ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN GENERATING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Dr. Anupama Lakhera

(Associate Professor, Delhi School of Professional Studies and Research (DSPSR), Delhi)

Abstract: Higher education plays a vital role in today's dynamic world, where the challenges are increasing at a faster pace. Most of the companies need employees who are adaptable, flexible with an entrepreneurial attitude and who can act as change agents in the organization. All employees have to move away from their comfort zone towards acquiring the right skills for the job they prefer. In India a gap exists between higher education and skill development in youth to make them employable. A huge gap exists between what industry needs and what is available in terms of skilled students. The need of the hour is enhancing employability skills in youth through education. This study was conducted with the objectives of exploring the role of education in enhancing employability skills required by business organizations. The study is based on literature survey of educational reports, articles, and empirical and theoretical research papers. Mainly studies conducted on education and employability skills in India have been referred to for this paper.

Key Words: Higher education, employability, skills, employability gap

HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

India has a glorious past in terms of Higher Education System, and had world famous universities like Nalanda and Takshashila.

As per the recent statistics (Feb 2017) of UGC, India has 789 universities including Central Universities, State Public University and Deemed University. There are 37,204 colleges, and 11,443 Stand Alone Institutions.

These institutions are providing various programs like MBA, BBA, B.COM, B.Tech, MBBS, Hotel Management, Nursing, Teacher Training and many more.

Today the jobs in the organizations have taken such shape where they are not task specific. In previous phase of market structure the jobs were more specialized so they needed people with specific job skills. But today, jobs are so enriched and multifaceted. So, on such jobs the individuals having those capabilities are required most. Now organizations give value not to the heads but to the skills, knowledge and abilities in them. All these required skills are known as Employability Skills. These skills are nothing but the individual's ability to gain initial employment, maintain employment, move between roles within the same organisation, obtain new employment if required and (ideally) secure suitable and sufficiently fulfilling work (Hillage and Pollard, 1998).

In India we still have a long way to go and the entire ecosystem should focus on bridging the employability gaps, it should focus on enhancing the talent pool and take measures to focus on learning at professional level. Educational institutes should work on the skills of students and give them a proper platform to explore and develop their employability skills to help the students in following the right path at the professional level. (Nirmal Singh, Founder and CEO - Wheebox, 2018)

OBJECTIVES

✓ To study higher education and employability gap in India
✓ To analyze the role of higher education in generating employability skills.

QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

In spite of plethora of universities and institutions for higher education, we have a very small number of quality institutions in our country. For students, getting admission in these prime institutions is an uphill task.

Therefore, a large number of self-financed private institutions have come into existence. Some of these are lacking the basic infrastructure and are thus compromising the quality of intake of students and teaching pedagogy.

The outcome is, they are providing education which is of sub-standard level. As a consequence, these institutions are supplying students of poor quality who are not able to meet the expectations of industries.

There are numerous reasons for the sub-standard quality in higher education. Some major ones are: system/structural issues, non-availability of proper infrastructure, outdated syllabus, irrelevance of curriculum towards generating employability and so on.

Hence, lack of quality education is creating a gap between higher education and employability.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY

Employability is generally seen as one of the manifestations of the rapid changes associated with the globalisation era of the past two decades (cf. Field 2000). The term ‘employability’ indicates that a person...
possesses skills, abilities, and attributes to get a job, and to be successful in his profession. This in turn leads to overall development of the nation. To be employable candidates must meet the demands of the industries that are recruiting them.

Many people feel that there is a skills gap between the manners in which students are prepared for the real world in a university set-up and what they actually need to be successful in the workplace and life in general. (Shivpuri and Kim 2004). The skills gap discussion shifts the focus from workplace preparation to the responsibility of higher education (Cox and King, 2006). Employers want to hire students who are ready for the workplace. This apparent “skills gap” serves as a call to universities to consider incorporating skills education in their curriculum.

Higher education plays an important role in terms of economic development of the country. Higher education helps in providing trained and skilled manpower to the different sectors of the economy. It is also expected that higher education should develop employability among the candidates. Although, education and employability are two separate things, but it has been assumed since long that possessing a higher degree will ensure one of getting a good job. A student applying for a job needs to possess required skills, subject knowledge as well as the soft skills to qualify for the job.

Out of four major factors of production i.e. men, money, machinery, and material, India may only have competitive advantage over the men i.e. the manpower, labour market or human resource. The progress, growth and development of India therefore depend on its quality manpower. As quality manpower can generate tremendous output and thus support in economic development. The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, on the occasion of the launch of Skill India Mission in 2015, had stated that, “In the coming decades, the largest workforce required by the world will be provided by India.”

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Various initiatives have been taken up by the Government of India to impart skill development to youth between the age group of 18-35 years.

To bridge this immense employability gap the role of the private sector is undeniable. Hence, to encourage the private sector to participate in the skill development process, the Government instilled the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) in 2009 as a PPP model to fund and enable support services and shape private sector skill training providers. The overall objective of the NSDC is to create training capacity in the country and sustain private enterprises. Their target is to train about 150 million people by 2022.

INDIA SKILLS REPORT 2019

India Skills Report 2019 states that around 70 per cent of the youth face problem due to lack of professional guidance in finding desirable jobs that worth their skills.

The Skill report team conducted the employability test by reaching out to more than 3 lakh students across 29 States and 7 Union Territories. The survey was jointly carried out by Wheebox, PeopleStrong, and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). It was supported and backed by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Association of Indian Universities (AIU).

The India Skills Report 2019 states that apart from domain expertise and skills, organizations usually prefer to hire those candidates who possess better communication skills and are willing to learn and adapt to changing business environment.

Out of the recruiters surveyed, there are about 60 per cent recruiters who feel that the right candidates are not available for them as a number of candidates don't possess the skills required by them.

CONCLUSION

Unemployment is the biggest challenge in India along with non-availability of skilled workers. Though, most of the time, the problem is not the availability of the job, but the mismatch or lack of skills to carry out a particular job. Therefore, it is important to develop skilling models, which will not only address the issue of the need for skilled human resources but will also provide employment to the bottom of the pyramid.

It is very important for the government to invest in education, training, and skill development programs as a whole to supply quality manpower in the requisite number to different sectors. At the same time, government must take initiatives to measure and control the institutions providing higher education, training, and skill development programs. Government should exercise control over quality of output and ensure quality supply of skilled manpower.

The focus should not only be given to higher education and skill development programs, but to skill development as a whole for Indian youth. This is the right time to promote skilled based programs like short term courses, vocational courses and so on.

In spite of the government plans and various schemes like “Make in India”, “Digital India” and “Smart Cities”, it is imperative that the skilled youth is employed in the right opportunities and thus contributing to the national income.
India has a vast employable population of educated youth who can become an asset and not a liability for the country if they are imparted education in the right skills at the right time for being eligible for the right job.

REFERENCES
The India Skills Report 2019, www.cii.in