

SKILLING: DISPARITY BETWEEN DEMAND AND SUPPLY IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA – A REVIEW

A. Dunstan Rajkumar¹ and Shyam Bahadur Katuwal²

The aim of this article is to review the literature concerning the skilling of educated youth and their scope of employability in the industry or the entrepreneurial potential and confidence. In the era of digitalization technology, due to the time factor, the industry looks for the candidates to equip with necessary skills in order to avoid the training cost on the one hand and the required updates and upgrades on the other hand from the campus itself. Of late, it is known fact that the industries aspire to conduct campus recruitment in those universities and institutes only. In India, there is a vast disparity between the demand and supply of candidates due to the reasons such as slow phase of curriculum update, increased global expectations of industries, rapid changes in technology, reduced zeal and enthusiasm in the minds of adolescent youth and so on. Considering these factors, the Government of India also takes serious and series of actions to impart skills among the youth. Hence it poses the challenges to bridge the said gap, thereby the nation as a whole can reap the fruits of skilling. The present paper attempts to study the relevant reviews of skilling to understand the employers' expectations so as to help people concerned to fine tune the curriculum at the level of higher education which supplies the required candidates to the various industries at national and global levels.

Key words: Skilling, Employability, Higher Education, Industries, Youth

INTRODUCTION

'Education is not merely dissemination of knowledge but also skilling' Education is either meant for making learners employable or imbibing in them entrepreneurial capabilities. Essentially the productivity of the nation can be enhanced and the needs of ever increasing population can be satisfied to raise the standard of living of the people. But what is really happening in India is not as expected. Employers are not happy with the graduates emerging from Indian Universities as they lack the required skills to undertake the job from day one of joining. Many graduates are not aspiring for entrepreneurial ventures as they are not confident about their skill sets. Even technical graduates are not an exemption to this state of affairs. It is clear that there is a gap between the skills demanded by employers and the skills with which the universities are supplying graduates to the market. The intensity of this problem is enlarging as the employers are tech-savvy while universities are shaping the learners with moribund curriculum ignoring the technological changes taking place in different walks of life across the globe. Universities have to avail the support of employers. Of course, in this endeavor industries are expected to

¹ Associate Professor in Commerce, VIT University, Vellore-632014, India, E-mail: dunstanrajkumar.a@vit.ac.in

² Professor, Faculty of Management, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal, E-mail: shyam.katuwal@gmail.com

extend a helping hand to universities. This paper is an attempt to study the review to identify the reality so as to understand whether the university education is meaningful to the satisfaction of prospective employers and the ultimate aim is nothing but the incorporation of both knowledge and skill in every segment of curriculum construction by educational planners.

REVIEW OF RELATED AND RELEVANT LITERATURES

Alvesson & Tomlinson (2008) Higher education has lost its exclusiveness and this has led to a devaluation of educational merits and an overall decrease in the importance of formal education in social allocation at the expense of other forms of social and cultural capital. Higher education is viewed as an “entrance ticket” and is used as a pre-selection for professional employment. The competition becomes fiercer; other soft skills are often decisive in distinguishing candidates with the same educational background. Although education is still necessary, it is not a sufficient criterion on its own to give a graduate access to different positions on the labour market and in society.

Archer and Davison (2008) the most primary skill sought by employers was termed as “communication” and they found that most of the graduates lack in “soft skills” that are of prime importance for businesses to succeed today. The possession of professional skills and attributes makes one employable and to name a few skills & attributes linked to employability.

Baker, (2009), the role of higher education in the construction and development of the employability of the future workforce has been the subject of debate for nearly as long as the universities have existed & however globalisation and new conditions of businesses have made it imperative to undertake professional programs.

Carl Senior & Cubbidge (2010), mention about “speed program” an educational placement programme which happens to be an interesting training course that allows students the opportunity to develop the necessary skills that are required to start a business. The development of effective communication skills, a range of social processes or so-called “soft skills” that are designed to improve general employability such as communication, the ability to work in a team and the ability to focus on the end product and with respect to improving employability the need for hard technical skills is no longer considered of importance for the new generation. Here, workplace experience is of greater importance than traditional skill sets. Key social skills such as the ability to work effectively in a team and to communicate successfully are regarded as being important by the students as discussed in the paper. Soft skills are often regarded post-graduation as more important than technical grounding. The paper also suggested that the importance of work-based experience is not necessarily realised in the attitudes or expectations of teaching staff.

Chao (2005) Formal education and training have been criticized for their incomplete understanding of what constitutes professional knowledge and for assuming that all professional knowledge can be transmitted through lectures and supervised practice that focus on the transmission of explicit rules and codified knowledge.

Cranmer (2006) an important revelation in conjunction with the present research came to the fore on the impact of employability skills teaching and learning on graduate labour market prospects. The findings of the study cast doubt on the assumption that these skills can be effectively developed within classrooms. It is argued that, despite the best intentions of academics to enhance graduates' employability, the limitations inherent within the agenda will consistently produce mixed outcomes. Furthermore the paper argues that resources would be better utilised to increase employment-based training and experience, and or employer involvement in courses, which were found to positively affect immediate graduate prospects in the labour market and, therefore, support graduates in the transitional stage into employment. These are the things that add concern to the present educational scenario in India as well as abroad.

Cumming (2010) a dominant theme is emerging regarding many graduates those who lack appropriate skills, attitudes and dispositions, which in turn prevent them from participating effectively in the workplace.

Curtis and Shani (2002), speaks about range of potential advantages accruing to students who have term-time jobs. Term-time working can therefore provide an additional learning environment. It can help students to increase their knowledge of organisational life. Term-time working can also facilitate a better understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. They may also be able to compare this to their experience of carrying out similar activities in an academic environment. When employers reject candidates as unsuitable it could be argued that they are being rejected for lacking "cultural" capital. There is absolutely no doubt that this happens when people are seen to have the wrong accent, dress inappropriately at an interview, or do not know the rules of the game when candidates are invited to a formal dinner to meet company employees. These things are all related to soft skills training which are all the more important in today's highly competitive and challenging work environment.

David Rae, (2007), this study aimed to reveal the underlying principle for connecting enterprise education with employability and career development in the creation of curriculum and learning experiences within UK higher education. They aimed to "connected" models of individual learning and of the institutional integration of enterprise, personal and career development. The author revealed that how a "connected" approach to enterprise and employability works theoretically, organisationally, and practically, the end results are in the learning experiences and career pathways of students and graduates. Based on these

connections, students can experience enhanced outcomes of personal and skill development, enterprising success and employment. An increasing challenge, and one essential for universities, is to measure and evaluate these results as well as to learn from them and to engage students and graduates in the design and management of these experiences as an integral part of their degree. There are increasing indications that students will make positive contributions to these opportunities.

DilipChenoy, he pointed out National Skill Development Corporation has received an enthusiastic buy -in from Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) in their respective areas. In this the responsibility of NSDC is to bringing together all stakeholders to achieve the common goal of creating a skilled workforce for the domains they represent. He mainly focused on working on promoting academies of excellence and helping in executing train-the-trainer programs. He also pointed out with the main objective of introducing NSDC funded for four SSCs for the auto, IT/ITes, retail and private security. They are directly involved for National Vocational Education Qualification framework. He also stated that SSCs have set up labour market information system and promotes academies of excellence programs.He mainly focused on educational system and training firms don't have any standards to ensure that their programmes result in employer-needed competencies among those graduating from their programmes and courses. He strongly stated that SSCs would involve in the design of "Competency-based curriculum". In vocational educational institutions skill-related training is essential for formal education system.

Galloway *et al.* (2005) suggests that a cross disciplinary approach to enterprise education can influence a range of industry sectors, including Arts, Science & Technology disciplines. Enterprise education /corporate training will contribute to the development of a range of skills, including the ability to innovate and to provide leadership, which pays dividends for the individual and the economy in any employment context. The mainstream education follows more of a didactic approach to teaching where the learner's ability to grasp things and possess the skills is hampered due to the structured and rigidity of the curriculum. Corporate training / professional training is based more on experiential learning that involves continuous exposure to and reflection on practical encounters that facilitates learning in a flexible informal environment which makes these programs of more value to employers and students. Here the teacher acts as more of a guide and a partner in the learning process as opposed to a dictator who delivers knowledge to a largely passive audience.

Harvey and Bowers-Brown (2004) have pointed out that, with increased mobility across national borders, there is a growing need for a model of generic skills that is recognised internationally. In Australia, for instance, graduates complete a 'generally accepted' set of attributes. In New Zealand, various measures have been developed, such as the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), in consultation with education and industry specialists. In Canada and

the USA, several universities have introduced 'critical skills' deemed necessary for the Canadian workforce into their careers programmes; whilst both Canada and the USA assess students through work-based/ related learning criteria. In Denmark, the Qualifications Framework requires the completion of a 'competence' profile. In Finland, skills courses are available and integrated into the curriculum and students' personal study plans. In South Africa, the NQF includes two sets of outcomes—'critical and specific'—which contribute to the graduate's personal development and the social and economic development of the society (Harvey & Bowers-Brown, 2004). These examples show that, whilst countries may constitute 'employability' differently, there are commonalities in approaches.

Mukit Mishra, "in traditional education, subject to millions of degree without job". Most of the degrees are exam based and learned through pedagogy, memorizing some basic concepts and theories and understanding probable applicability only to minuscule extent. In current education system, real life competency and the level of education are almost parallel. He also stated that current education system resulting in awarding degrees prepares learners to be "think-ready", not "job-ready". The purpose of education is to create job and work commensurating with the level of learning and degree. For quality of education and appropriate level of work with matching both expectation and degree migration becomes a continuous process. He defined skill as, 'optimal output with minimal input and quantifiable improvement in their in the earning capability'. Presence of skills results in absence of wastage. He also stated that informal learning in the skill sector plays a very pivotal role not only in shaping the learning curve, but enhancing the income level.

Naureen D and Vicki N (2012), they explore the role and importance of numeracy skills in graduate recruitment within a diversity of employment sectors. The results revealed that the importance of employers attach to graduates' numeracy skills and the extent to which employers use numeracy tests in graduate recruitment. The results of this study suggest that many employers seek graduates with particular kinds and levels of numeracy skills and that many test the possession of the latter via their recruitment procedures, to what extent employers and their graduate employees make use of these numeracy skills subsequently in the workplace and whether and how employees' numeracy skills influence organisational performance warrants further investigation.

Neumann and Banghart (2001) describe the relationship between industry and academia as a "gap to be bridged". Students usually leave university with a good appreciation of their chosen subject as they have studied it intensively for the previous few years. However, the individual subject skills may still not fully meet employer requirements, as there is a tension between formal education and vocational training.

Raghavendra, has said that employees need to increase their knowledge through a formal and structured process of learning. In educational institution need pre and post hiring capability building. Employee growth is one of the critical aspects one would look forward to and must be dealt with utmost care and sensitivity. Multiple aspects such as opportunity to learn and build ones skills, competencies and roles enabling the talent with the required experience and talent.

Rosenbaum (2002) stated that if students do not learn basic employability skills before they are hired, then they may not have the opportunity to learn them on the job since employers may be reluctant to invest in the resources needed to provide remedial training for these skills.

Satish Jha stated that “By making children curious, by nurturing exploratory instincts and making learning enjoyable we can help children learn faster and engage their minds in ways that can find newer ways to understand various questions that engage them”. Generally the performance of children is based on the environment they grow up. The nutrition given to the children may not develop the capabilities, family and peer environment helps the children to acclimatize into their surroundings. He also pointed out parental involvement is essential for children’s learning process. Nurturing of children’s can help in pushing towards higher performance. In our educational system follows knowledge creation, pedagogy and technologies that support education rather than learning. By making children’s curious, by nurturing exploratory instincts and making learning enjoyable we can help children learn faster and engage their minds in ways that can find newer ways to understand various questions that engage them. He said that, India has not utilizing the opportunity offered by One Laptop per Child. Based on this scheme one can adopt very quickly in a matter of months rather than years. This could improve their grammar and writing skills.

SantanuPaul, said that “with professional education becoming a must for the youth, a student loan seems the most effective way to tide over these expenses”. For youngsters professional education is must for improving skills. If a youth or adult wants to fund a vocational training or skill development program that is conducted by a private training company, there are virtually no loan products available to support them. He has stated that ability to print degrees actually provide quality education. In order to improve the employability of youths, each and every college should provide quality of vocational and skill training programs. He also pointed out that the Finance Minister proposed to allocate INR 1000 crore to National Skill Development Fund.

Staffan Nilsson (2010), the author aimed to focus on illuminating perceptions of engineering graduates about employability. That is how the engineering graduates perceive, invest in, manage, and develop their employability. He explains employability means the ability to find employment and remain employed. It includes both hard and soft skills, including formal and actual competence,

interpersonal skills, and personal characteristics. The results indicate that the technical, formal and vocational skills are considered as less importance when compare to one's individual employability. And also the author states that the responsibility for managing and developing one's employability lies with each individual.

Vathsala W. and Lasantha P (2004), this study explored the employability skills that employers, university lecturers and graduates value to bring to the workplace. The software and computer services industry requires employees to possess individual creativity, essential skills and talent for the competitiveness and growth of the industry. When graduates are equipped with necessary skills they will become motivated and efficient in fulfilling their job tasks, and consequently employment retention will be increased. They suggested that employability skills are influenced by the gender of the graduates. The findings of the study could be used to assist universities, graduates, employers, and career advisers in applying strategic decisions in managing graduates' careers. They also suggested that the possession of employability skills by graduates is essentially manifested in priorities given and steps taken by graduates and university lecturers during the undergraduate degree programmes, and by employers in selecting graduates for entry-level graduate jobs and imparting skills in graduates after hiring. The results of this study could be used to assist in universities, graduates, employers, and career advisers to apply strategic decisions in managing graduates' careers.

The related and relevant reviews surveyed as above, stated the significance of skilling from the Industrial Perspective. Seasoned academicians came out with their views on pragmatic curriculum construction but many failed to make a comparison with employers' requirements. Similarly human resources managers of corporate houses pinpointed the deficiencies of present day curriculum without associating with universities either in curriculum construction or extending practical training to students to acquire hands-on experience in the chosen fields. Literature with the participation of both the sectors is minuscule.

CONCLUSION

At the level of higher educational institutions, curriculum construction/modification is the responsibility of the policy making bodies like Boards of Studies/Academic Council//Senate/Syndicate. The outcome of the reviews could help such bodies to identify the skills to be honed and the methods through which such skills can be sharpened. In short, the review is helpful to make the curriculum learner friendly and employer oriented. Employers expect the output of higher educational institutions (graduates) to take up the assignment from the date of joining. In other words, those graduates are expected to acquire the required skills while undergoing their programmes. This shall gradually draw the employers' representatives (Human Resource Managers) towards higher educational institutions and eventually

understand their requirements. In short, this attempt will assist the entrepreneurs/ employers to have people of required calibre to undertake jobs of varied nature.

References

- Alvesson, M. (2008). *Tomhetenstriumf: Om grandiositet, illusionsnummerochnollsummespel*, Atlas & Liber, Stockholm.
- Archer, W., and J. Davison. (2008). Graduate employability: What do employers think and want?
- Baker, D. P. (2009). "The educational transformation of work: towards a new synthesis", *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 163-91.
- Carl Senior and Robert Cubbidge (2010). "Enhancing employability in the "ME generation" Education þ Training Vol. 52 No. 6/7, 2010 pp. 445-449.
- Chia-an Chao (2005). "Toward full participation in management consulting practice: Experiences of recent college graduates Education þ Training Vol. 47 No. 1, 2005 pp. 18-30.
- Cumming, J. (2010). Contextualised performance: Reframing the skills debate in research education.
- Curtis, S. and Shani, N. (2002). "The effect of taking paid employment during term time on students' academic studies", *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 129-38.
- David Rae, (2007). Connecting enterprise and graduate employability Challenges to the higher education culture and curriculum, *Education + Training*, Vol. 49 Issue 8/9 pp. 605 – 619.
- Dilip Chenoy, the CEO &MD of National Skill Development Corporation, Skilling India.
- Galloway, L., Anderson, M., Brown, W. and Whittam, G. (2005). The Impact of Entrepreneurship.
- Harvey, L. and Bowers Brown, T. (2004). "Employability cross country comparisons". In *Graduate Market Trends Winter 2004/5*.
- Lalit Agarwal, the Chairman & Managing Director of V-Mart Retail Limited, Skilling India.
- Mukit Mishra, President, CUTM, India & Chairman of Gram Tarang, Skilling India.
- Naureen Durrani and Vicki N. Tariq, The role of numeracy skills in graduate employability, *Education þ Training* Vol. 54 No. 5, 2012 pp. 419-434.
- Neumann, B.R. and Banghart, S. (2001). "Industry-university 'consulternships': an implementation guide", *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 7-11.
- Raghavendra. K, Vice President & Head, HRD infosis, BPO, Skilling India.
- Rosenbaum, J. (2002). *Beyond Empty Promises: Policies to Improve Transitions into College and Jobs*, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, US Department of Education, Washington, DC.
- Satish Jha, President & CEO, OLPC India Foundations, Nurturing Childerns learning, Skilling India.
- Sue Cranmer (2006). Enhancing graduate employability: best intentions and mixed outcomes, *Studies in Higher Education*, 31:2, 169-184.
- Staffan Nilsson (2010). Enhancing individual employability: the perspective of engineering graduates, *Education and Training*, Vol. 52 No. 6/7, 2010 pp. 540-551.
- VathsalaWickramasinghe and LasanthaPerera, Graduates', university lecturers' and employers' perceptions towards employability skills, *Education + Training*, Vol. 52 Iss 3, 2004, pp. 226 - 244.