

Skill Based Education For Youth To Enhance Employability

Shweta Pandey (Research Scholar – Education)

Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur (India)

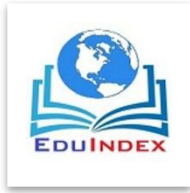
[Email: shwetapandey19841@gmail.com](mailto:shwetapandey19841@gmail.com), (M) 9826012739

Abstract

Trade and industry sectors want their potential employees assessed in various ways. It is done to evaluate the candidates' abilities matching the desired work profile. However, most often the grudge is skill deficit or skills mismatch. India is steadily working to become a pool of market-ready talent for the world at large and not just for domestic needs. With India having the world's largest youth population (64 per cent of 1.3 billion in the working-age group); it is well-known that the education system will have to continue to take the lead role to provide the youngsters required skills and training, especially to higher education students.

The Government's Draft National Education Policy 2016 also envisages to include skills and training in the curriculum to expand opportunities for students to acquire relevant skills, including skills needed for work and entrepreneurship, to name a few. With the tremendous impact of technology on the labour market marked by continuous change, the work environment has also become more complex, requiring new skills.

In a fast-changing area like digital marketing where schools and universities cannot keep up with the pace of change, many agencies have also launched part-time training courses that lead to internships. The industry can step in and ensure that students get access to development opportunities, especially in industries that have a shortage of skilled talent. Youths after graduating often opt to secure a decent job; some choose to pursue higher education or put efforts on research and development; some opt for the profession of teaching; some follow their family occupation; some choose a different career path; some follow their passion or interest: photography, music, film, art, and so on. It would be no exaggeration to say that graduates who



look out for a regular- income-work profile in their field-of- study are the ones who often struggle to get one.

Many corporate bodies and organizations along with government bodies have been collaborating to contribute on enhancing students' employment opportunities by way of internships, campus placements and providing work experience to students.

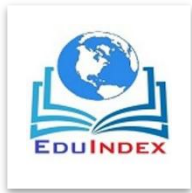
Key Words: Education, Skills, Employability, Entrepreneurship, Industry, Government, Policy.

Introduction

According to the government statistics, India's youth literacy rate (15-24 years) and adult literacy rate (15 years and above) in 2011 were 86.1 percent and 69.3 percent, respectively. It has set a target to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 25.2 percent in 2017-18 and further to 30 per cent in 2020-21.

India's GDP is growing at a rate of 8% per annum, and more than 500 million job opportunities are expected to be created by 2022, the majority of which will be skill based. Accordingly, it is critical to increase the capacity and improve the utilization and quality of Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) being imparted to new job entrants in India. Despite the fact that a significant portion of India's population falls within the employable age bracket, there exist various causes for low employability of Indian youth. It is noted that 90% of the workforce is engaged in the informal sector and has low levels of productivity due to inadequate technical, vocational, and soft skills. The vocational training system in India has the capacity to train only 25% of the estimated 12.8 million new entrants expected to join the workforce every year.

This huge gap can be bridged by improving the capacity, utilization and quality of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in India. Improved TVET could help millions access a decent livelihood. To do this, it is essential to increase capacity, improve utilization and quality of technical and vocational training (TVET) being imparted to new job entrants in India. By

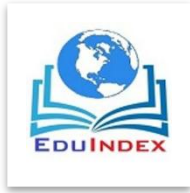


investing 10% of current GDP on increasing skills training for youth there would be, by some estimates mean extra income for such workers amounting to 61% of current GDP.

The Government's Draft National Education Policy 2016 states that there is a need to renew curricula at all levels of education with special emphasis on the emerging learning areas. It also envisages to include skill development and training in the curriculum to expand opportunities for students to acquire relevant skills, as well as skills needed for work and entrepreneurship, to name a few. The report published by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) last year states that India's demographic dividend will be a huge deficit if we continue to have only 20 per cent of our graduates employable. The evident gap in the industry requirements and curriculum has emerged as one of the most common reasons highlighted for this figure. There is an opinion among stakeholders that most of teaching-learning experience is academic and not related to the real-job environment. Communication skills of graduates are often lacking particularly in comparison to the demands of today's global marketplace.

Trade and industry sectors want their potential employees assessed in various ways. It is done to evaluate the candidates' abilities matching the desired work profile. However, most often the grudge is skill deficit or skills mismatch. On the occasion of the launch of Skill India Mission in 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "In the coming decades, the largest workforce required by the world will be provided by India." The Government thus set a target to create 500 million skilled workforces accordingly by 2022. By this skill development mission, India is steadily working to become a pool of market-ready talent for the world at large and not just for domestic needs.

In addition, with the tremendous impact of technology on the labour market marked by continuous change, the work environment has also become more complex, requiring new skills. In this era of fast changing technology, it would be better if the academia can articulate the requisites of roles and graduate employability skills for students to work upon much prior to their placements by using authentic and reliable assessments, which are more aligned with corporate



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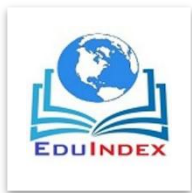


practices to ascertain best fit for the respective roles that they are hiring for. The Government can play vital role by contributing to employability and skill development schemes that help create more vacancies and funding higher education for a better quality of education that encapsulates skill-based learning which could go a long way to mould budding talent in a very large way.

Education framework tool should have a lifelong access to learning through innovations that supports the professional and personal objectives of a diversity of learners. By keeping a loose decision-making and co-operation framework on track, and deepen the dialogue with the stakeholders along with developing a shared language, shared understanding of the underlying objectives rather than the technicalities of the tools only. This can be achieved, if the tools are seen as being interconnected through student-centered learning and with the view of catering to a diverse student population, within specific institutional and national contexts.

Today, higher education is posed by various contingencies demanding diverse skill, architecture, innovation and creativity, public-private partnership, to name a few. The four dimensions which are inherent to promote and nurture an innovative climate can be: individual agency associated with self-determination and the creative impulses of individuals; proficiencies and opinions of diverse set of people; intrinsic motivation merits over external rewards; and individualism deeply intertwined with autonomy at colleges and universities.

The skilled workers have more chances of getting employed over unskilled workers. Government is working extensively on skill training of workforce like for the ITI pass out trainees; by ensuring that different recruitment camps are held regularly for their employment in different companies, organizations, factories or industries. A number of such drives have been conducted and more are proposed to be organized. The Government can act as a bridge between prospective trainees/employees and employers. Government is also inviting counselors in employment exchange programs and developing counseling centers to council the trainees. Counselors help the trainees in improving their behaviour, language skills, soft skills and if



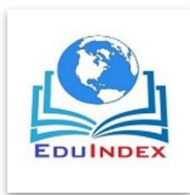
required suggest them to enroll in any short term training course for the same. In ITIs, seminars and talk shows are also being conducted for the candidates to improve their personality.

Skill Development to Start at School Level Education

In the changing world scenario with regard to industry and the job market, there is now an overpowering need for skilled workers. However, the definition of 'skill' in India, and the world in general, has also changed over recent years. India is relatively young as a nation with around 28 million youth population being added every year. More than 50 per cent of its population is below the age of 25 and more than 65 per cent are aged below 35. In 2020, the average age of an Indian will be expectedly 29 years, while it will be 37 for China and 48 for Japan. As former President Pranab Mukherjee has said in a CII event in Kolkata, "We often boast about India's demographic dividend. But the question that arises is, what we do with this, if we cannot skill them, if we cannot educate them and cannot enhance their employability."

Nayana Mallapurkar, Program Head, TISS School of Vocational Education said that About 90 per cent of employment opportunities require vocational skills. Only 20 per cent of our graduates get employed. The rest are unable to get suitable employment due to the lack of employable skills. In the present context of globalization, the demand for skilled and multi skilled workers has increased. Therefore, in the context of developing countries, such as India, there is a critical need for quality skill development and training at school level itself. In general, apart from the core subject expertise, some of the prominent employable skills that employers seek are:

- Communication Skills (verbal and written)
- Commercial Awareness
- Attitude towards work
- Lifelong Learning
- Self-management
- Teamwork

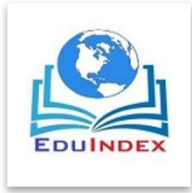


- Problem Solving
- Initiative
- Self-motivation
- Adaptability
- Stress Management
- Creativity
- Interpersonal Sensitivity
- Technology/IT skills

Dr Lakshmi Mohan, Campus Head, ITM Business School emphasizes that at school level, there must be options available for skill development courses and they must be provided in the secondary stage of schooling. Many more courses in fields such as Hospitality and Tourism, Handicraft, Healthcare, Textiles, Photography, IT, Retail, Banking, Insurance can be added that would interest students to learn from. For instance if a student opts for healthcare, he could learn to be a blood-collection expert and later can add further courses to become full-fledged pathology technician or nurse. The pedagogy has to be practical; learning can be enhanced through field visits, e-learning, industry driven projects, digital or video inputs and so on.

She further adds that to make India the skill capital of the world, the school curricula will have to go through a dynamic change. Skill development should ideally begin at the age of 13 years, from the eighth standard, while in school. Integration of skill development and education is essential for skilling to take wings. Skill development will remain a dream if carried out in isolation through centers alone. It has to be imparted in schools alongside academics. If a student opts for motor repair as a skill development course while in school, at a later stage, he can opt for a diploma or degree in automobile engineering.

Evolution of Skill Training in Schools According to the Learner's Age



The employable skills apart from the core skills as mentioned above should be introduced to school students from an early age of 6-7 years onwards in an incremental manner.

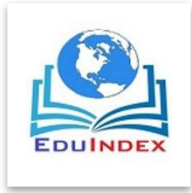
- **Primary school** (classes 1 to 5) (age 6 to 11): Communication skills, attitude, adaptability and IT skills.
- **Middle school** (classes 6 to 8) (age 11 to 14): Above skills plus self-management, teamwork, creativity.
- **Secondary education** (classes 9 to 10) (age 14 to 15): Above skills plus stress management, self-motivation.
- **Upper secondary** (classes 11 to 12) (age 16 to 17): Above skills plus initiative, interpersonal sensitivity.

Higher education (graduation or professional programs): Above skills plus commercial awareness, problem solving, lifelong learning.

Importance of Skill Development for Young Students even before they Graduate

Considering the Indian population, there is an acute need for training the young workforce, just to shape them in a better way. In today's scenario there are ample opportunities that one can choose from and excel in. However, the Indian thought process is more clued on to the typical traditional academic streams and careers in the field of engineering, medicine, accounts, MBA etc. There have been numerous instances where a student is pushed in to a particular field due to parental/peer pressure only to realize at a later stage in life about his/her passion or calling in life and to start all over again from scratch. Introduction to skill training at a young age will by all means give the student an opportunity to explore various options and accordingly, narrow down on a vocation of his/her liking

There are also those set of students who are not able to cope with main stream education. This could be because of economic reasons or academic in-capabilities. So what are the options available to them, such that they lead a dignified life without being exploited or being vulnerable? Introducing skill training at a young age will go a long way in directing these

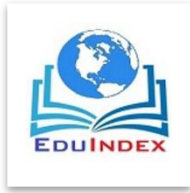


students to opportunities that will have a larger impact on the general fabric of the workforce in this country. Apart from these, introducing students to some of the employable skills mentioned above will also help them prepare and adapt to real work situations without much effort. It will ease the transition phase from being a student to being a professional.

Factors in the Indian Education System that Prevents Skill Development of Students

- The Indian education system puts maximum emphasis on bookish knowledge. Hence, when an individual graduates, he/she struggles to apply this knowledge in the real life scenario.
- From primary to upper secondary, the subjects covered in the school curricula are the languages (mother tongue/regional/foreign), mathematics, science and technology, social science, art education, physical training etc. It will be observed that the curricula do not cover components of employable skills nor is there any option to introduce students to different vocations.
- The Indian education system does not consider the component of skilling in its curriculum. The option of vocation education is limited to certain boards, which do not cater to the larger target audience. In India there are different boards that follow different systems/curriculum.

SiddarthBharwani, Vice President, JetkingInfotrain Limited also added that the Indian education system adopts a top-down approach where major initiatives and strategies get rolled out at 35000 ft in university board rooms and council. However, the approach needs to be bottom up where the students and faculty at the last mile should be the focus. The two major reasons of skill shortage are faculty and facility. The faculty's role needs to change; it needs to flip around in a way that the teacher facilitates the overall learning of students rather than only distributing notes. The facility or infrastructure of a lot of schools needs to be upgraded as per 21st century requirements, which will in turn encourage 21st century skills that students can adapt. According to the recent City and Guilds Group's Skills Confidence report, about 95 per cent of India's



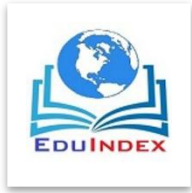
labour force lack formal vocational skills. While the education system and the skill development domain has its own set of challenges and limitations, there is a need to transform the way we skill our youth as many-a-time, students have been found to be unemployable due to lack of practical knowledge. Fundamentally, there is more work to do to ensure we have a skilled youth force 10 years from now.

Skill Development in International Countries

In most developed international countries, students are introduced to formal skill development at the age of 16 onwards i.e. at upper secondary level onwards. The education systems in these countries also provide for opportunities to students to move laterally and vertically to achieve their academic aspirations in main stream education. Germany, Switzerland, USA, Singapore, Japan and Sri Lanka and the Scandinavian Countries have a comparatively well-established vocational track.

Vocational Education as a Solution for Inadequate Skill Development

Skill development is not yet popular in the practice of Indians schools. In the Indian society, an individual pursuing main stream education has a glorified status. Vocational education is viewed as a reluctant option for those who are less privileged, incapable of pursuing main stream education or for the vulnerable sections of society. However, the good news is that vocational education in India is now moving within the purview of a formal structured program at the university level. The 1st step in this direction has been the BVoc degree (Bachelor of Vocational Education) introduced by the UGC through its notification in April 2012. This degree will be a judicious mix of skills relating to a particular profession and appropriate content of general education and will suggest a symbiotic link with industries. Hence, this will open up opportunities for millions of students to pursue a graduation in various vocational courses apart from the regular main stream subjects. The BVoc degree is at par with any mainstream graduation degree and thus, gives opportunities to students to apply for post graduate courses



where the eligibility is any graduation. The BVoc program is also considered as an eligible degree for those seeking government jobs.

How Vocational Courses can Help Students?

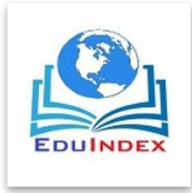
The BVoc programs gives an opportunity to the student to choose a vocation of his/her choice, rather than be pushed into main stream education for which he/she has no interest and does not add any value for further progression. Also, the focus of the vocational courses is to gain hands-on experience, which makes the students industry ready. Thus, these students stand a better chance in terms of employability.

Vocational Training and Challenges of Ensuring Sustainable Economic Development

About 41 percent of people in India are 18. It is obvious that they would be joining the workforce and forming an integral part of the economy. Generating jobs for the future generation is another challenge before the government. Vocational education can play an important role in enhancing the employability of youth. Vocational education is also referred to as career education or technical education prepares people to work in various fields of trade, craft, and technician. A graduate, under-graduate or a metric pass person can pursue for vocational education. It uses various forms of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Also, it is important for social equality, inclusion and sustainable development. In India, vocational skills come under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The National Skills Qualification Framework was launched in December 2013 to the standards and cost of the training to be provided. On July 15, 2015, the Government of India launched first Skill India Development Mission through Public Private Partnership.

Challenges of Ensuring Sustainable Economic Development

Indeed, every country is working towards sustainable development, but developing countries, like India, have to go a mile extra. Here's a look at the challenges before India to ensure sustainable livelihood to the youth,

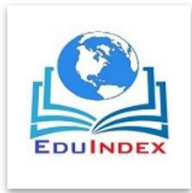


- a.To provide equal opportunity for employment and livelihood.
- b.Physical access to quality skills development institutions and job markets.
- c.Availability of skill development at a nominal price or an on an unpaid basis to the underprivileged or marginalized youth.

Economic Effects of Unemployment

Unemployment hampers the economic growth of a country. Due to the lack of skill and confidence, people settle for jobs that pays them way less. It provokes a **negative environment** in the industries and creates a disputed relationship between the employer and employee. This practice further gives rise to activities like gambling, robbing, theft etc and hampers the **social environment** of a country. In spite of having a large population, the **human resources** are not efficiently utilized productively. As large section of students affirmed that finding a job and getting our first pay cheque is one of the most memorable moments. It provides us with a deep sense of accomplishment and joy. However, landing a job that fits your skill set and matches your area of interest has become a daunting task. This is also because employability skills are not a mandatory part of the college curriculum. According to the India Skills Report 2019, around 70% of the youth face problems in finding desirable jobs due to lack of professional guidance and job-readiness. Lack of employability skills is one of the many issues that deter youth from exploring different career options. Moreover, with a small number of quality institutions, it is very difficult for many of them to develop their skills during their regular degree program.

To address this issue, government with some non-profit organizations has created an employability development program aimed at skilling young students, with a mission to improve the employment outcomes of youth through 21st century skills training, on-the-job work experience, and ongoing placement and alumni support at their existing educational institution. The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) & National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) are playing a important part in this process. The existing education system

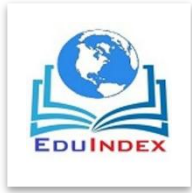


is heavily focused on theoretical learning and does not include employability skills as part of its regular curriculum. Hence, a model has been devised where the employability skills of the students can be developed through an interactive and experiential learning program. The program aims at developing the skills of students enrolled in government and government-aided colleges, polytechnics and ITIs in tier two and tier three cities of India. There is no quick fix to employability and employment issues; a long-term, sustained effort will be required to have meaningful impact on young people. The curriculum has to evolve over a period of time to meet current demands from students and industry.

Importance of Skills Training in Today's Education Ecosystem & Role of MSDE & NSDC

Despite being world's youngest country in terms of demographic dividend, India has only 2% of the workforce skilled compared with 96% in South Korea, 45% in China, 50-55% in USA & 74% in Germany. All these years, we focused on building Higher Education and very little did we think of enhancing the Employability Quotient (EQ) and produce skilled manpower through skill training Interventions. Indian Education sector has seen rapid growth in nos. of Institutions and students over last few decades. As per UGC report, in 1950-51 there were approx. 750 colleges affiliated to 30 universities, which has grown to over 727 universities, 35000 colleges & 13000 standalone Institutions in 2014-15 and counting. Regardless of the tremendous growth, higher education has not proved too efficient to make youths of the country employable as per need of the employer due to low Skill Quotient (SQ).

In today's world of Globalization, Skill Training is an Integral component of increasing efficiency & productivity for sound economic development of any economy, In India, it's still at a nascent stage, however the demand for skilled manpower is huge and to cover this gap, it is very pertinent to re-engineer the skill ecosystem. As India paves its path to be a Global Economic Powerhouse, it is imperative to equip its working population with employability skills. Today, India is one of the youngest countries in the world with more than 62% of the population



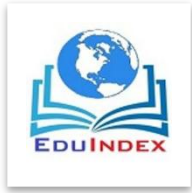
in the working age group (15-59 years) and more than 54% of the total population below 25 years of age. Skill based learning focuses on increasing employability through series of inputs to:

- Equip students with appropriate hands-on skills which help them to be job- ready.
- Core focus on job role based skills leads to comprehensive specialization, thereby increasing efficacy of the candidate.
- Skill Training interventions raises confidence, improves productivity & competency of an individual through focused outcome based learning.

In 2014, Skill Development started getting booster from the Govt. under the visionary leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, he encouraged Skill India Mission and also formed Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Skill (MSDE) to coordinate all skill development activities, capacity & technical/ vocational training framework building, assessments framework. The Ministry is dedicated to skill 400 million workforce by 2022. MSDE has launched Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), which is the flagship outcome-based skill training scheme, the objective of this skill certification and reward scheme is to enable & mobilize a large no. of Indian youths to take up outcome based skill training & become employable and earn their livelihood.

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is a central nodal agency under MSDE responsible to build strong skill training capability through funding training partners. NSDC has been working to define and align all the training nationally under National Skill Qualification Pack (NSQF) as defined in the National Skill Development Policy which aims at bringing standardized ecosystem well- recognized by the industry across the Globe.

India is poised to stand out as one of the Skilled Nations in coming years and it's time for Higher Education & Skill Training to exist in same space with seamless Integration as part of curriculum. To enable this, it is very important for the Industry and Academia to work together to generate focused hands- on candidates with right blend of learning and employability traits.



When MSDE & NSDC started working on skill development programs then many questions arose which helped in framing a national skill development policy. Some questions were,

How Much Value Does Skill Carry in the Growing Indian Economy?

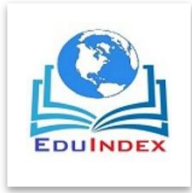
There can't be a more opportune time to consider how closely a nation's growth agenda is aligned with the skill-level of its manpower. NSDC's analysis has projected an incremental skill gap of 240 million across major sectors from 2008-2022. As per statistics, India has a demographic dividend advantage over many other countries because 75 per cent of its population falls in the working age group of 15 to 59 years. By 2050, as per estimates, India's working population would be in excess of 1 billion resulting in the number of people in the age group 20-60 being higher than what it is today. India's education system is also characterized by a high school dropout rate, with as many as 56.8 per cent students leaving school before reaching the qualifying Class X exam. There is a definite need for skill development to enable this section of society to become employable.

What is the Current Scenario of Skill Based Learning in India?

Skill based education is not a choice but a need in India where the demand for skilled professional is still very high and the desire to get skilled is low. Learners, parents and society prefer socially acceptable qualifications in pure academic subjects. Youth in the country still incorrectly believe that skill based education leads to low paid jobs and it is perceived to be meant for only academically weak students, school dropouts and for people in the lower strata. Besides, it is not about skilling alone. Challenge is to create right kind of jobs for which people are skilled.

What were the challenges they had to face while trying to bridge the gap between academia and industry?

Millions of graduates pass out of our universities annually, a rich vein of talent and resource for the industry to tap into. Yet, every year, the gap between offered ability and employability widens and the industry struggles to map the right set of skill sets to the jobs on hand. The result



is relentless training in the required skills to make candidates job viable and a resultant loss of productivity and competitiveness at the industry and the national level.

How do we see the students coping up with both vocational training and academics?

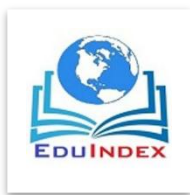
Only 25 per cent of graduates today are considered “employable” by employers. The biggest challenge comes due to lack of employability skills. As a result the individual’s ability to conduct in the work environment in terms of communication, presentation, interpersonal skills, team working, etc does not meet the desired levels. Inculcating employability skills requires a huge task for our education system to bring in the transition in the role from “student” to worker and prepare the candidates for the new working world.

Conclusion

Education is the single most important instrument for social and economic transformation. A well educated population, adequately equipped with knowledge and skill is not only essential to support economic growth, but is also a pre-condition for growth to be inclusive since it is the educated and skilled people who stand to benefit most from the employment opportunities which growth provides. Skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development for any country. Countries with higher and better levels of skills adjust more effectively to the challenges and opportunities of world of work. As India moves progressively towards becoming a ‘knowledge economy’ it becomes increasingly important that the country should focus on advancement of skills and these skills have to be relevant to the emerging economic environment. The task of skill development has many challenges in India which

include,

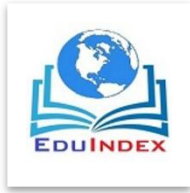
- a) Increasing capacity & capability of existing system to ensure equitable access to all.
- b) Promoting lifelong learning, maintaining quality and relevance, according to changing requirement particularly of emerging knowledge economy.
- c) Creating effective convergence between school education, various skill development efforts of government and between government and Private Sector initiative.



- d) Capacity building of institutions for planning, quality assurance and involvement of stake holders.
- e) Creating institutional mechanism for research development quality assurance, examinations & certification, affiliations and accreditation.
- f) Increasing participation of stakeholders, mobilizing adequate investment for financing skill development, attaining sustainability by strengthening physical and intellectual resources.

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