

# THE ROLE OF THE ADDITIONAL SKILL ACQUISITION PROGRAMME (ASAP) IN ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS OF THE STUDENTS

<sup>1</sup>SIJI VERGHESE V.  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR ,  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,  
M.E.S.PONNANI COLLEGE,  
PONNANI

**Abstract:** The paper explores the multifaceted impact of the Additional Skill Acquisition Programme (ASAP) on students enrolled in higher secondary education. The primary objective is to analyze the factors that motivate students to participate in ASAP, providing insights into their academic, financial, and personal incentives. Additionally, the research examines the program's influence on skill development among youth, focusing on both hard and soft skills. Specifically, it assesses the effectiveness of ASAP in enhancing communication skills and fostering personality development, which are critical components of student success in higher education and beyond. Furthermore, the study evaluates the overall satisfaction levels of students enrolled in the ASAP course, aiming to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement within the program. The paper provides a detailed view on the various types of certification available and its benefits. The paper concludes with a comprehensive understanding of ASAP's role in shaping the academic and personality development of its participants, offering valuable recommendations for optimizing the program's outcomes.

**Keywords:** Unemployment Rate, Employability Skill, ASAP, Communication Skill

## 1. Introduction

There are crores of well educated youth in India who are unemployed. Lack of skilled manpower is the reason behind such large number of unemployed youth. Our traditional education system gives less priority to skill oriented education, they are focusing on the theoretical aspects only. This is one of the reasons for such higher amount of unemployment among youth. Government and educational institutions are now trying to organize various programmes in a serious manner to overcome this problem. Various skill oriented courses and schemes have introduced recently. The new initiative introduced by the government of Kerala in higher education is Additional Skill Acquisition Programme (ASAP).

There has been significant growth in educational institutions and new generation courses are able to meet needs of varying jobs over last decade. One of the good things to happen in India in recent times has been that professional higher education has spread its wings to reach common man and ordinary people and the dream of becoming an engineer or doctor, management professional, bank employee or any skilled white collar job getting into reality. This clearly means that thousands of qualified candidates pass out every year and get started their journey to get an employment. But the recent studies revealed that the majority of qualified candidates lack the necessary skills for employment.

Government of Kerala has initiated an ambitious programme, the ADDITIONAL SKILL ACQUISITION PROGRAMME (ASAP) with the objective of tackling the issue of growing unemployment in the state. The programme aims at equipping selected school/college students with skills in communication, IT and selected areas of industry and service sector. To address the concern of the growing educated – unemployment rates of the state, the SSDP or State Skill Development Project was enacted in the year 2012. This was following the realization that Kerala has the human resources and the potential to soar up to become a redial point for skilled manpower to the world. SSDP involves the participation of industries and training partners to execute the project tactically branched in to two, ASAP(Additional Skill Acquisition programme) and ASEP (Additional Skill Enhancement Programme) .

ASAP under the General and Higher educational departments, works on the preventive side by training Higher Secondary and graduate students offering skill courses to students in need of immediate employment. ASEP under the department of labour on the curative side offers enhancement training to educated unemployed youth. The objective of ASAP is to reduce the issue of growing unemployment in the state. The programme aims at equipping selected schools or college students with skills in communication, IT and selected areas of industries and service sector.

India today spoke to experts on why skill development is necessary from a young age and how it should evolve according to the student's age to create ideal employees in the 21st century. About 90 percent of employment opportunities require vocational skills. Only 20 percent of our graduates get employed. The rest are unable to get suitable employment due to the lack of employable skills.

The teaching method under ASAP includes more of activity oriented. This gives a new experience for the students. ASAP should be spread to other states also as it helps in the skill development. This will be helpful in improving the quality of education all over the country. ASAP skill course have an important role in skill development among students. In the present context of globalization, the demand for skilled and multi skilled workers has increased. In the developing countries such as India, there is a critical need for quality skill development and training. Nowadays, ASAP implemented in many schools with a view to improve the skills of the students.

## 2. Review of Literature

Ashok Kumar M., & Gowsalya G. ( 2016) investigate that enhancing the employability skills is considered as the important task within any educational institutions. Skills which are improving the capabilities that should be taken in to account during the formatting of the future skills requirements.

Jaison Parckel Johnny, (2016) reveals that ASAP is inculcating the skills required for the employability of the students graduating from regular academic courses. Necessary steps should be taken while launching the programme on a large scale so that it could be conducted in a more effective manner. It is expected that the project will be more fruitful in the upcoming years.

Kaushal U., (2016) tried to intends to enlist the importance of skills and why students need to be aware of the skill they possess and how they can work on packaging their candidature around a few skills. The paper stresses the role of academia in filling this gap by acting as facilitators in a three-step process (i.e., awareness, self analysis, and acquisition). The author concludes that the combination of both employability skills along with an engineering degree should ensure students meet the high expectations of the employers.

In the paper Imren Markes (2006) reveals that encouraging skills development is a key part of the UK government's strategy and identified that the skills has led to changes in higher education, where there is an increasing recognition of the need to enhance student's employability. The paper reviews the data on the type of employer skill needs available in the existing literature with a particular emphasis on those skills required by engineering and manufacturing employers.

Knight P.T., &York M. (2003) expresses that many governments are concerned on the investment in higher education should increase the stock of human capital, which is seen as a source of national economic well being. This concern often leads to an expectation that that higher education will foster the learning outcomes that employer value. The paper concludes that the employability policies should be associated along with teaching by a detailed systematic thinking about the programmes and the learning environments.

### 3. Statement of the Problem

Kerala is traditionally known for its high quality manpower all over the world and has the highest density of science and technology personnel. As availability of trained man power is a crucial factor for the industry to set up their business, so it is necessary that Kerala should give importance to the growth of the skills of its human resources. The major hurdle is ensuring a readily employable talented person from the insufficient Training Infrastructure of the state. Availability of skilled persons are the main problem faced by several industries. The academic syllabus of higher education is not sufficient for getting a job. In such a situation, government tries to give an opportunity for students through ASAP. In this context, the present study analyzes the effectiveness of ASAP in skill development among students and tries to examine the extent to which the ASAP courses are relevant for the improvement of employability skill of students.

### 4. Objectives of the Study

- 4.1 To identify various sectors selected by ASAP Programme
- 4.2 To find out the impact of ASAP towards skill development among youth.
- 4.3 To identify the effectiveness of ASAP in communication skill and personality development among higher secondary students.
- 4.4. To identify the satisfaction level of students on ASAP course.

### 5. Research methodology

The study is designed as a descriptive study by using primary and secondary data. The data are collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been collected from 100 higher secondary students of Malappuram District using questionnaire. The Secondary data required for the study are gathered from journals, magazines websites etc. Convenient sampling technique is used for selecting sample

### 6. Variables used for the study

Gender ( male/ Female), Type of Higher Secondary school ( Govt/ Aided), Scheme of the study, Awareness of students about ASAP, Source of information about ASAP, Reason for selecting ASAP courses, Skill course selected by ASAP students, Most motivating factor to join in ASAP, Preference of teaching methodology, Effectiveness of teaching, Acquisition of skills through ASAP and the level of satisfaction towards ASAP.

### 7. The sectors identified for Skill Development

1.Hospitality 2.Accounting 3.Health care. 4.IT &ITES. 5.Automobile 6.Beauty and wellness 7.Media and Entertainment Industry. 8.Banking and Financial sector. 9.Construction 10.Agriculture 11.Electronics 12.Gem and jewellery 13.Telecom 14.Plumbing 15.Printing etc.

### 8. Certification under ASAP

Level 1: The common feature of the Programme will be that the first level has to be necessarily undergone by every student opting for the skill Programme. The first level will be of 300 hours duration, out of which 180 hours will be devoted to modules on communications and information technology. The other 120 hours will be devoted to the sector chosen by the student for the specialization .The design of all the levels will be in such a manner that the learning achieved by the student in the first level will be woven into the design of the curriculum of the second and the third levels also.

Level 2: The second level will be of 300-500 hours duration and will be an intermediate module in the selected area of specialization.

Level 3: The third level will be of 300-500 hours duration and will be an advanced module in the selected area of specialization.

Certification under ASAP will be three-fold in nature. The most advanced form will be where the student undergoes all the three levels of the Programme. This will be so designed to meet the academic requirements prescribed by the Universities in Kerala. Thereby, the student is given the opportunity to earn a dual degree awarded by the University. At the other levels, certifications will be provided for students of Higher Secondary Schools /Vocational Higher Secondary Schools and Colleges of Government either by Government and wherever feasible the Industry Association also. In the University Integrated Model, students will be given opportunity to attend three modules of ASAP, one in each year, with vacation apprenticeship in the first and second years and a course end apprenticeship at the end of the third year.

For Under Graduate (BA, B. Sc, B. Com) students, two kinds of ASAP courses, viz. Independent and University Integrated, will be instituted. In the Independent Model, students will be given opportunity to attend two modules of ASAP in the selected skill

areas, in the first and third years respectively, with examination and certification in each year and also with apprenticeship and final certification at the end of the third year For Higher Secondary students, a dual skill model will be instituted. Students will be given the opportunity to attend two modules of ASAP in the selected skill areas, in the first and second years respectively, with exam and certification in each year and also with apprenticeship and final certification at the end of the second year. The Courses will be conducted both in private training institutions identified through a normative process and facilities in Government Institutions including Colleges, Higher Secondary Schools, Vocational Higher Secondary Schools, and Polytechnics etc. The expertise of agencies like NASSCOM, CII, FICCI, and empaneled skill providers of Government of India etc will be sought for the Programme. The Examination and issue of certificates will be done by the Directorate of Technical Education, initially.

The feasibility of creating a separate certifying agency under the Government will be examined.

Once the project is successfully launched, students who leave the Programme should be given opportunity to get credit for the short term courses for higher education. A specific structure for this will be developed with the approval of Universities.

## 9. Major Activities of ASAP

The major Activities under ASAP which requires funding are given below.

**9.1 Programme Launch & Advertisement:** The ASAP, as referenced by the Hon'ble Finance Minister is part of the 'dream project' that will help the advancement of Kerala society. The planning of the ASAP has been done by 'thinking big'. The ASAP has been designed to help students attain 'employable resource' status at the end of their Vocational / Higher Secondary or Undergraduate study streams.

**9.2 Workshops:** Enrollment of Students in the ASAP will be identified through Feeder Institutions and other selected institutions. Aptitude Tests will be conducted to gauge students' skill level and counseling services will be imparted to students to guide and help them choose the right skill development sector..

**9.3 Academic Instruction :** Academic Instruction for students is the most important aspect of the ASAP. Theory of 140 hours and Practical of 160 hours per student is envisaged. Course. Materials such as printed notes, handouts, booklets and a Net book will be provided to students. Travel for students such as industrial visits etc will also be part of the curriculum

**9.4 Lifelong Learning:** Lifelong Learning is the continuous building of knowledge and skills throughout ones career, aimed at enhancing social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, but also competitiveness and employability. Almost all countries in the world stress Lifelong Learning as an ideal solution in this respect for retaining the qualitative edge of the work force. The possibilities of Community Colleges (CC) will also be explored. ASAP (Additional Skill Acquisition Programme) is a Programme being implemented jointly by the General Education and Higher Education Departments of Government of Kerala to enhance the employability of students of Higher Secondary and Under Graduate Courses of Arts & Science Colleges in the state by equipping them with Industry. NASSCOM, through its Education & Skill Development Initiatives, works with its industry members and select academic institutions to help improve the quality and quantity of the employable workforce available to this industry.

## 10. ASAP and Placement

ASAP Kerala's placement division functions round the year to ensure the brightest prospective minds work with the best in business. It is found very successful in maintaining our high placement statistics over the last few years. The students have been placed from 2012-13 onwards and they have tie-ups with a good number of recruiters.

## 11. Findings and Discussion

The study found that ASAP courses are mostly recommended by government school. Most of the students was aware about ASAP before they joined ASAP. The major source of information about ASAP is ASAP Programme manager, friends and teachers. The study reveals that most of the students selected ASAP course for aspiration for a good job. Majority of the students are females and Accounting is the most demanded course. The motivating factor for students enrolled in ASAP is that the availability of job facility. They prefer that skill oriented ASAP is better and the students are satisfied with the skill course, course duration, teaching methodology and allowances. Majority of students agree that ASAP provides personal benefits such as source of motivation, setting goals in life, growth and development of personality. They agree that ASAP improves communication skill and employability skill and improve overall personality of students. The Government should try to ensure the participation of private school and more aided schools in the project. It can be recommended that the students selection criteria and process can be reduced so that more students will be attracted towards the Programme. Th paper made a detailed view on the major areas covered, and various levels of certification etc.

## 12. Conclusion

ASAP aims at improving the skills of students of higher secondary, vocational higher secondary and undergraduate students of government/ aided sector. The whole idea of ASAP is that the students will be given skill training in addition to their regular academic Programme. These training will be conducted before and after school or college timing as well as during vacation. Thus when they complete regular academic Programme, they also get additional skill certification. This will ensure them job opportunities after their studies. ASAP is functioning under a well-structured management. This shows that the Programme is an effective one for students. ASAP not only help in skill development but also helps in providing mental satisfaction for the students. The initiative of the Government of Kerala is highly effective for nurturing a community of employability skills.

**References:**

- Gowsalya G. & Dr. Ashok Kumar M. (2016) A study on the factors affecting employability skills among college students in Namakkal District of Tamil Nadu  
*International Journal of Commerce and Management Research* 2(11), 09-14.
- Jaison Parackal Johnny.(2016). The role of ASAP Kerala project in skill development through technology enhanced learning. *International Journal of Business and Administration Research Review*, Vol. 3(1), 143-147
- Kaushal, U. (2016). Empowering engineering students through employability skills. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 6(4). doi:10.18870/hlrc.v6i4.358
- Markes, I. (2006). A review of literature on employability skill needs in engineering. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 31(6), 637-650. doi:10.1080/03043790600911704
- Knight, P. T., & Yorke, M. (2003). Employability and good learning in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 8(1), 3-16. doi:10.1080/1356251032000052294
- Jegadeeshwaran, M., & S, K. (2021). Employability skill gap analysis of commerce postgraduate students in higher education with reference to Coimbatore district. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Engineering & Management*, 8(5). doi:10.21276/ijirem.2021.8.5.1
- Morley, L. (2001). Producing new workers: Quality, equality and employability in higher education. *Quality in higher education*, 7(2), 131-138.
- Moreland, N. (2006). *Entrepreneurship and higher education: an employability perspective* (Vol. 6). York: Higher Education Academy.
- Morgan, P. J., Barnett, L. M., Cliff, D. P., Okely, A. D., Scott, H. A., Cohen, K. E., & Lubans, D. R. (2013). Fundamental movement skill interventions in youth: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Pediatrics*, 132(5), e1361-e1383.
- Cassidy, S. (2006). Developing employability skills: Peer assessment in higher education. *Education+ training*, 48(7), 508-517.
- Bennett, N., Dunne, E., & Carré, C. (2000). *Skills Development in Higher Education and Employment*. Taylor & Francis, Inc., 7625 Empire Dr., Florence, KY 41042.

**Websites:**

<https://asapkerala.gov.in/>

<http://www.investopedia.com>

<http://www.wikipedia.com>

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

[www.scribd.com](http://www.scribd.com)

