

Employability Skills; a Strategic Means to Subdue the Problem of Unemployability in Educated Youth of India

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Abstract

Education is the driving force of economic and social development in any country. The progress, prosperity and accelerated growth in economy require support from the higher education system in providing on uninterrupted supply of a skilled and efficient workforce. India, like any other knowledge economy, depends on the development of its educational sector. However research finding have shown that the overall state of higher education is dismal in the country. There is a severe constraint on the availability of skilled labour (Agarwal, 2006). If, India attain its goal of becoming a global economic power, it needs people of caliber to power and accelerate growth and for all this India needs to cater employability skill to its educated youth. This article is an attempt to discuss about the need of employability skills among educated youth, so that we have not a just literate youth but a skilled youth, with talent which can fetch gainful employment. This article provides the common employability skills required by employers these days and also suggest measures in increase employability of educated Indian youth.

Keywords: Employability, Un-Employability, Employability Skills, Higher Education, Educated Youth.

Introduction:

Indian economy is experiencing an accelerated growth in the recent year and is poised to grow further. The world Development Report, 2007, emphasize that in India the situation of increasing youth population presents an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate growth and reduce poverty. Because labour is the main asset to the poor, making it more productive is the best way to reduce poverty. This requires enhancing the opportunity to earn money and developing the human capital to take advantage of those opportunities. Education is the driving force of economic and social development

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in any country (*Cholin, 2005; Mehta and Kalra, 2006*). Higher education enhance earnings of the individuals and contributes to economic development and makes a significant contribution to reduction is absolute as well as relative poverty. The progress, prosperity and accelerated growth in economy require support from India, like any other knowledge economy, depends on the development of its educational sector. However, research finding have shown that the overall state 15,000 colleges and hundreds of national and regional research institutes, Indian higher education and research sector is the third largest in the world, in terms of the number of student it caters to but not a single Indian university finds even a mention in a recent international ranking of the top 200 universities, except an IIT ranked at 41

Report of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) has estimated that India would face 'talent gap'- the lack of right skills for the job required of more than 5 million by 2012, as existing educational institutions do not impart employable skills. The report titled, 'India's Demographic Dilemma' brings out the fact the \$1.1-trillion economy will have a shortfall of 750000 skilled labours (*Agarwal, 2006*). India needs to ensure for greater availability of educational opportunities at the higher education level so that we have not just a literate youth but a skilled youth, with skills which can fetch gainful employment. What we have today is a growing skills gap reflecting the slim availability of high-quality college education in India and the galloping pace of the country's service driven economy, which is growing faster than most countries in the world. Considering this, it is necessary to find ways to make education of good quality, accessible and affordable to all as well as to enhance employability of educated youth.

Concepts of Employability, Unemployability and Unemployment:

Industry looks for a different mix of skills, abilities, capabilities and competencies in potential hires depending on the business it's in. Industry also looks for multi skilled individuals. All these things lead to unemployability. In this context, let us look at the difference between employability, unemployability and unemployment. Employability refers to a person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment if required (*Hillage and Pollard, 1998*). In simple terms

employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. More comprehensively, employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realize potential through sustainable employment. Employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals that they possess, the way they use and present them.

A widely accepted definition of employability is “a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.” (ESECT, 2004) Thus, employability is about an individual’s chances of progressing into and through the labour market successfully, according to what they choose to do. A person’s employability at any one time depends on

- ❖ A combination of their own skills, understandings and attributes.
- ❖ External factors and circumstances, such as the state of the labour market.

People often confuse between unemployability and unemployment. Unemployability arises when individuals have educational eligibility but lack in capability and suitability to execute job related activities despite being the availability of employment opportunities while unemployment is a state where individuals have educational eligibility, capability and suitability but dearth of employment opportunities. In India, current situation is more of unemployability rather than the unemployment.

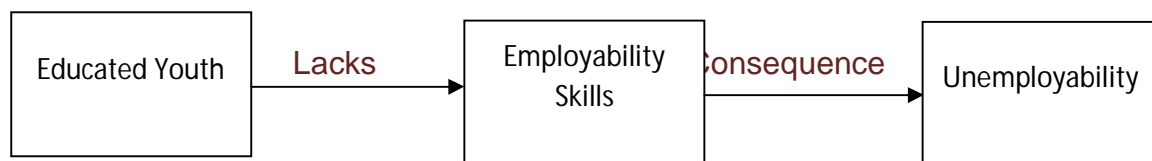


Fig. 1

Employability Skills:

“A set of achievements - skills, understandings and attributes – that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation” (*Learning to Work - SFC 2004*). Employability skills refer to specific skills essential for employment. These skills are a set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the economy. These are the critical tools and traits required to perform tasks at workplace. These are all about the ability of individuals to exhibit their skills to the prospective employers and the ability to execute the tasks thereby achieving organizational goals and objectives. Besides, it also talks about the ability to switch over to other jobs comfortably.

Employability skills are the additional skills apart from the core skills and hard skills. These skills are essential for all employers cutting across all industries. These days employability skills are much sought by employee. The needs of employability skills differ from country to country and from sector to sector and from time to time. However, certain qualities such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, integrity, right attitude, problem solving, decision making and team building skills can be taken as a few common employability skills.

The need for employability skills differ from one country to another. For instance, American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) identified six categories of skills which are important to employability. They are; basic competency, communication, adaptability, developmental activities, group effectiveness and influencing others. In Malaysia, these are positive values, leadership skills, teamwork force, communicative skills and life-long learning. In Australia employability skills are defined as “the skills required gaining employment or establish an enterprise, but also to progress within enterprise or expand employment capability, so as to achieve one’s potential and contribute successfully to an enterprise’s strategic directions.” The eight employability skills are initiative and enterprise, learning, self-management, communication, teamwork, problem solving, planning and organizing and technology.

These days all business cry for employability skills as these enable their growth and competitiveness. Besides this now youth also began to realize that without these

employable skills it is difficult to grab jobs. Few employability skills are discussed below:

Self Management – Contributes to Employee Satisfaction and Growth:

Self-Management refers to an individual's ability to manage themselves in relation to the outcomes expected of their work role. Individuals must increasingly take responsibility for their own performance. It includes readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, resilience, self-starting, appropriate assertiveness, time management, readiness to improve own performance based on feedback /reflective learning.

Team Working – Contributes to Productive Working Relationships and Outcomes:

Team work recognizes the important of relationship with others in the workplace. There are very few tasks and roles which occur in isolation, but even these require at least some degree of relationship with customer and / or supervisors for an understanding of how the work being done contributes to an overall goal or target. Structural change, the growing complexity and diversity of services and products being provided, the use of outsourced providers, workplace flexibility and multi-skills are just some of the factors influencing the increased requirements for teamwork.

Relationship Building and Customer Awareness – Contributes to Business Success:

Relationship is defined as a mutual affiliation or connection between individuals or groups of people or entities. It focuses on understanding the needs of the clients' and getting the best possible results. Establishing a relationship has certain for it to develop like networking, establish rapport, use of contacts, and concern for stakeholders. Relationship building promotes an ethic of client service and so an understanding and anticipation of clients' changing needs is essential. Stress and conflict are other issues that a competent relationship – builder will manage.

Communication – Contributes to Productive and Harmonious Relations between Employee and Customer:

Communication skill is to facilitate people for to communicate effectively with one another. It also plays an important role in forming relationship. Communication involves

elements such as being a good listener, expressing yourself clearly, explaining things to people from different backgrounds and presenting a clear case. For effective communication, a sender transmits his or her message in a clear and organized form to maintain and promote the need and interest of the receivers. Receivers or listeners show interest only if the person communicating is loaded with confidence, gestures and softness. Speaking, listening, reading and/or writing are central to all work practices and there are very few examples of units of competency which do not contain at least some aspects of communication therefore communication is the key to individuals and team effectiveness.

Problem Solving and Initiative – Contributes to Productive Outcomes:

This involves being able to offer a solution to a problem by analyzing a situation and working out how to arrive at a favorable outcomes. It often involves making optimum use of available resources and enlisting others to achieve an outcome. At a more complex level, problem solving can include processes to identify problems for example, risk management and quality assurance. Initiative is identified as an important facet of problem solving as it allows individuals to take steps to solve problems, with or without input from supervisors.

Learning – contributes to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes. Learning skills refers to a preparedness to learn from experience in a range of settings and scenarios. It contributes to ongoing improvement and expansion in one's knowledge and skill set. This also refers to the ability to learn workplace skills and expectations specific to organization. To keep up with the techno change employees need to continuously engage in self-assessment against the technological landscape of skills and knowledge, and take proactive steps toward enrolling in continuous training.

Technology Contributes to Effective Execution of Tasks:

The capacity to apply technology, combining the physical and sensory skills needs to operate equipment with the understanding of scientific and technological principles

needs to explore and adapt systems. They may include having basic IT skills, including familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets file management and use of internet search engines and ability to use technology more effectively to manage work. Employers are expecting graduates to be work-ready and demanding above discussed skills and qualities from young graduates. Educational institutions should be critical of their program offerings and question if they are nurturing the appropriate competencies and skills.

Mismatch between Knowledge and Skills among Youth in India:

The economic development and progress of any nation depends on its higher education system. Our modern higher education system was established in 1857 by our colonial relents and it has not changed much since its inception in its concepts and organization structures. If India is to attain its goal of becoming a global economic power, it needs people of caliber to power and accelerate growth, is it in manufacturing, service or even agriculture now and for all this India also needs to cater employability skills. Unemployment among educated youth is caused by a variety of factors. The number of educated unemployed may rise due to a mismatch between knowledge and skills that are imparted by the educational institutions on the one hand and what is required by industry on the other. In the recent job fairs conducted at a reputed Indian University, though the employers came up with plenty of openings, the number of graduates who had required qualification and skills in terms of analytical, verbal and interpersonal skills were only 4 per cent. The remaining 96 per cent of graduates were unemployable. Employers did not get the applicants with right skill set, mind set and tool set. Such a high percentage of unemployable and to lessen to talent gap now it is necessary for higher education system to focus on employability skills. Moreover employability should acquire a central role within policy, strategy and the student curriculum in higher education. The syllabus committees should interface with the industries while designing courses. Many big industries have set-up-their own in house training programs to fight with the problem.

Measures to Increase Employability:

The time is ripe for us all now to reboot the India education system by various problems, Joint initiatives and other measure by individuals the government, industry and academia. Such activities have the potential to play and important part in plugging the talent gap in the years to come.

Soft Skill Programmes:

Language and soft skill programmes should become mandatory for postgraduate student and undergraduate student. Introduction of soft skills and language skills will certainly improve the employability of our graduate student.

University-Industry Collaboration:

There is need to end the isolation of higher education sector and the industrial sector. Both the sector should come together in their own interest in their own interest and in the interest of the nation. The higher education institutes should build relationships with industry and collaborate with them in designing the requisite curriculum for supplying employable graduates in the industry and business organizations. Enhancing employability through imparting required skills has become the imperative of the higher education system.

Industry Internship Programmes:

In association with industry, an industry internship programmes should be made mandatory so that the graduates can understand the industry atmosphere and the industries can identify the talents and skills in our graduates and employ them opportunities arise.

Coordinated Approach:

Government, educational institutions, industry, and the student themselves all the four parties need to play a better role in addressing the critical challenge and understanding the changing role of technology and innovation in driving transformation. None of the four can make this work in isolation; it will take a well-coordinated approach.

Modernized Education System:

India has one of the largest education systems in the world, but there is an urgent need to modernize it. We need more institutions in diverse fields like agriculture, biotechnology, and human resources etc are needed to reap the advantages of our demographic profile.

Employable Courses:

The institutions should develop the course as per the requirements of the employers, the competencies have to be mapped, and evaluation systems have to respond to the requirement of the assessment of competencies which have been acquired by the learner and not simply knowledge domain.

Proficient and Trained Teachers:

Capacity also needs to be upgraded in terms of human resource. In other words, we also need to train more teachers, re-skill them according to today's requirement. Young people should be motivated to work as educationists and trainees. This will partly solve the unemployment problem and add to the system a large number of people who can then transfer those skills to students. There is a need for faculty enablement, faculty development and faculty recruitment. There is a need for blended training which is part ICT enabled training and part faculty driven.

Qualitative Improvement in Education:

A change should reflect in pedagogical methods and lay emphasis on several dimensions, including:

- ❖ A shift from rote memorization to development of student's capacity for critical thinking.
- ❖ A shift from traditional academic to practically relevant curriculum.
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- ❖ A shift from imparting information to imparting life values such as independent thinking, self-reliance and individual initiative that are essential for success in any field of endeavor.

Mentoring:

Universities should offer structured mentoring programs to student as a way to expose them to experience professionals who assist them to reflect on their development needs and career direction. It will help to deepen student' understanding of their intended profession and to build relationships that will assist them in following graduation. For this purpose motivators and counselors should cooperate with institutions in the process of giving guidance and inspirations to students regarding the ways to increase employability skill from time to time in order to be excellent workers. Apart from that, apprentice programs are suggested to be carried out so that students will be able to understand employability skill better. This program will also serve the purpose to make student realized that employability skill is as important as technical skills.

Conclusion:

“To be employed is to be at risk, to be employable is to be secure” Peter Hawkins. An important role to education is to foster in each child the attributes and values of a responsible, capable, active and healthy members of the family and the society. The rigidity of curriculum, testing and teaching methods need to be relaxed so that innovative methods and new models of education can be evolved, tested and perfected. The growing Indian economy is now facing the shortage of competent manpower. There is a mismatch between required qualifications and competencies. The achievements in terms of academic qualifications do not show up in terms of competencies in the work area. There is a big difference between the actual learning outcomes and the required learning outcomes. Businesses want graduates who not only add value but who have the skills to help to transform their organization in the face of continuous and rapid economic and technological change. All graduates whatever their degree disciplines - need to be equipped with employability skills. The employability, however, is a more serious problem and is a major challenge to the entire educational system and content of the curricula as well as the emphasis on the theoretical as distinguished from

practical applied training. The efforts made by the Indian state and policy-makers in the area need them to be reviewed carefully. Training individuals for the jobs of the future and allowing them to visualize what it possible today will not only make a difference in their lives but will enrich our communities now and for years to come. Empower these youngsters with the requisite skills they will need to get employment and to grow in a corporate environment. Hence, the reform in the higher education system must necessarily provide the skilled graduates with suitable value additions in order to meet the demands of the growing economy.

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