



Bridging Literary Scholarship and Career Readiness: Re-envisioning English Studies in Contemporary Indian Higher Education

Gurdeep Kaur

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Guru Nanak College, Batala
Email: gurdeepkoursaini24@gmail.com

| ARTICLE DETAILS | ABSTRACT |
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| Research Paper | English studies in Indian higher education have long been associated with literary interpretation, theoretical inquiry, and textual criticism. |
| Keywords : <i>English studies, employability Skills, Higher Education reform, Curriculum Innovation, Professional Communication, Career Readiness</i> | In the present employment-driven academic climate, however, questions have emerged regarding the practical relevance of humanities education. This study examines how English departments can integrate professional competencies without compromising intellectual depth. Using a qualitative institutional case study from an undergraduate college in Punjab, the paper analyses classroom innovations such as structured presentations, collaborative discussions, resume drafting sessions, and applied writing modules. Student reflections and classroom observations indicate that embedding communication and professional skills within literature courses strengthens confidence, articulation, and analytical clarity. The study proposes a balanced model in which literary engagement and career readiness function as complimentary rather than opposing objectives. |

The humanities, and English studies in particular, have traditionally emphasized interpretative depth, critical reflection and aesthetic engagement. While these dimensions remain central to intellectual formation, the expanding demands of contemporary job markets require graduates to demonstrate applied competencies alongside theoretical understanding. Increasingly, stakeholders in higher education expect academic programs to cultivate transferable skills such as structured communication, analytical reasoning,

collaborative interaction and professional writing. English departments possess inherent strengths in fostering articulation and interpretative ability. However, these strengths are not always explicitly connected to professional development within conventional curricula. This paper explores how English programs can consciously integrate employability-oriented practices into literary courses without diluting disciplinary rigor.

Educational discourse in recent decades has emphasized measurable learning outcomes and competency-based frameworks. Contemporary pedagogical approaches encourage active engagement, reflective, and contextual application of knowledge. Language education research highlights the importance of authentic communication tasks and learner participation in strengthening proficiency. Rather than separating literary study from professional development, emerging academic perspectives suggest that close reading, argumentation, and textual analysis already cultivate skills valued in multiple career paths. The challenge lies in making these connections visible through curriculum design and assessment reform.

This qualitative study was conducted during the 2023-2024 academic session in an undergraduate institution in Punjab. Data were gathered through classroom observation, student reflection, and informal feedback from more than forty learners enrolled in English courses. Teaching strategies incorporated applied writing tasks, seminar-style presentations, peer discussions, and guided resume preparation exercises. The aim was to examine whether structured skill-based activities embedded within literature classes could enhance student confidence and communicative competence.

Several practical interventions were introduced within the existing syllabus framework. Presentation-based assessment replaced memory-oriented testing patterns. Students were guided to articulate literary interpretations orally before peers, thereby strengthening public speaking abilities. Resume drafting sessions were organized to demonstrate clarity, conciseness, and professional tone in writing. Group discussions encouraged collaborative reasoning and spontaneous articulation. Literary themes were connected to contemporary social and workplace contexts to encourage applied thinking. Digital media resources were selectively incorporated to expose learners to varied speech patterns and presentation styles.

Student responses suggested measurable improvement in confidence and participation. A majority reported greater ease in expressing ideas during seminars and interviews. Many indicated that structured writing tasks clarified expectations of formal communication. Classroom atmosphere became increasingly interactive as learners assumed active roles in discussions and peer feedback. Importantly, analytical

engagement with literary texts remained central, indicating that skill integration did not undermine disciplinary substance.

Despite encouraging results, certain structural limitations were evident. Limited technological resources occasionally restricted multimedia integration. Some students initially expressed discomfort with non-traditional evaluation patterns but gradually adapted to interactive formats.

Curricular flexibility, professional development programs, and administrative assistance are necessary for long-term implementation. A positive way ahead for Indian higher education is to rethink English studies as a discipline that combines literary analysis with professional preparation. Departments might emphasise the transferable skills already present in literary analysis and critical discourse rather than viewing employability as something outside of humanities study. This institutional scenario illustrates how careful curriculum redesign can foster both professional readiness and intellectual depth. Through comparative research and long-term monitoring of graduate outcomes, future research may broaden this strategy.

Academic disciplines must adapt positively to shifting societal and professional expectations as the higher education landscape changes. English studies, which have historically been based on literary interpretation and critical analysis, have a great deal of promise to help develop the transferable skills needed in today's workplaces. This study shows that many of the abilities valued in contemporary workplaces—such as analytical thinking, persuasive communication, collaborative engagement, and interpretative reasoning—are already essential to literary scholarship rather than being seen as external to humanities education. Making these competencies apparent and purposefully developed in curriculum design and classroom practice is the main difficulty.

Without sacrificing academic rigour, including skill-oriented exercises into literary courses can greatly increase student participation, confidence, and communication competence, according to the classroom-based treatments detailed in this study. Students were able to convert literary study into useful communication techniques through peer discussions, resume preparation activities, presentation-based exams, and applied writing assignments. Importantly, students remained deeply engaged with textual interpretation, suggesting that employability-oriented pedagogy can complement rather than diminish the intellectual objectives of humanities education.

The study also identifies some institutional limitations that need to be resolved for long-term deployment. Pedagogical innovation may be hampered by inadequate technology infrastructure, conventional testing

procedures, and early student resistance to interactive learning styles. Institutional support, faculty development programs, and curricular flexibility that promotes interdisciplinary and skill-integrated teaching methods are all necessary to address these issues.

Therefore, rethinking English studies in the context of modern higher education necessitates a balanced strategy that respects students' practical goals while maintaining the intellectual depth of literary scholarship. English departments can make a significant contribution to both intellectual development and professional preparedness by emphasising the communicative, analytical, and interpretive skills inherent in literary studies. This strategy is in line with more extensive educational reforms in India that prioritise interdisciplinary involvement and competency-based learning.

This paper's case study demonstrates how small but deliberate pedagogical changes might close the perceived gap between professional preparation and literary education. Through comparative institutional studies, the incorporation of digital communication skills, and long-term evaluation of graduate outcomes, future study may expand this investigation. In the end, enhancing the relationship between literary scholarship and professional advancement can confirm English studies' ongoing significance in the changing context of Indian higher education.

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