfied with the level of knowledge on the above mentioned skills. On skills such as initiative taking, problem solving, commitment, self-management, analytical decision making and team work the respondents are not even "somewhat satisfied" with the hiring.

This demonstrates the need for enriching the quality of recruitment as per industry standards. The analysis of correlation between various skills and the satisfaction level of corporate from PGDM/MBA graduates comes out to be positive in the following cases:

Table 2. Correlation between Skills & Satisfaction Level

Skills	Correlation between average score on skill & satisfaction from knowledge of PGDM/MBA
Technical Strength (TS)	0.52
Leadership (L)	0.42
Planning & Org (P&O)	0.31
Communication Skills (CSs)	0.24

This represents that an improvement in these skills will positively impact the level of satisfaction from the knowledge of students. The sensitivity analysis displayed in Figure 4 below strengthens the above analysis. It depicts that the value of satisfaction (y axis) increases with increasing values of mean scores (x axis).
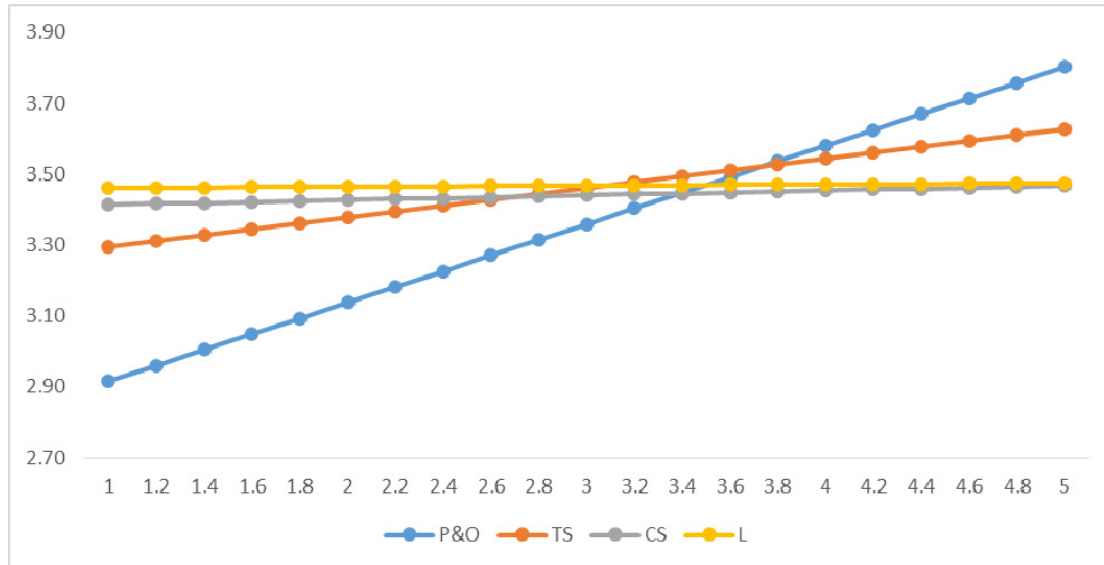
Figure 4. Sensitivity Analysis of Skills Affecting Satisfaction

4.5 The Presence & Suitability of ACL Enrichment Techniques

From the above analysis it is comprehensible that the corporate give prime importance to the societal aspect of CSR. While almost each organization hires PGDM/MBA graduates, they scored them low on most of the skill sets. Thus there exists a gap between corporate and academia which needs to be bridged. It has also been recorded that the corporate is ready to take the onus of increasing students' employability thereby helping in bridging the gap.

For bridging this gap, through our paper, we propose certain techniques. These techniques include:

i) Appointing industry mentor;

ii) Organizing corporate workshops for students;

iii) Faculty employee exchange programs;

iv) Students to work on 2 selected jobs for 3 months each;

v) Faculty involvement on real time industry projects.

We checked the presence and acceptability of these techniques. Figure 5 below depicts that the presence of proposed techniques in any form is less than even 50%.
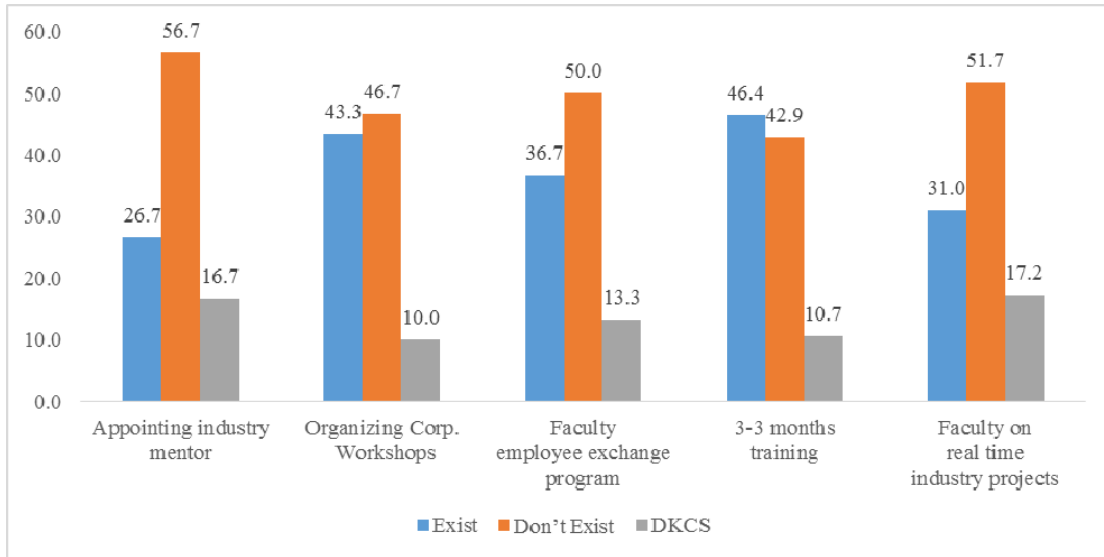
Figure 5. Proportion of Respondents Admitting the Presence of Proposed Techniques of ACL Enrichment through Bar Graph

In support of our proposition of enriching ACL, Table 3 shows that corporate find the proposed techniques suitable to implement. The mean scores in the table denote that the most suitable techniques to implement are organizing corporate workshops followed by 3-3 months of industrial training & involving faculty on real time projects. The suitability of appointing full time industry mentor and faculty employee exchange program is lesser as compared to the other options but still not low.

Table 3. Cumulative Effect of Challenges through Pareto Chart Representation

Proposed Techniques	Mean Score (Out of 3)
Appointing full time industry mentor	2.0
Organizing Corporate workshop	2.5
Faculty employee exchange program	1.9
3-3 months training in 2 job profiles of choices	2.3
Involving faculty on real time industry projects	2.3

As per the corporate, despite the willingness to ascertain initiatives in CSR, there are certain challenges. Table 3 is a graphical representation of these challenges.

Lack of time, manpower and funds are the major challenges faced by corporate in adoption of CSR. However, as per the study the average amount of time period spent in training an employee is 2.36 months. If the ACL enrichment techniques are implemented, the level of student knowledge will go up there by reducing the average training time. This would in turn help in saving time & manpower.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study shows strong intent of corporate towards adopting CSR and benefitting society. They also agree that it is the responsibility of the corporate to make students more employable. Thus we realize that the establishment of ACL is possible. The techniques to enrich ACL have been much appreciated and deemed suitable for corporate implementation. The proposed techniques can thus be adopted by corporate as their CSR activities in order to create a win-win situation for both corporate as well as academia. Figure 6 below is a pictorial representation of how this link can be developed & built upon.
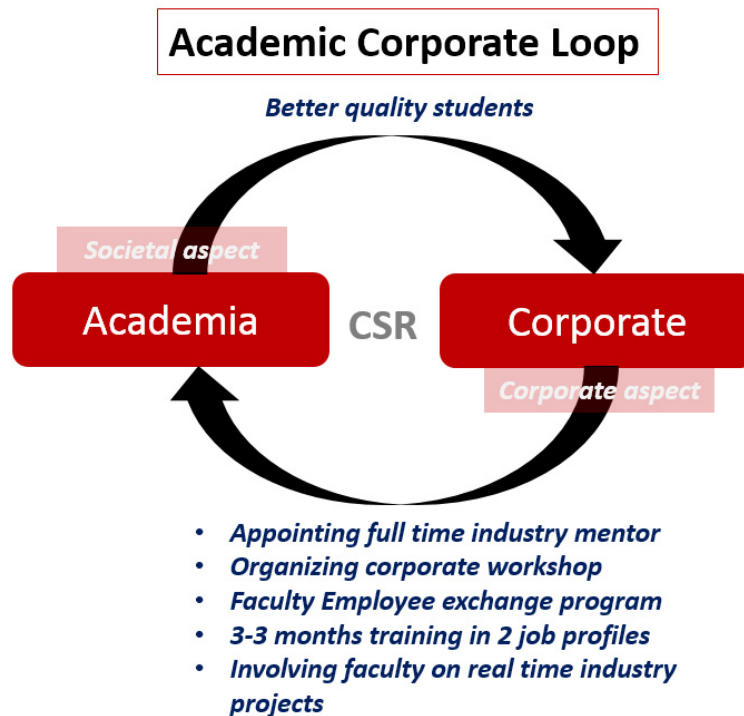

Academic Corporate Loop

Better quality students

Societal aspect

Academia   CSR   Corporate

Corporate aspect

- *Appointing full time industry mentor*
- *Organizing corporate workshop*
- *Faculty Employee exchange program*
- *3-3 months training in 2 job profiles*
- *Involving faculty on real time industry projects*

Figure 6. ACL Enrichment & Link with CSR

The study is exploratory in nature and accommodates scope of adding & examining suitability of more techniques for ACL enrichment.

References

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Mattera, M., Baena, V., & Cervino, J. (2012). Anallyzing social responsibility as a driver of firm's brand awareness. *Procedia-Social and behavioural sciences*, *58*, 1121-1130.

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Annexure:

Questionnaire

Serial no. (Respondent)										

Name of Respondent			
Name of Organization			
Position	Top management	Middle management	Lower management
Annual Turnover			
Number of employees			
City			
Mobile			
Gender	**M**	**F**	

Thank you for participating in this survey. Before starting this interview, we wish to tell you a few things. Please be assured that all information given by you will be kept strictly confidential and not revealed to anyone with your name/contact details without your prior permission. The response collected will be added together with the responses of others before presenting the findings. Under no circumstance will this information be used for sales or any commercial purpose.

We request you to give your honest responses to the questions. Do not be biased and do not try to give ideal answers. Failing to do so will defeat the purpose of this questionnaire. We expect you to be truthful to yourself and the questionnaire.

Now you may proceed towards the questions! Kindly tick the responses of your choice.

Q1. Kindly look at the dimensions below and rank which dimensions are the most important in corporate Social responsibility. Rank top 3, 1 being the most important and then 2nd and then 3rd.

Parameter	Meaning	Rank
The environmental dimension	Natural environment	
The Social dimension	Relationship between business & society	
The Economic dimension	Socio economic/Financial aspect	
The Stakeholder decision	Stakeholders/Stakeholder group	
The Voluntariness decision	Actions not prescribed by law	

Q2. Is your company involved in corporate social responsibility?

Yes	1
No	2

Q3. Look at the options below and tick the CSR activities that your organization is involved in? You may choose more than one option.

Environmental protection policies	1
Educating under-privileged people	2
Providing vocational training free of cost	3
Running community development programs	4
Promoting sports & fitness	5
Funding research & development (R&D)	6
Offering subsidies to needy (subsidized electricity/tools & equipment/medicines, etc.)	7
Assistance during natural calamities	8
Free medical facilities	9
Funding political parties during election	10
Funding national security interests	11
Others (Please specify)_____	12

Q4. Please look at the options below and tell me are you satisfied with the CSR initiatives of your organization.

Not at all satisfied	Less Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

Q5. Do you hire PGDM/MBA graduates?

Yes	1
No	2

If answer to Q5 is 1, then go to Q6, else go to Q7.

Q6. Are you satisfied with the level of knowledge & skill sets the students possess? Kindly mark the

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most suitable option.

Not at all satisfied	Less Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

Q7. Do you provide your joiners with training, if yes kindly mention the average time period.

Yes	1	
No	2	

Q8. Do you think it is the responsibility of the corporate to make students more employable?

Yes	1
No	2

Q9. In the table below we provide some key skills required by employers. On each skill mark the level of improvement required.

Skills	High improvement required	Improvement required	Somewhat improvement required	Less improvement required	No improvement required
Initiative taking ability	1	2	3	4	5
Willingness to learn	1	2	3	4	5
Planning & Organizing	1	2	3	4	5
Integrity	1	2	3	4	5
Technical Strength	1	2	3	4	5
Commitment	1	2	3	4	5
Problem Solving attitude	1	2	3	4	5
Flexibility	1	2	3	4	5
Self-Management	1	2	3	4	5
Team Work	1	2	3	4	5
Communication Skills	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Analytical decision making	1	2	3	4	5

Q10. In the table below, we provide some initiatives to make PGDM/MBA students more employable. Kindly mark the options (for each parameter) which already exist **as CSR initiatives** according to you.

	Yes, they exist	No, they do not exist	Don't know
Appointing a full time mentor for student from industry	1	2	3
Organizing corporate workshops to train teachers as per industry standards	1	2	3
Faculty-employee exchange program	1	2	3
6 months training in 2 job profiles of interest (3-3 months each) e.g., One student can work on 2 training jobs of choices—Sales and Business analyst for 3-3 months each to decide his area of interest better.	1	2	3
Involving faculty to be a part of real time industry projects	1	2	3

Q11. In the table below, we provide some initiatives to make PGDM/MBA students more employable. Kindly tell us how much you think these are suitable for organizations to implement

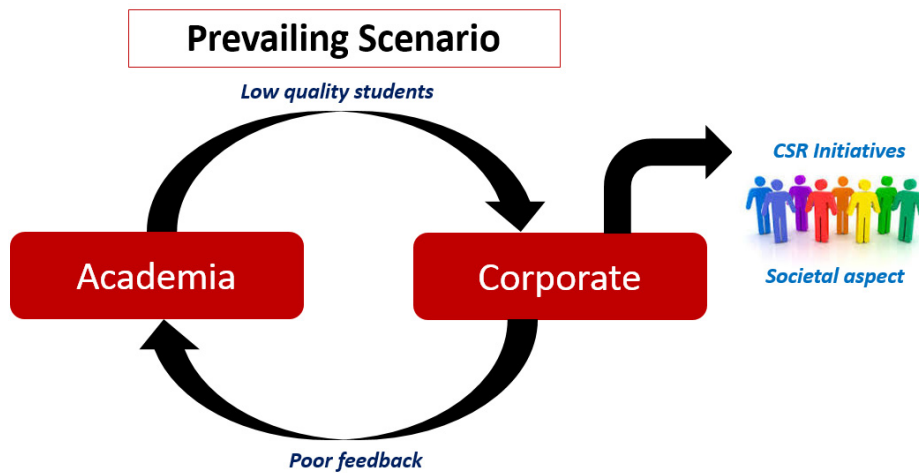|	Not Suitable	Somewhat Suitable	Completely Suitable
Appointing a full time mentor for student from industry	1	2	3
Organizing corporate workshops to train teachers as per industry standards	1	2	3
Faculty-employee exchange program	1	2	3
6 months training in 2 job profiles of interest (3-3 months each) e.g., One student can work on 2 training jobs of choices—Sales and Business analyst for 3-3 months each to decide his area of interest better.	1	2	3
Involving faculty to be a part of real time industry projects	1	2	3

Q12. According to you what are the challenges in front of corporate while taking up CSR initiatives. You may choose multiple options.

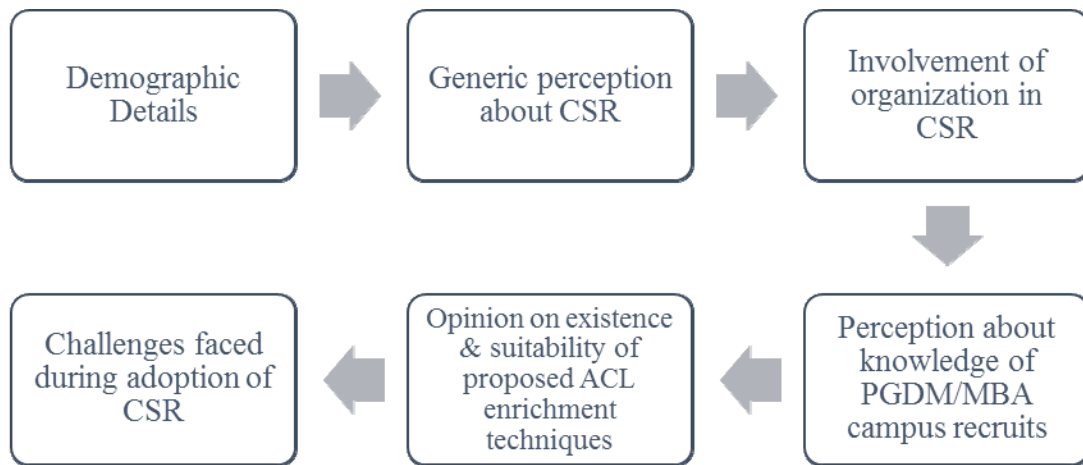|	
Lack of time	1
Lack of funds	2
Burdensome job	3
Lack of manpower	4
Not mandatory	5
Others (Please Specify)_____	6

Thanks for your time!

Appendix

Appendix 1.

Appendix 2.

Appendix 3.