NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY: 2020-CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

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Skills and Employability in Higher Education

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Abstract

Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world, after USA and China. University Grant Commission is the main governing body of higher education in India. This enforces its standards, advises the government, helps and coordinates between the Centre and the state. Distance learning and open education is another important feature of Indian education system. Indira Gandhi National Open University is the largest university in the world, having approximately 3.5 million students across the globe. Some of institution of India like Indian institute of technology IIT's, Indian institutes of Management IIM's National Institute of Technology NIT's and Jawahar Lal Nehru University have been globally acclaimed for their standard of education. The IITs enroll about 11000 students annually and the alumni have contributed to both the growth of the private sector and public sector in India. However, India has failed to produce world class universities like Harvard or Oxford. It has often been observed that while India produces a large number of graduates in professional courses like engineering & management, a very small percentage of them are actually employable. According to the MHRD "Industry does not create (human) wealth, it translates ideas into wealth. Higher education will create this human wealth. In this article, it is hence to discuss about the employability skills required and to be provided by through higher education.
Keywords: Higher Education, Employability Skills, Governing Body, Human Wealth, eLearning

Introduction

Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world, after USA and China. University Grant Commission is the main governing body of higher education in India. This enforces its standards, advises the government, helps and coordinates between the Centre and the state. Distance learning and open education is another important feature of Indian education system. Indira Gandhi National Open University is the largest university in the world, having approximately 3.5 million students across the globe. Some of institution of India like Indian institute of technology IIT's, Indian institutes of Management IIM's National

Institute of Technology NIT's and Jawahar Lal Nehru University have been globally acclaimed for their standard of education. The IITs enroll about 11000 students annually and the alumni have contributed to both the growth of the private sector and public sector in India. However, India has failed to produce world class universities like Harvard or Oxford. It has often been observed that while India produces a large number of graduates in professional courses like engineering & management, a very small percentage of them are actually employable. Employability has become a key concept in higher education worldwide. The upsurge of interest in employability can be traced to a number of factors, including a concern that graduates are less likely to secure public-sector employment. The downsizing and re-structuring of private organisations due to neoliberal policies places further strain on graduate work availability. A focus on employability is a pragmatic response to these conditions in order to strengthen the vocational mission of higher education. The role of HEIs goes beyond ensuring that students are knowledgeable in an academic discipline to ensuring that they are prepared for the labour market.

Employability

Broadly speaking, existing definitions of employability can be categorised into three main groups. The first group emphasises the capabilities of individuals. These definitions resonate with the idea that employability of an individual depends upon personal assets or intrinsic characteristics. While Hillage and Pollard refer to it as capability, terms it a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes. These definitions emphasise the absolute dimensions of employability which relate to whether individuals possess the appropriate capabilities, skills and attitudes that employers need.

Developing employability skills in Higher Education
- Collaboration and Teamwork.
- Communication.
- Innovation and Problem Solving.
- Critical Thinking and Decision Making.
- Leadership and Global Citizenship.
- Personal Development and Management.

Purpose of Employability Skills

Employability is a key concept in higher education. Graduate employment rate is often used to assess the quality of university provision, despite that employability and employment are two different concepts. This paper will increase the understandings of graduate employability through interpreting its meaning and whose responsibility for graduate employability from the perspectives of four key stakeholders: higher education institutions, students, government and employers.

Importance of Employability Skills

These sets of job-readiness skills are, in essence, behaviours that are necessary for every job and are essential attitudes that enable the growth in career and also help to:

- Connect with co-workers
- Solve problems
- Be a part of and understand the role within the team
- Make responsible choices for job and career
- Be independent and take charge of career

Personal characteristics, habits, and attitudes influence how the interaction is being made with others. Employers value employability skills because they regard these as indications of how a person gets along with other team members and customers, and how efficiently persons are likely to handle the job, how they perform and succeed in their career. Employers value these unique attributes in their potential employees because they have always been necessary for a productive and smoothly functioning workforce. Enterprises spend a substantial amount of time and money developing these foundational and work-readiness skills. But in today's world, where jobs are limited, employers enjoy more options and would like to hire a technical expert who also displays well-rounded employability skills. The eLearning platforms, puts immense emphasis on developing these employability skills or soft skills in learners. Realizing that skill gaps are fast expanding, it has made employability skills training an essential part of their training programs.

Improve Employability Skills

The following are some of the strengths and qualities that a company would expect an employee to have when they appear for an interview. It is equally important for the applicant to draft an <u>effective resume</u> listing the right skillsets that he or she possesses for the job. An employee should also learn to make know the employer about the skills possessed by that employee at the time of interview.

Ways to Improve Employability Skills
1. Communication and Interpersonal Skills

The ability to express the ideas and opinions clearly and explaining the content which is to be achieved without ambiguity. It includes listening and understanding and acting upon what others are saying or instructing.

2. Problem-Solving Skills

It is the ability to think logically and find solutions to setbacks which should be possessed by an employee.

3. Self-Motivation

This is the capability to come out with innovative ideas and results and display enterprising capabilities to do things on own without being instructed.

4. Working under Pressure

This reflects the skill to deliver the best performance within deadlines without fastening under work stress.

5. Organizational skills

It is a systematic approach to work that emphasizes planning every move to meet deadlines.

6. Team Spirit

This expresses the possibility to work well with other people from different backgrounds, disciplines, and expertise to accomplish a task or goal.

7. Learning Skills

It is the desire to learn and understand new things is an essential skill-set in the tech world today where skill gaps are appearing quickly and up skilling is inevitable.

8. Number and Data Skills

It says about the ability to use data to demonstrate a point.

9. Value Diversity

People in modern workplaces come from different backgrounds and so the learning to work with people of different ages, religions, and political opinion is essential for the career progress.

10. Negotiation Skills

The ability to work towards a win-win outcome where it is possible to make objective decisions after listening to the opinions of all stakeholders.

Education System in India

Provision of education is shared responsibility of both Central and State governments in India. The stages of education can be broadly categorized as follows: school stages and higher/university education. The school stages include elementary and secondary education. Elementary education (grades I–VIII), consists of primary and upper primary schooling, is compulsory schooling for all children between 6 and 14 years. Secondary education comprises high school (IX–X) and higher/senior secondary school (XI–XII). Secondary education also comprises vocational education which is offered at the school level and vocational training programmes which are institutions based training programmes. Higher/university education includes non-professional degree courses such as humanities, pure sciences and commerce and professional degree/diploma courses such as engineering and technology and medicine.

Types of Skill Mismatch Type I—Over-education

At the individual level, over-education is defined as a form of skill gap wherein 'over-qualified' persons with tertiary education are hired for jobs/activities that do not require such qualifications. Because of over-supply of persons for such jobs, Higher Education is used as a transparent and easy screening device by employers. For example, a postgraduate in Economics is hired as a bus driver.

Type 2—Skill mismatch in technical education

A second form of over education is specifically where persons who have received Higher Education in technical fields such as agriculture, engineering and technology end up working in jobs that do not require that training. Such skill mismatch is where the person hired has a qualification that is different from the requirement for that particular job. For example, an agricultural scientist appointed as the director of a firm.

Type 3—Quality skill gap

The third form of skill gap is when firms hiring for jobs that require persons with tertiary education complain that the quality/skill is inadequate for such activities. As a consequence, while persons with Higher Education may get hired for such jobs, they require significant training adding to the costs of firms. This can be seen as poor quality of the existing Higher Education system in India. For example, graduates in Commerce are required to be trained in the accounting procedures of the firm.

Conclusion

As a job seeker, having experience in core employability skills gives an opportunity to stand out of others. Many job seekers these days have degrees and work experience related to the job being applied for. Employability skills though gives more depth and a much better chance to succeed in getting the job. **As a company**, the more skilled is the workforce in these core skills, the more likely will have a more productive workforce, in addition to a happier workforce. Managers who, for example, have a good understanding of Communication Skills and Resilience Skills will be better leaders and a**s a corporate trainer**, the employability skills are a great opportunity to provide workshops and training sessions in-house as a freelance trainer. Resilience training is particularly relevant and in demand these days.

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