
ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SKILL INDIA

Dr. Smita Vivek Wadaskar

M.E.S. Garware College of Commerce, Pune

ABSTRACT

Education is one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality in a country like India. It is the key to enhance India's competitiveness in the global economy. The linkage between higher education and national development is so strong that it has been widely believed that the nation does well so long as everything is well with the institutions of higher learning. In fact skilled manpower and a steady supply of knowledgeable and trained workforce are the prerequisites for rapid industrial and economic growth. India has gradually evolved as a knowledge-based economy due to availability of capable, flexible and qualified human capital. India has immense opportunities to position itself on the world globe, thanks to the rising influence of globalization. However, there is a need to further develop and empower the human capital to ensure India's global competitiveness.

India is an agro based country with wealthy natural resources. This is where our Indian Higher Education and Scientific Research should concentrate on and give importance to these aspects while developing the curriculum in Indian Universities. The academic programs in Higher Education should therefore include scientific and technological methods and procedures to develop rural economy, exploiting the natural resources available in plenty in the rural India. Higher Education should offer programs for the empowerment of rural youth, men and women. This approach will transform Indian population as effective human resources empowering them with knowledge and skill.

Indian Industry and policy makers have realized the fact that India is facing a skill and knowledge crisis, giving rise to the formation of the National Policy on Skills Development. The policy envisions the establishment of a National Skill Development Initiative which will empower all individuals through improved skills, knowledge, nationally and internationally recognized qualifications to gain access to decent employment and ensure India's competitiveness in the global market. In the year 2008, a Coordinated Action on Skill Development with three-tier institutional structure consisting of PM's National Council, National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB) and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was created, which laid the institutional foundations for a more proactive role of public and private sector interactions and interfaces for harnessing the benefits of the demographic dividend.

Key words: Higher Education, National development, Skill Development, Human resources, Employability.

Introduction: Skilled manpower and a steady supply of knowledgeable and trained workforce are the pre-requisites for rapid

industrial and economic growth. The economic development of a country depends on the effective and constructive

exploitation of the available natural resources in the country. An individual using his sixth sense tries to understand the natural laws and makes technological evolution to improvise his living style. He needs knowledge and skill for the effective utilization of the natural resources to develop the economy of the country. Knowledge and skill to the people are expected to be given through higher education and scientific research in an effective manner. The human beings become human resources only when they are equipped with knowledge, skill and human values through higher education. Countries with good number of human resources and well established scientific research facilities flourish well in economic growth.

India is a young economy and this is evident from the fact that an average Indian will be only 29 years old as compared with 37 years in China and 48 years in Japan. 65% of the Indian people will be in the working age group and this age advantage for India is expected to continue for at least three decades till 2040. It is therefore necessary to create more and more jobs for the next decade to provide gainful employment to this young population. The public and the private sector together may not be able to generate employment on such a large scale. It is therefore necessary to actively focus on providing a suitable environment for entrepreneurial thinking which can help in creating sufficient jobs and self employment opportunities to absorb the youth.

According to the skill-gap studies by NSDC, the important sectors where skilled workers will be a requirement are mainly, Infrastructure, Auto and auto-components, Textiles and allied textile sectors, Healthcare, Education etc.

India has embarked on a Mission for 'Make in India'. The objective is that its large population does not depend on more and more imports as its industrial consumption increased as a result of economic development. At the same time, the Make in India Mission is expected to create large employment that the country needs as significant percentage of its population shifts from agriculture

In order to make the youth employable, it is necessary to understand their aspirations and career choice. These aspirations have to be matched with the requirements of the industry and suitable training needs to be imparted to make them employable.

Concept of Skill Development:

Skill development is an initiative and a top priority of the Government to re-emphasize focus on providing training and employment opportunities to the young population to make them ready for a job. Skill India has become a national program to impart employability and entrepreneurship skills to the youth. It is said that India has the world's youngest workforce and there are over 10 million new entrants in the job market every year. However, only 2% of

this workforce has employable abilities. The Industry is not able to find employable workers. Industries often complain about shortages of skilled technicians. Therefore companies can play a major role in the skilling initiative by providing apprenticeship training in necessary skill sets, earn while your learn scheme etc.

Indian Industry and policy makers have realized the fact that India is facing a skill and knowledge crisis, giving rise to the formation of the National Policy on Skills Development. The policy envisions the establishment of a National Skill Development Initiative which will empower all individuals through improved skills, knowledge, nationally and internationally recognized qualifications to gain access to decent employment and ensure India's competitiveness in the global market. The object of the policy is to create opportunities for all to acquire skills throughout life, and especially for youth, women and disadvantaged group. The policy aims to fulfill this objective by establishing several Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), vocational schools, technical schools, polytechnics & professional colleges to facilitate adult learning, apprenticeships, sector-specific skill development, e-learning, training for self-employment and other forms of training. Thus skill building can be viewed as an instrument to improve the effectiveness and contribution of labour to the overall production, empower the

individual and improve his or her social value.

The target group for skill development comprises all those in the labour force, including those entering the labour market for the first time. The current capacity of the skill development programs is 3.1 million. India has target of skilling 500 people by 2022. Being the prime provider for skill development in India, the government has established many avenues and pathways to increase the employability of the student under the National Policy on skills. In addition to this the private sector has also ventured in this area by being both a supplier and consumer of skilled manpower. In view of the huge demographic dividend (younger population compared to the ageing population of the developed countries) that India enjoys, this advantage of the 'demographic dividend' can be cultivated to build a skilled workforce in the near future.

Need for Skill Development:

India's transition to a knowledge-based economy requires a new generation of educated and skilled people. Its competitive edge will be determined by its people's ability to create, share and use knowledge effectively. A Knowledge economy requires India to develop workers – knowledge workers and knowledge technologists who are flexible and analytical and who can be the driving force for innovation and growth.

To achieve this India needs a flexible education system consisting of basic education to provide the foundation for learning, secondary and tertiary education to develop core capabilities and core technical skills and further means of achieving lifelong learning. The education system must be attuned to the new global environment by promoting creativity and improving the quality of education and training at all levels.

In a globalized economy, a large pool of skilled workers is indispensable for attracting foreign direct investment. Developing skilled workers enhances the efficiency and flexibility of the labour market. Skilled workers are easily absorbed into the economy and their job mobility is improved. It is crucial to invest in quality secondary and tertiary education and in vocational education and training if India's economy is to develop and remain competitive in world markets.

Employers all over the world seek recruits who can handle 4 Cs – communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. Any education or skilling system must therefore, provide trainees with these skills and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, so that they will be able to handle the demands of future jobs.

Importance of Skill Development:

India is an agro based country with large rural population. India has its strong

economic hold in the agriculture sector. India ranks second worldwide in farm output. Agriculture and allied sectors like forestry, logging and fishing accounts for 16.6% of the GDP. India's total cultivable area is 1,269,219 km² (56.78% of total land area); total water surface area is 3, 14,400 km² and it receives an average annual rainfall of 1,100mm. Irrigation accounts for 92% of the water utilization. Thus, India is an agro based country with wealthy natural resources. This is where our Indian Higher Education and Scientific Research should concentrate on and give importance to these aspects while developing the curriculum in Indian Universities. The academic programs in Higher Education should therefore include scientific and technological methods and procedures to develop rural economy, exploiting the natural resources available in plenty in the rural India. Higher Education should offer programs for the empowerment of rural youth, men and women. This approach will transform Indian population as effective human resources empowering them with knowledge and skill.

The Economic survey, 2012-13 observed that by the year 2021, 64% of the country's population will be in the working age group of 15-59 years and in 2016, the working age population will increase by 63.5 million, of which majority will be in the age group of 20-35 years. This demographic dividend can be reaped only if this young population is healthy, educated and skilled. However, creating jobs is the biggest concern. The

number of workers dependent on agriculture is reducing, they are migrating to the cities for jobs, but there is no creation of new jobs to absorb them. Also more jobs which are being created are in the informal/unorganized sector. Although the Government program, MGNREGA is intended to fill the job deficit for a certain period of time, it is important to focus on longer term inclusive growth strategies. Therefore to boost job creation, more banking and regulatory support is essential to help micro, small and medium enterprises to grow faster.

To reap the benefits of the above mentioned demographic advantage a co-ordinated strategy for skill development has been formulated involving key stakeholders like the Central Ministries, State Governments, National Council on Skill Development (NCSD) and National Skill Development Co-ordination Board (NSDCB). It is estimated that, India needs to create around 1 to 1.5 crores jobs per year for the next decade to provide gainful employment to India's young population. To generate employment on such a large scale there is a need to actively focus on providing a suitable environment for entrepreneurial thinking; this can help in creating sufficient jobs and self employment opportunities to absorb the youth. If the Indian youth is to be made more 'employable', it is necessary to understand their aspirations and match these with the requirements on the demand side. The youth needs to be counseled of

their career paths so that, they are able to make a proper choice based on their aptitude.

Role of Higher Education in Skill Education:

In newly Independent India, because of Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on village economies and economic policies and Pandit Jawaharlal's view on industrialization and need for the State to occupy commanding heights of the economy, more attention was paid to higher education with the creation of institutions of excellence such as the IITs and IIMs, engineering and medical colleges, which began to produce graduates for the newly industrializing nation. However in the decade between 1950 and 1960, even as India produced more engineers and doctors, the actual number of illiterates in the country raised from 294.2 million to 325.5 million. In a sense, this divergence was also institutionalized; therefore higher education became a focus area for the Ministry of Education while skill education and labour policy were relegated to the Ministry of Labour. In a way these two departments competed for the same scarce resources. Thus education and skills development came to be viewed as separate from each other. Aspirations for growth and personal advancement began to be associated with higher education and not skills or working with one's hands, as a result of which, only 2 per cent of all those working in industrial or semi-industrial trades were formally or professionally skilled.

The new millennium brought with it a realization that this divergence could have a disastrous impact on India's future. India's demographic dividend and opportunity to re-establish her as a leading economy had to be addressed through adequate skilling of youth for employability and contribution to the nation's economy as well as a global workforce. This was reinforced by Dr. C. K. Prahlad, in 2007, where he shared his belief that India would shape the emerging world order and change not only its own destiny but even that of the world through economic strength, technology, innovation and moral leadership. He envisioned India to be the moral voice for the people around the world, to practice inclusiveness and sustainability and to be the most benchmarked country for its capacity to benefit from its own diversity.

This period saw an upsurge of initiatives to address the convergence of education and skills, such as the framing of the National Skills Policy 2009, as well as the establishment of the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC), National Skills Development Agency (NSDA) and the creation of the National Skills Qualification framework (NSQF), and setting of the Sector Skills Councils to spearhead the selections and articulation of outcome oriented competencies for high volume jobs.

The NSQF is a particularly potent initiative, as it provides the framework for a much needed convergence between education and skills by enabling mobility between formal

and vocational education, while also creating a framework for enabling recognition of the large numbers of informally skilled individuals, with the opportunity for future career progression.

The formation of the Ministry for Skills Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) to coordinate various skilling initiatives in the country and the Make in India and skill India campaigns have also gone a long way in re-energizing the relationship between education and skills, by igniting youth interest in acquiring skills formally and industry participation in recognizing skill certifications along with educational qualifications. Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi's Make in India campaign is the latest of many such attempts by successive governments to accelerate the pace of manufacturing activity in India. Twenty five sectors have been identified as areas where India has an existing or potential competitive advantage and where additional policy support can encourage new investment. Having identified these sectors, the Modi government is pushing through policy changes aimed at improving India's rank on the global, Ease of doing Business' index.

Government of India also launched the National Skill development Mission on 15th July 2015, which coincided with the World Youth Skills Day. The Mission has been set up to deliver the Skill India campaign and will create convergence across sectors and States on skills training activities. As of

now, the country has 249 training partners, 3,222 training centers, 55, 70,476 trainees with 23, 88,009 placements so far. While there are many schemes and missions under different ministries like the Deen Dayal Antodaya Yojana (skill training for urban and rural poor), the Digital India and Make in India campaigns are all steps to encourage skill development to develop products within India by Indians.

Challenges in Skill Development:

The challenges of Skill Development in India are multifold. There is a large proportion of the existing workforce, which needs skill training support at varying levels. While it is estimated that at least 1.70 crore will enter the workforce every year for the next 7 years. The current skilling capacity is inadequate to match this demand, with many initiatives un-aligned and suffering from a lack of coordination. The situation is further complicated by different states having different demographic situations, hence different skilling needs and challenges. ‘Vocational Training falls under the Concurrent list, which means State Governments have a key role and responsibility in realizing the objective of ‘Skill India’. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship however, will have a crucial role in coordination between a range of stakeholders – including skill training providers, governments at all levels and the end beneficiaries.

While the Government has laid great emphasis on provision of skill training and assessment and certification, particularly at younger ages, it is also necessary to consider the demand side of this equation. The availability of more and more skilled personnel will need to be accompanied by the creation of increased demand for their services, which in turn, is dependent on the growth of the economy.

Whether it is policy or academia or regulation, all must work closely with industry to ensure that supply and demand for skills are at all times, properly matched. There is a need for an independent system to assess quality, comprising all elements of the skill development value chain, right from need assessment and student mobilization upto training and placement.

Conclusion:

The integration of new technologies and the recognition of the 21st century skills of design thinking, problem solving, analytics and entrepreneurship will necessitate to the approach to school curricula and open doors to even greater synergy between industry and education. For India, skill Development is critical from both socio-economic and demographic point of view. For the economy to grow at 8% to 9%, with a targeted growth rate of 10% for secondary, 11% for tertiary and 4% for agriculture sectors, a multi-faceted and highly efficient skill development system is imperative. But, before going in for any skill

development program, it is important to determine the current skill capacity, the major obstacles in the way of skill development programs along with their possible solutions. One of the tasks towards 'Make in India' mission is to significantly improve the quality of the educational

institutions, so that its graduates/products are able to contribute to a large extent. All kinds of skills need to be developed so that graduates are ready to participate fully in the various aspects of mass-manufacturing and commercializing.

References:

1. Draft National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015, published by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India, May 2015.
2. National Skill Development Policy, March 2009.
3. www.ficciskillforum.org
4. www.planningcommission.gov.in/vol.13
5. <http://nsdcindia.org/knowledge-bank/>