

CONTEXTUAL EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY IN PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to find out the present situation of contextual education and employability in the pharmaceutical sector and to suggest ways to improve it, especially in the areas of recruitment and selection. Research design for the article is exploratory; employees of reputed pharmaceutical companies were interviewed for the research. Indian pharmaceutical industry is one of the largest industries in the world in terms of volume. The growth rate of Indian pharmaceutical industry is approximately 13% per year. Recruitment and selection of employees in pharmaceutical industry is a tough task for HR as it is a long process. It is also very challenging as it takes various steps like cross checking the background of the applicants. Education system is outdated and nonpractical; thus there is a lot of scope to strengthen the education system in pharmaceutical sector as the current situation is not satisfactory. Various steps can be taken to improve education which will definitely improve the scope of the employability. Freedom of expressing the problems and ideas should be given to the students and a more practical approach towards pharmacy education will help students become key growth partners for the pharmaceutical industry. Presentation and seminar participation will help the students to be more practical and confident.

Objective

Pharmaceutical industry is a major industry in India and it contributes to the Indian economy in a big way. The growth in this industry is very fast. It is a science-based industry and need talented young professionals to further contribute in increasing its worth.

Aim of the article is to find out the present situation of the pharmaceutical sector, and assess how education system can be to improved upon. Pharmaceutical marketing is different from other industry marketing. This article deals with topics such as various pharmacy education programs, status of current education system of pharmacy in India, how it affects employability, weakness of current pharmacy education system and how it can be improved upon.

Importance of Pharmaceutical Industry

Indian pharmaceutical industry is worth 6 billion US dollar (Its growth rate is 13%). As of now there are 300 large, medium and small companies in India providing a total of estimated 24% generic drugs to the world. This gives it a leading position in producing active pharmaceutical ingredients. (National Conclave, 2012)

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According to an article published in *The Economic Times* Indian pharmaceutical industry has been consistently registering double digit growth i.e.14% since last five years and it will continue to grow in 2014. This is the reason why multinational corporations are keen on operating their business in India. This will surely create more jobs in India. In the present day pharmaceutical company employs approximate 4,50,000 people.

The new generation is more skilled and talented due to a strong education system and now companies have to provide various benefits and high remuneration to match their expectations so that young talent can be hired. Companies have to build a strong market image so that they can attract new young talent.(Dictmar)

Pharmaceutical companies need medical sales representatives to promote their products to health care professionals (doctors, nursing staff) and for that they hire qualified people who have basic qualification in pharmacy. After that they train them by providing product knowledge and required selling skills.

Job Profile of a Pharmaceutical Sales Team

1. Taking prior appointment from health care professionals to discuss product
2. Daily planning of calls to be made to doctors
3. Arranging CME, conducting patient-related activities in clinics, hospitals; providing latest knowledge of drugs by literature, studies provided by the company, free sample
4. Convincing health care professional towards viability of company's product and influencing them to prescribe their product
5. Medical representative should have competitor brands knowledge and information of promotional activities undertaken by them
6. Regular monitoring of the area of sales and achieving quarter and annual targets assigned to them
7. Understanding and convincing targeted customer to prescribe products. Medical representative should collect all information related to customer and set the stage
8. Implementing strategies of company whether product related or policy related
9. Generating prescriptions of assigned products so that targets can be achieved
10. Building healthy relations with health care professionals and building a good image of company

Recruitment and selection of employees in the pharmaceutical industry is a tough task for HR, as it is a long and challenging process. It takes various steps like cross checking criminal background of applicants, employee classification as prescribed by Jacobson in *Xpert HR*.

This makes the Recruitment and selection in pharmaceutical industry is a challenge. (National Conclave, 2012)

Expectations of Candidates

The candidates who apply for a job in any pharmaceutical company would expect the following from the organizations and to fulfill their expectations remains a challenge. The following steps could be undertaken to attract more applicants:

1. Leadership and high reputation of the organization
2. Good remunerations, well-planned career path, and a learning environment
3. Motivation of young professionals not just by a provision of financial benefits but a conscious recognition of innovation in their work
4. Clarity of vision and strategies of organization

Education System in Pharmaceutical Industry

Educational programs in India are as follows:

- Diploma in Pharmacy (DPharm): 2 years coursework,
- Bachelor of Pharmacy (BPharm): 4 years of coursework,
- Master of Pharmacy (MPharm),
- Master of Science in Pharmacy [MS(Pharm)]
- Master of Technology in Pharmacy [MTech (Pharm)],
- Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD),
- Doctor of Philosophy in Pharmacy (PhD).

Education System in Pharmaceutical Industry Needs Improvement

In India, the education system of pharmaceuticals needs improvement. The curriculum, course work are outdated and there is a need for change according to the present scenario. The theoretical part is predominantly stronger than the practicals. Teachers of Indian universities are not imparting a practical perspective due to burgeoning student strength. Students are complacent and interested only in passing the exams and getting a degree. Curriculum should match international standard. If education system gets updated then students will also take more interest and perform better. Thus chances of employment will increase.

Employability in Pharmaceutical Industry

After completing graduation in pharmacy, joining pharmaceutical industry and remaining there is a big challenge, Pharmaceutical industry is a knowledge-based industry and is different from other industries because here the sales team has to convince doctors to prescribe their product. For that they should have complete knowledge. They cannot (directly) contact or influence consumer to consume their product. Thus they need special training and skills so that they can convince health-care professionals.

Findings

1. It is clear from the article that the pharmaceutical industry can be a good career option for new comers because pharmaceutical industry is growing very fast and Indian pharmaceutical industry is world's third largest in terms of volume.
2. Pharmacy education system in India is outdated so there is a need to redesign. Some changes as per the need of pharmaceutical industry can be made.. There should be some additional sessions in the curriculum of pharmacy study in which practical and basic knowledge should be provided to the students. Also clarity upon various job profiles, so that they can better decide in which area of the pharmaceutical sector they can apply and get promising results.

3. Pharmaceutical industry needs talented marketing and sales team but getting them is a big challenge. Various challenges are faced by the HR of pharmaceutical industry in recruitment and selection, The main hurdle is how they can attract and retain young professionals. Hence there is a need to rethink and implement better strategy.
4. Marketing and sales team puts a lot of hard work in attracting the targeted customers. Special skills and training is required because customer are busy professional who are not interested in meeting the sales team. It is a challenge for the pharmaceutical industry to educate and train a sales team that is different and effective in their dealings with health-care professionals.

Conclusion

Pharmaceutical industry is one of the major industries in India, and it contributes to the Indian economy in a big way. Pharmaceutical industry is growing very fast and there is a lot of scope for new job openings in the future. Industry needs new talent and for that companies should provide better remuneration. But in India, in the present day the pharmacy education system is redundant and requires a facelift by augmenting a practical approach. Pan India, pharmacy colleges and universities have to revamp their curriculum by making it more practical in its orientation. Also, skill training has to be an integral part of the curriculum so that pharmacy students are better equipped for their career.

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