

INTEGRATING SKILL TRAINING WITH CURRICULUM: A STUDY ON NAAN MUDHALVAN IN ARTS & SCIENCE COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the integration of the Naan Mudhalvan Scheme into Arts and Science colleges, with a focus on its effectiveness in enhancing academic learning, employability, and career readiness. Designed by the Government of Tamil Nadu, the scheme provides training in technical, analytical, communication, and sector-specific skills to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and industry requirements. Using a descriptive and analytical research design, data was collected from 150 final-year students in Coimbatore through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS. The Friedman Rank Test revealed that career guidance and confidence building are the most effective components, while communication skills and practical exposure are relatively less emphasized. Descriptive statistics showed strong consensus on the scheme's contribution to technical skills but only moderate agreement on interview preparedness and teamwork. Overall, the findings indicate that while the scheme significantly enhances technical competencies, greater focus on soft skills and workplace readiness is essential.

Keywords: *employability, soft skills, career.*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving global economy, higher education is no longer confined to the pursuit of academic knowledge alone. Employers increasingly demand graduates who possess not only theoretical understanding but also practical skills, problem-solving abilities, and industry readiness. Traditional academic curricula, particularly in Arts and Science colleges, have often been criticized for their limited focus on employability and real-world applications. This gap between classroom learning and workplace requirements has led to a growing emphasis on skill-based education as a complementary component of higher education. The Naan Mudhalvan Scheme, launched by the Government of Tamil Nadu, is a pioneering initiative designed to equip students with industry-relevant skills alongside their formal education. By offering training modules in emerging technologies, communication skills, analytical thinking, and sector-specific domains, the scheme seeks to prepare students for sustainable career pathways. One of its notable strengths is the integration of skill training with existing academic curricula, ensuring that students not only acquire theoretical knowledge but also develop the competencies required to succeed in a competitive job market.

For Arts and Science colleges, where employability challenges are more pronounced compared to professional streams like engineering and medicine, the integration of the Naan Mudhalvan Scheme offers a transformative opportunity. It allows students to connect their classroom learning with practical applications, gain exposure to industry practices, and build confidence in career readiness. At the same time, it challenges institutions to adapt their academic frameworks, coordinate with government initiatives, and effectively blend traditional teaching with modern skill-development approaches. This study therefore seeks to explore how skill training under the Naan Mudhalvan Scheme has been integrated into the curriculum of Arts and Science colleges, and to what extent it contributes to enhancing learning outcomes, bridging the gap between theory and practice, and improving employability. By focusing on the perceptions of students and institutional practices, the research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of this integration and provide insights for strengthening policy implementation and academic innovation in higher education.

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anitha and Ramesh (2023) researched about “**Gender gaps in vocational education: A study on Naan Mudhalvan scheme in Tamil Nadu**” investigate persistent gender disparities in access, participation, and outcomes of vocational education under the Naan Mudhalvan scheme. Using a mixed-methods approach, they analyze enrollment records and conduct interviews with female beneficiaries. The study highlights sociocultural barriers, limited mobility, and gendered occupational stereotyping as key impediments to women’s participation. Despite the scheme’s inclusive design, women are often channelled into traditional skill domains like tailoring and beautician courses, while men dominate technology and mechanical training. The authors recommend gender-sensitive curriculum restructuring, outreach campaigns, and mentoring support. The study emphasizes the role of local institutions in correcting gender imbalances. It also calls for more robust gender-disaggregated data monitoring. Importantly, the paper aligns its findings with the SDG goals on gender equality. The authors commend the government’s efforts but stress the need for deeper structural reforms. Case studies from select districts are used to strengthen the argument. The paper concludes by advocating for skill ecosystem redesign to address the root causes of gender disparity in vocational education.

Balasubramanian (2023) studied about “**Youth empowerment and regional development through skill based initiatives**”: explores the linkage between youth-focused skill programs like Naan Mudhalvan and regional economic development. The study positions skill training as a driver for employment, innovation, and local enterprise creation. Through statistical evaluation and policy analysis, the paper argues that trained youth contribute to improved productivity and migration control. The Naan Mudhalvan scheme is highlighted as a model due to its comprehensive approach—aptitude mapping, digital modules, and placement support. The author uses data from southern Tamil Nadu districts to illustrate how skill alignment with industry needs reduced unemployment rates. Regional industries also report increased engagement with local youth. The research underscores a multiplier effect, where empowered youth trigger micro-level economic activities. Furthermore, Balasubramanian highlights the role of soft skill training and digital literacy in shaping employable graduates. The paper identifies the need for regular feedback from employers to recalibrate the curriculum. A notable contribution is the focus on the ‘youth-region-development’ nexus. The author concludes by recommending replication in other Indian states with local students.

Moorthy & Christina Jeyadevi (2023) in their paper entitled "A Study on Awareness of Central Government Policies for the Sustainable Development of Rural India with special reference to Coimbatore discloses that, even though numerous government schemes are present and being formulated throughout the country. People from southern regions, are not highly aware of such schemes. As per the research, the participants had a medium level of knowledge about Central Government schemes. Based on these findings, the researchers provided suggestions to enhance awareness and enable easier access to the benefits of such schemes.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the present higher education system, particularly in Arts and Science colleges, students often acquire strong theoretical knowledge but lack the practical skills required by employers. This gap between academic learning and industry expectations has led to concerns about graduate unemployment and underemployment. The Government of Tamil Nadu introduced the Naan Mudhalvan Scheme to address this issue by integrating skill-based training with existing curricula. While the scheme is designed to enhance employability, digital literacy, and career readiness, its actual impact in Arts and Science colleges remains underexplored. Many students and institutions face challenges in adapting to new modules, aligning them with academic schedules, and ensuring meaningful outcomes. Questions arise about whether these trainings genuinely complement classroom learning and prepare students for real-world applications. Additionally, institutional readiness, faculty involvement, and resource availability may influence the scheme’s success. Without proper evaluation, there is a risk that the initiative may not fully achieve its objectives. Therefore, it becomes essential to analyze how effectively the Naan Mudhalvan Scheme is integrated into Arts and Science curricula and how it contributes to sustainable academic and career growth.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How effective are the skill training programs under the Naan Mudhalvan scheme in enhancing academic learning outcomes among Arts and Science students?
- In what ways does the Naan Mudhalvan scheme bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skill requirements?
- To what extent does the scheme contribute to improving the employability and career readiness of Arts and Science graduates?

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the effectiveness of skill training programs in enhancing academic learning outcomes.
- To evaluate the role of Naan Mudhalvan in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills.
- To assess the contribution of the scheme towards employability and career readiness among Arts & Science graduates.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, it is confined to Arts and Science colleges, and hence the findings cannot be generalized to professional courses such as engineering, medicine, or management. Secondly, the data is primarily based on the perceptions of students and faculty, which may involve a degree of personal bias and subjectivity. Another limitation is the short time frame of the research, which restricts the assessment of the long-term impact of the Naan Mudhalvan scheme on employability and career growth. In addition, the study is geographically restricted to a particular region, thereby limiting the scope for nationwide generalization. Further, variations in the quality of training modules, faculty involvement, and institutional support may influence the outcomes, but these factors have not been fully controlled in the study. Finally, external influences such as labor market conditions, industry demand, and individual motivation of students are beyond the scope of this research, although they may significantly affect employability outcomes.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the effectiveness of the Naan Mudhalvan Scheme in preparing job-ready graduates in Coimbatore. It focuses on evaluating the development of technical, communication, analytical and soft skills and their impact on employability. A sample of 150 final-year Arts and Science students will be selected through stratified random sampling. Primary data will be collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, while secondary data from placement records and institutional reports will supplement the analysis. Data will be processed using SPSS, with descriptive and inferential statistics applied to identify patterns and relationships. A pilot study will be conducted to ensure reliability and validity, and Cronbach's alpha will confirm internal consistency. Ethical practices, including informed consent and confidentiality, will be strictly maintained. This methodology aims to present a comprehensive assessment of how the scheme bridges the gap between academic learning and employability.

1.8 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION FRIEDMAN RANK TEST

Table no.1.1 Effectiveness of skill training programs in Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme

Particulars	Ranks	
	Mean Rank	Actual Rank
Career Guidance and Counseling	1.48	1
Confidence and Self-Efficacy	2.40	2
Campus Recruitment Opportunities	3.12	3
Practical Exposure	3.71	4
Communication Skills	4.31	5

Test Statistics ^a	
N	200
Chi-Square	392.488
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000
a. Friedman Test	

Table 1.1 exhibits that “Career Guidance and Counseling” with a mean rank value of 1.48 has been ranked the highest among the respondents, indicating it is perceived as the most effective component of the Tamil Pudhalvan skill training programs. This is followed by “Confidence and Self-Efficacy” with a mean rank of 2.40, suggesting that the scheme significantly contributes to building students’ confidence. The next in ranking is “Campus Recruitment Opportunities” with a mean value of 3.12, showing its moderate role in enhancing employability. Further, “Practical Exposure” with a mean rank of 3.71 is considered less effective compared to the above aspects. Finally, “Communication Skills” with a mean rank of 4.31 has been ranked the lowest, implying that respondents perceive this area as the least effectively addressed through the program.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Contribution of Naan Mudhalvan Scheme towards employability and career readiness

The mean ratings of the agreement level of the respondents have been assigned as 1 for 'Not beneficial at all', 2 for 'not very beneficial', 3 for 'Somewhat beneficial', 4 for 'beneficial' and 5 for 'very beneficial'. The mean ratings have been found out for each item and are given in the following table.

Table no.1.2

Contribution of Naan Mudhalvan Scheme towards employability and career readiness

Impact	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Naan Mudhalvan has improved my job-related technical skills.	150	1	5	4.4538	.76802
The scheme enhances my employability by aligning skills with industry needs.	150	1	5	4.3576	.58500
Participation in Naan Mudhalvan increases my chances of securing employment.	150	1	5	3.8929	.88533
The program strengthens my communication and interpersonal skills for the workplace.	150	1	5	3.7143	1.03962
The scheme prepares me to face job interviews and recruitment processes with confidence.	150	1	5	3.5738	1.15825
The training contributes to building leadership and teamwork skills.	150	1	5	3.7619	1.07952

Source : Primary data

Table 1.2 indicates that the total mean perception of students regarding the contribution of the Naan Mudhalvan Scheme towards employability and career readiness shows the highest score of 4.4538 for “Naan Mudhalvan has improved my job-related technical skills” with a standard deviation of 0.76802, indicating strong agreement and low variability among responses. This reflects that students largely value the scheme for enhancing their technical competencies. The lowest mean score of 3.5738 was recorded for “The scheme prepares me to face job interviews and recruitment processes with confidence” with a standard deviation of 1.15825, suggesting relatively moderate agreement and higher variability in perceptions. This pattern highlights that while students perceive the scheme as highly effective in strengthening technical skills, more emphasis may be required on interview preparedness and career process training to ensure holistic career readiness.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The Friedman Rank Test shows that Career Guidance and Counseling (Mean Rank = 1.48) is the most effective component of the Tamil Pudhalvan Scheme. Confidence and Self-Efficacy (2.40) ranks second, highlighting its role in boosting student motivation. Campus Recruitment Opportunities (3.12) and Practical Exposure (3.71) are rated moderately effective. Communication Skills (4.31) is ranked lowest, indicating weaker emphasis. The Chi-Square value (392.488, $p < 0.05$) confirms that these differences are statistically significant.

The descriptive results show that job-related technical skills received the highest mean score (4.45), with low variability, indicating strong consensus. This is followed by employability alignment with industry needs (4.35), confirming industry relevance. Chances of securing employment (3.89) and teamwork skills (3.76) received moderate agreement. Interview preparedness (3.57) and communication skills (3.71) were rated lowest, with higher variability. Overall, the scheme is effective in technical skill enhancement but less impactful on soft skills and job readiness.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, it is evident that while the Tamil Pudhalvan and Naan Mudhalvan schemes have been highly successful in enhancing technical competencies and aligning them with industry requirements, there remains a clear need to strengthen soft skills and workplace readiness. To address this gap, more emphasis should be placed on improving communication abilities through language labs, interactive workshops, and presentation practice. Similarly, interview preparedness can be enhanced by organizing mock interviews, resume-building sessions, and group discussions that simulate real recruitment processes. Practical exposure must be expanded by fostering industry collaborations, internships, and live projects that enable students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts. Furthermore, teamwork and leadership skills can be developed through group assignments, leadership camps, and role-play exercises that build collaboration and problem-solving abilities. While technical training is already effective, equal importance must be given to soft skills, adaptability, and workplace etiquette to ensure holistic career readiness. Personalized career counseling, continuous industry linkages, and regular feedback mechanisms from both students and recruiters will also strengthen the program's impact. Overall, a balanced approach that integrates technical expertise with employability skills will make the schemes more comprehensive and effective in preparing graduates for the competitive job market.

CONCLUSION

The present study clearly demonstrates that the Naan Mudhalvan scheme have made a significant contribution to skill development, employability, and career readiness among students. The Friedman Rank Test revealed that career guidance and confidence building are the most impactful aspects, while communication skills and practical exposure remain comparatively less effective. Similarly, the descriptive analysis highlighted that the schemes are highly valued for enhancing job-related technical skills and aligning them with industry requirements, but students expressed only moderate agreement on areas such as interview preparedness, teamwork, and interpersonal competencies. These findings indicate that while the schemes are effective in bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical application, there is a pressing need to strengthen soft skills, workplace adaptability, and holistic career preparation. Overall, the schemes play a crucial role in empowering students with industry-relevant skills and enhancing employability, but a more balanced approach integrating both technical and soft skills will further improve their long-term impact and sustainability.

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