

Towards Employability Through Vocational Based Education Curriculum

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Abstract

In the absence of Education man is a beast. Only education refines him and makes him fit for the job he undertakes. There is individual difference among individuals. One subject found to be easier for one may not be so for the other. Therefore choice of subjects must be based on taste and aptitude. Right type of education given to an individual enhances his potentials and makes him shine in his chosen field and his employability increases. Suitable vocational education is capable of maximizing employability. This results in the stoppage of wastage and employability is maximized. An attempt is made in this paper and all ways of empowering students' employability is dealt with in detail.

Key words

Empowerment – Employability - Vocational education - Vocational based curriculum;

I. Introduction

Man as such is unrefined and hence unfit for performing any job. Unless man is educated and trained for a particular job, he cannot make any profit in any vocation. Only through profit making life becomes easier and the per capita income of the nation goes up. In all developed countries the percentage of skilled work force is at a higher level. But in India the figure is still at a lower level and that hinders the progress of the nation. India is a most populous country next only to China in the world. Human wealth is the major wealth of India. But uneducated and untrained population is a liability to the nation. Only when they are given proper education and suitable training man becomes a useful citizen. Hence an attempt is made in this paper to analyse the ways and means of empowering the young generation of our country. Through education and training every child must become productive. Through proper planning and implementations this can be achieved. In recent years, Higher Education across the globe is put to serious introspection especially with regard to the question of employability of students.

II. Employability – Definition

The term employability involves willingness as well as capacity of workers to remain attractive for the labour market. In recent time employability as a concept has received considerable attention in international media although its first literal appearance was felt long back in 1909. Since then it has been conceptualized differently in different contexts in accordance to changes in tasks and work environment as per the requirements of the changing economy.

III. Determinants of Employability

Till 1970, an individual's knowledge obtained from academic as well as the occupational skill earned through training and work experience of individual employees was considered the only determinant of employability. But during the latter part of 1970's it started getting recognized that occupational skill are not sufficient to remain attractive on the labour market and 'transferable' skills of the employees started getting greater value. During the 1980's rapid changes took place in products, services and processes. Hence employers gradually started hiring more workers on a temporary basis. This resulted in the dichotomy of

the labour market into primary segments (permanent employees) and secondary segments (temporary staffing). These developments gave rise to the perception that all workers may have to encounter discontinuities in their careers. Therefore now employability is considered to be the marketability of an individual's cumulative skills. And employable individual in this view is a permanent entrepreneur of his own boundaryless career.

Today we have entered into the 21st century and employability has entered into the skill plus era. Here occupational and transferable skill does not sufficiently capture interplay between good education and employability. Graduates now are not only expected to possess such skills, but use them appropriately and effectively in response to customized needs of new and ever changing circumstances. It relates to the ability of graduates to tackle 'job market'. This somewhat conforms to the notion of 'capability' or 'functional ability' or 'situational performance'. Such ability can be observed when students having justified confidence in their ability to take effective and appropriate action to cope up with new and changing circumstances, what the actions are all about, live and work effectively with others and continue to learn from their experiences as individuals and in association with others, in a diverse and changing society.

It is therefore necessary to ask whether the students we teach are capable of functioning as the situation demands. If the answer to this question is not affirmative then we have to overhaul the entire system of education and the teachers have to identify the requirements of the job market and have to develop appropriate curriculum for the stakeholders. If we fail in this area Higher Education in India would become irrelevant to our students as far as their employability is concerned.

IV. Understanding the Work Place Requirements

In view of the above, academicians of India have initiated a curriculum building exercise for empowering the students. As a first step toward this exercise, a two stage survey was conducted to explore the determinants of employability relevant to the context of our country. The next step is to assess the employability of students graduating in several Higher Education Institutions.

V. Determinants of Employability

(1) From Employers' Perspective

Employers have given a fairly diverse account of the different determinants of employability. Each of them assume varied importance in different contexts and categories of work. Therefore it becomes impossible to state a direct relationship between employability and its determinants. However generally speaking, it is observed that most employers tended to relate the determinants of employability to their own work environment putting forward lengthy and varied lists of attributes – skills, qualities and attitudes. Most of the employers expect their employees to keep up with the changes and learn the relevant new technologies as they emerge and need to develop ‘self’ akin to global citizen and the most wanted of them is communicative abilities through diverse media.

(2) From Job Seekers Perspective

It was observed that most of them expressed concern or disappointment for having little prospect of finding work relevant to their degree subjects. The major complaint is that they were given unrealistic expectations during their degree course and their degrees are used as a selected mechanism prior to interviews. Some opined that success of getting job was mostly due to some previous work experience. A few tell that advantage came to them by the demonstration of their skills in practical and direct way. The strongest message was that personality and generic skills were more important than qualification and subject specific knowledge and skills and greater importance should not be assigned to interview performance.

VI. Emerging Requirements

Surveys point to the following contours of the emerging job market and hence any attempt to develop curriculum for employability should take into account that ‘Life time employment’ contract with a single employer is no longer relevant. Of late large share of the working population has been replaced by a dynamic ‘protean’ careers. They are characterized by a high degree of flexibility, varied experiences in educations, training and self management. In the face of the emerging requirement of building such protean careers employability is the synergic combination of subject, understanding, skill endowment and personal qualities. To manage such a career, besides having a repertoire of cognitive, social, emotional and behavioral sub skills – one should have nurturing self theory and self efficacy beliefs so as to integrate the above sub skills for facing myriad challenges thrown up by the world. People need a sense of efficacy to apply what they know consistently, persistently and skillfully especially when things are not going well and deficient performances carry negative consequences. Given appropriate sub skills, successful performance in work place is determined by strong self efficacy beliefs of individuals.

VII. Towards Empowerment of curriculum

During the crucial formative period of students’ lives, the higher education institutions function as the field for the cultivation and social validation of cognitive competencies. Higher education institution is that place where students develop the cognitive competencies and acquire the knowledge and problem solving skills essential for participating effectively in the large society. Here their knowledge and thinking skills are continually tested, evaluated and socially compared. As students master cognitive skills, they develop a growing sense of their intellectual efficacy. The task of creating learning environments conducive to the development of cognitive skills rests heavily on the talents and self

efficacy of teachers. Teachers who have a low sense of instructional efficacy favor a custodial orientation that relies heavily on negative sanctions to get students to study. But those having a high sense of efficacy about their teaching capabilities can motivate their students and enhance their cognitive development.

VIII. Developing Curriculum for Empowering Students

To develop appropriate curriculum for empowering students, a questionnaire based survey was conducted. It aimed at assessing the employability of the students. It measured variables such as attitude, flexibility perception about job market, new literacy, IT ability, communicative competence etc. From the findings of the survey, an attempt was made to ‘identify certain focal points for curriculum development. Such focal points are highly useful to guide us to frame the right curriculum suitable to our learners.

IX. Identifying the Right Type of Intelligence

Howard Gardener in his famous book entitled. “Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligence”, has identified eight distinctive types of intelligence such as

1. Linguistic intelligence
2. Logical – mathematical intelligence
3. Spatial intelligence
4. Bodily – kinesthetic intelligence
5. Musical intelligence
6. Interpersonal intelligence
7. Intra – personal intelligence
8. Naturalist intelligence

A child having one type of intelligence cannot pursue a course which requires another type of intelligence. This is where parents fail and admit their wards in wrong types of courses and make them total failures in life. A square peg cannot fit in a round hole and also a round peg cannot fit itself in a square hole. Therefore emphasis must be given to assign right type of course for each and every student. Only then all the potentials, latent in it can be brought out and made useful to the society.

Actually some students are not fit for higher academic studies. They must be identified at the Secondary School level and must to enrolled in vocational stream at the Higher Secondary level. If this classification is done properly, Vocational education would be a great success. They must be trained by skillful instructors. By doing so they would come out successfully in the Higher secondary education and pursue suitable employments in factories or through self employment.

X. Conclusion

Many of the young unemployed have rather poor qualifications in terms of their performance at the examinations and have little aptitude or the capacity for the type of work that they aspire for. The employability, however, is a more serious problem and is a major challenge to the entire educational system. It is also a challenge to the curricula as well as the emphasis on the theoretical as distinguished from practical applied training. The efforts made by the government and policy makers in this area need to be reviewed carefully. But there has been more rhetoric than action, and the implementation of the recommended policies has been woefully unsatisfactory.

The policy makers need to pay serious attention on high rates of youth employment not only to mitigate the frustrations faced by the new entrants into the work force but also to minimize the

likely alienation and wide spread evidence of deviant behaviour of youth throughout the country. The unemployed youth have partly been responsible for the tensions leading to the “Sons – of – the Soil” movements in different parts of the country and perhaps also the unrest in several of the border states of the country. Several schemes initiated by the Indian planners and policy-makers during the past several decades merit a careful scrutiny to assess and evaluate their impact on the employment situation.

It is possible that the less educated persons are unable to find job because of the competition from the better educated person with degrees, which have also been devalued. The abilities of the degree holders to perform various tasks do not quite compare with those of their older peers. Also the over – supply in the labour market forces them to accept less remunerative jobs that would have been taken, in the past, by the less educated new entrants into the labour force.

Higher Education Institutions must recognize that a large number of students don’t find the transition from education into employment a straight forward matter and in the past many years, students have been ill equipped for this transition. Further more, the nature of graduate employment is changing. It should also be recognized that even for those in work the nature of employment is changing so that education is the first step in a continuing programme of life long learning - much of which will subsequently be conducted in a work place setting.

Totally it can be concluded that if Higher Education instills various values, morals and other qualities, which help in the development of the overall personality of the youth, they will lead them to a better and bright future.

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