

Skill Development Is Key To Economic Progress - Role Of Higher Education In India

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Abstract: Indian education system in general and higher education in particular has not been proved too well-organized to make youths of our country employable according to the need of job market. Even though the increase in number of institutions at primary, secondary and tertiary level our young educated people are not proficient of being employed and getting better job opportunities. Reason being they have not gained specified skills essential for requirement of the job market. India is one of the youngest nation in the world with more than 62% of the population of the people is in the working age group (15-59 years) and more than 54% of the total population is below 25 years of age. This poses the challenges and opportunity. To reap the demographic dividend which is expected to last next 25 years. For this, India needs to endow its workforce with employable skills and knowledge so that youth can contribute productively to make India a developed country. Paper points out that higher education does little to address the skills requirement of a youth raring to go into the world and make a mark. It also lays stress on the need to improve the employability of our graduates. Graduates now require the skills beyond the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. Such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity are now important for getting more and more jobs. The major challenges confronting us is low employability of our graduate passing out higher education state institutions. The argues on the supply side a huge skill gap has to be bridged while on the demand side, there is need for skill matching and the creation of opportunities. It also makes an attempt to critically examine the efforts being made by Govt. of India in this direction. It concludes with this remark that the education system will have to gear itself to support nation's economic agenda by creating job- ready and employable workforce.

Keywords: Demographic Dividend, Economic growth, Skill Development, Skill mismatch, Soft Skills, Informal Sector.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the single most imperative instrument for social and economic transformation. A well educated population, adequately equipped with knowledge and skills is not only essential for support the economic growth, but it is also a precondition for growth to be inclusive since it is the educated and skilled person who can stand to benefit most from the employment opportunities which growth will provide. In this connection, Hon'ble Prime Ministry States that today, the world and India need a skilled workforce. If we have to promote the development of our country then our mission has to be "Skill Development and Skilled India." Millions and Millions of Indian youth should acquire the skills

which could contribute towards making India a modern country. I also want to create a pool of young people who are able to create jobs and ones who are not capable of creating jobs and do not have the opportunities, they must be in a position to face their counterparts in every corner of the world, while keeping their heads high by virtue of their hard work and their dexterity of hands and win the hearts of people around the world through their skills. We want to go for the capacity building of such young people. Vision is absolutely relevant in present day context and prevailing circumstances India is on the cusp of the country of a demographic opportunity. It is today one of the youngest nation in the world with more than 62% of the people is in the working age group (15-59 years) and more than 54% of the total population

below 25 years of age. The country's population pyramid is expected to "bulge" across the 15-59 age group over the next decade. It is further estimated that the average age of the population in India by 2020 will be 29 years, as against 40 years in USA, 46 years in Europe and 47 years in Japan. In fact, in next twenty years industrialized world will decline by 4% while India it will increase by 32%. This poses both challenges and opportunity. To reap the demographic dividend which is expected to last next 25 years, India needs to equip its workforce with employable skills and knowledge so that the youth can participate productively to make India a developed economy. One Ex-minister of State for HRD and external affairs E. Ahmed also of the view that employability of graduates coming out of our educational system is becoming a matter of great concern. It is fact that only 25% of the general graduates across all streams have employable skills. A youth seeking job in the market today is expected to have no due skills about till he/she faces an interview. Higher education does little to address the skills requirements of a youth raring to go into the world and make a mark. To make it amply clear as to how Higher Education has got to address the issue of skill development and employability, no better evidence than what planning commissions approach paper to the Twelfth Five year Plan says:

"There is a need for a clear focus on improving the employability of graduates Indian Higher Education is organized in to "General" and "Professional" streams. General education which is an excellent foundation for successful knowledge based career often fails to equip graduates with necessary work skills due to its poor quality. Graduates now require the skills beyond the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic (the 3Rs.). Skills such as critical thinking communication, collaboration and creativity (the 4Cs) are now important for getting more and more jobs. Accordingly, there is need to focus on the 4cs. Special emphasis on verbal and written communication skills, especially in English would go long way in improving the employability of the large and growing mass of disempowered youth. In this direction the Vocational Education and training sector in the country is small and this limited capacity is under – utilized due to poor – quality and lack of social status. In India, young people who will soon be entering the labour market, constitute the largest segment of demographic structure. The majority of young people have limited access to education and training and most find work in the informal sector.

In recent years, India has rapidly expanded the capacity of educational institutions and enrolments, but dropout rates remain high and educational attainment remains low. While India has a well institutionalized system of vocational training, it has not sufficiently prepared its youth with the skills that today's industries require. Thus, to speed its economic growth and take advantage of its "demographic dividend", the country has recently embarked on drastic policy reforms to accelerate skills development. These reforms have led to important changes both in the national institutional framework and at institutional level.

II. SKILL DEVELOPMENT & HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Indian higher education system has undergone massive expansion in post independent period with national resolve to establishing several universities, technical institutions, research institutions and professional and non professional colleges all over the country to generate and disseminate knowledge to the common citizen of India. The rapid growth in the sector both in terms of enrolment and number of institutions has thrown up now challenges of maintaining quality of higher education. In last decades the higher education sector in India has witnessed exponential growth both in terms of the number of institutions and the rate of employment, the recent UGC report states that in 1950-51, when there were only, 3,97,000 students enrolled in all disciplines in 750 colleges affiliated to 30 universities. Now the growth of higher education in India has been phenomenal in 2013, India had 727 universities over 35000 colleges and about 13000 stand alone institutions. Despite of this progress made by our higher education sector we are unable to prepare our graduates in tune with needs of job market. Given the direct correlation between education, employment and empowerment, the biggest challenge confronting us is low employability of our graduate passing out of higher education institutions.

III. OBSERVATIONS

Various research studies conducted so far, have brought forth some startling facts. Some of them are being mentioned here-

An employability Survey on engineering graduates (2014) concludes that less than 20% engineers are employable for IT jobs and 7.5% are employable for core engineering jobs, even though more than 90% aspire for such jobs. The key reason behind such partly employability percentages is inadequate preparation in the domain area, the ability to apply basic principles of say, computer engineering or mechanical engineering to real world problems.

Another survey on graduates (2013) finds that as many as 47% graduate in India are not employable for any industry role most of the graduates (40% approximates) were found suitable for clerical/secretarial roles. Their lack of English language knowledge and cognitive skills were identified as the major abstract to their suitability in the job market.

A similar report on MBA's (2012) informs that employability of management graduates in functional domains remains below 10% whereas one third of management graduates lose out because of lack of English and cognitive skills at least half the students are not employable in functional domains for lack of knowledge and conceptual understanding of the domain.

Above facts reveal that the higher education sector as a whole, which affect employability of our educated youth and hence need to be addressed urgently. These findings have sparked serious concerns about the mismatch between the education system and the needs of the job market. Nothing can be more disruptive for our social cohesion and sustained

economic progress than a large army of educated, unemployed youth who feel disempowered in every sense of the term.

IV. CHALLENGES FACED BY WORLD YOUTH

- ✓ Youth across the world face serious challenges regarding skills and jobs, challenges fundamentally different from those their parents faced. In the globalize economy competition has become intensified among firms and industries in the developing and developed countries alike, requiring their workers to have higher level of skills to engaged in innovation, improve the quality of products/ service and increased efficiency in their production processes or even to the point of improving the whole value chain process. Rapid technological changes demand a greater intensity of knowledge and skills in producing applying and diffusing technologies. In turn, all these have changed the nature contents and types of skills that industry demands .As a result on most countries recently moved to reform their education systems to upgrade skills of their workforce.
- ✓ The challenges are greater for developing countries like India which have long suffered from a shortage of skilled labour. But today, developing country firms and producers have become increasingly involved in the global value chains, requiring them to meet global standards of quality and efficiency. This in turn requires higher levels of skills in the workforce.
- ✓ Moreover many countries today need more skilled workers to compete in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as it is a viable strategy for bringing advanced technology to their domestic industries expanding their foreign trade and there by boosting industrial and economic development the availability of and even the stock of skilled workforce in a country is a key determinant of multinational firms considering investment.
- ✓ Today most of developing countries are well aware that expending basic education is hardly sufficient in this globalize era. If their firms and industries are to compete in global economy and they are to promote sustainable development unless they work harder to upgrade their worker's skills.
- ✓ Moreover, though basic education has expanded considerably in recent decades, graduates of basic education who are entering the labour market have increasingly found themselves inadequately equipped with the skills that industry demands.
- ✓ Thus developing countries and all major international organization concerned with education have recently shifted from basic education and back to technical and vocational education and training & higher Education.
- ✓ In globalize era, competition has intensified among firms and industries, requiring them to improve the efficiency and quality of their products and services. This forces them to hire fewer, but more skilled workers. Thus, the entry requirements for youth seeking work have become higher and tougher.

- ✓ Technological change particularly the development of information and communication technology is occurring at un-preceded speed requiring more complex cognitive skills than ever.
- ✓ Moreover the global economy is increasingly becoming "knowledge based" demanding higher intensity of knowledge and skills to do ones job.
- ✓ Global labor markets are increasingly causallized and flexible. Firms are adopting more flexible employment practices. An increased preparation of workers especially new to labour market must know work as causes labour.

V. CONCLUSION

Apart from meeting its own demand India has the potential to provide a skilled workforce to fill the expected shortfall in the ageing developed world. Where as in the 21st century knowledge, skills and technology are major driving forces for the economy. These are the new emerging factors of productivity, without which we cannot attain efficiency and effectiveness in our economy. Knowledge and skill enhancement will match the requirements by the industry which will help in higher productivity and to reduce hidden unemployment. Skill development programs throughout the nation in all sectors will facilitate more sustainable growth. Academia recognize the benefits of this model for integration of industry recognized skills with regular studies and post assessment the students receive industry endorsed and recognized certificate. Efforts should be taken to reach each and every strata of the society for inclusive growth. Not only Indian government but private units should have to invest in educational field to develop a strong infrastructure.

There are various roles which educational institutes can perform to accelerate the economic growth and progress.

- ✓ Vocational training and certification programs should be undertaken for producing skillful workforce.
 - ✓ Tie up with industries should be undertaken to design and develop curriculum.
 - ✓ Classroom training as well as internship (on the job training) will be helpful to students to get complete knowledge about the industry.
 - ✓ Assessment and certification by industry will help to industry to recruit a suitable candidate. This will enable to recruit skillful employees which increase efficiency and productivity.
- Implementation of such programs in rural areas will cater benefits of economic growth into lower strata of the economy, which will result into inclusive growth.
- ✓ Entrepreneurship education and incubation (including mentoring) are the key areas in which higher education institutions can contribute directly to the quantity and quality of new startups and indirectly to the Indian economy. Entrepreneurship education through these institutions can help in increasing awareness of entrepreneurship as a viable career option and the support received through incubation can help student entrepreneurs overcome hurdles to starting and growing their businesses.

In this way, the role of higher education institutions in India goes beyond just teaching and awarding degrees to more broadly influencing the economic development of the country.

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