



SKILL EDUCATION NOT IN THOUGHT BUT IN ACTION

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Abstract

Skills are necessary for success in this technical world. Skills are the key in stimulating a sustainable development process and make a contribution to facilitating the transition from the informal to formal economy. Skills are also essential to address the opportunities and challenges to meet new demands of changing economies and new technologies in the context of globalization. At present, the scenario of school education is not very inspiring. All the stake holders of education are in a state of despair and indifference. Parents, consumed by the ambition of highly paying lucrative careers for their children, continue to push them for examination success and high grades. As a result, the focus has shifted from learning for better understanding to learning for examination success. The entire process becomes very monotonous and machine like and learning becomes dull and loses its significance. At this juncture, it becomes need of day to pay more and more attention on the development of skills in them.

Keywords: Skills, Soft Skills, Employability Skills



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INTRODUCTION

21st century is the century of knowledge. In this era of competition, people who have knowledge and skills would survive and progress. It is an undeniable fact that the level of achievement depends on student's ability to think independently and their level of professional achievement depends on their skills. UNESCO defines knowledge process into four aspects: learning to learn, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. All these aspects give emphasis on such education which may produce useful, usable, employable and adoptable students.

India is a fast developing economy, where rapid growth is taking place in all the sectors. In this era of globalization many multinational companies have already entered Indian market and many more are looking at expanding their global operations. The 2007 Research report of UKIERI-KPMG (UKIERI: UK-India Education and Research Initiative, KPMG: UKIERI's corporate partner; an international research organization.) shows that India faces a daunting challenge in creating ideal environment for growth of developing economy. India is experiencing skill gap which needs immediate attention. Most of the graduates who are hired lack skills in the areas of communication, creativity and corporate thinking. But there is lack of practical job related skills.

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Skills are the most important factor for the development of any country. Skills are the key in stimulating a sustainable development process and make a contribution to facilitating the transition from the informal to formal economy. Skills are also essential to address the opportunities and challenges to meet new demands of changing economies and new technologies in the context of globalization. Students' skills can contribute to their success. That is why there is a need to train them in these skills. Skills are directly influencing the growth of individuals in terms of employment. Skills are showing great impact on getting employment. The need for giving emphasis on the skill development, especially for the educated unemployed youth (both for rural and urban) has been highlighted in various forums.

SKILLS

Skills are driving force of economic growth and social development for any country. Countries with higher and better levels of skills adjust more effectively to the challenges and opportunities of the world of work. Most of the sectors in present economic scenario require people who can do more than performing a set of task. They need people who have soft (transferable) skills as well as hard (technical) skills. Skills are the abilities, traits and attitude required to function in a specific employment environment, to deliver information or service, work efficiently as a team member of a team, to understand and adapt to cultural norms of the work place. Skills involve understanding and having the ability to apply generally accepted accounting principles to a work. It plays an essential role in producing the actual product. Skill is the knowledge, ability and proficiency in a specific type of activity. In human beings skills are the ability to work with ideas and concepts which deals with human logical power. The skill includes being able to define significant problems, gather problem information, formulate new understanding about the problem and generate prototype plans for problem solution. Human being has to incorporate with various kinds of skills which enable him to work effectively in his workplace. Various scholars have provided different approaches and models of skill to categories such as generic skills, soft skills, technical skills, problem solving and other cognitive skills; oral communication skills, personal qualities and work ethic and interpersonal and team work skills.

- **GENRIC SKILLS:** Generic skills enable human being generate new skills that help to succeed in novel situations, manage and adapt to change and to flourish by creating what matters, even in the face of adversity.

- **SOFT SKILLS:** Soft skills are character traits that characterize a person's relationships with other people.
- **INTERPERSONAL SKILLS:** Interpersonal skills are proficiency in working with people based on a person's knowledge about people and how they behave, how they operate in groups, how to communicate effectively with them, and their motives, attitudes, and feelings. They are the skills required to effectively influence superiors, peers, and subordinates in the achievement of organizational goals. These skills enable a person to influence team or group members to work together to accomplish organizational goals and objectives. Interpersonal skills proficiency means that people know their thoughts on different issues and, simultaneously, become cognizant of the thoughts of others.
- **TECHNICAL SKILLS:** Technical skills are those abilities which are required through learning and practice. Technical skills are proficiency, based on specific knowledge, in a particular area of work. Technical skills are the knowledge and abilities needed to accomplish mathematical, engineering, scientific or computer-related duties, as well as other specific tasks relating to technology.
- **NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS:** Non-technical skills are those skills which are required to manage, to adapt and to face challenges in the adverse circumstances. It is necessary to enter the workforce, to remain on the job and develop careers in the workplace, or for career development in the new workplace. These skills include: the ability to work independently, manage oneself, work in teams and adapt to change, solve complex problems, as well as think creatively and innovatively.
- **PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS:** Problem solving skills involve the identification of problems and the formulation and evaluation of alternative solutions by weighing risk and benefits.
- **CONCEPTUAL SKILLS:** Conceptual skills allow people to think through and work with ideas. Conceptual skills allow to give abstract ideas meaning and to make sense of abstract ideas for their superiors, peers, and subordinates. People with higher levels of cognitive skills are good at thinking through the ideas that form an organization and its vision for the future, expressing these ideas in verbal and written forms, and understanding and expressing the economic principles underlying their organization's effectiveness.

- **COGNITIVE SKILLS:** Cognitive skills positively affect a person's ability to acquire knowledge. Two types of cognitive skills have been identified-
 - (i) **General Cognitive Skills:** Perceptual processing, information processing, general reasoning skills, creative and divergent thinking capacities, and memory skills are included in general cognitive skills. These are general and complex problem-solving skills.
 - (ii) **Crystallized Cognitive Skills:** These types of skills develop because of experience. As one age and gain more experience, one acquire crystallized cognitive skills. These types of skills remain relatively consistent and generally do not diminish with age. As crystallized cognitive skills increase, they positively affect potential by increasing our social judgment skills, conceptual ability, and problem-solving skills.
- **ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** Oral communication skills include ability to listen well, embracing the ability to give and understand instructions and to communicate in ways appropriate to the situation and the audience.
- **PERSONAL QUALITIES / ATTRIBUTES:** Personal qualities or attributes include self-esteem, self-management, responsibility and motivation.
- **TEAM WORK SKILLS:** Team work skills are those needed to negotiate with others, to participate as a member of a team, to serve clients and customers in a way that meets their expectations and to resolve conflicts maturely.
- **SOCIAL JUDGMENT SKILLS:** These are skills that enable the individuals to comprehend people and the social systems within which they work, play, and have social life (e.g., friends and family) .Social judgment skills facilitate working with others to lead change, solve problems, and make sense of issues.
- **KNOWLEDGE:** Knowledge is the gathering of information and the development of mental structures to organize that information in a meaningful way. These mental structures are called schema, which means a diagrammatic representation or depiction. Knowledgeable leaders have more highly developed and complex schemata that they use to collect and organize data. Knowledge is linked to a leader's problem-solving skills. More knowledgeable people are able to consider complex organizational issues and to develop alternative and appropriate strategies for change. Knowledge allows people to use prior incidents to constructively plan for and change the future.

NEED FOR ACTION

The students of today are the employees or employers of tomorrow. The students who have the right blend of skills, abilities, values and personal qualities are required by the employer to perform the job perfectly. Employers are interested only in those persons who are enterprising, resourceful and adaptable with good attitude/range of possessing required skills. In other words, one can call it “Employability Skills”. These skills will reflect the employee’s abilities, interests and personality as sought by different employers throughout one’s career. Most of the skills expected by different employers are communication, team working, leadership, initiative, problem solving, flexibility, attitude and enthusiasm. Employability skills become very important issue in recent years. Education which is workforce oriented through the mastery of technical skills and employability skills are needed to sustain the development of a knowledge-based economy (Esposito and Meagher, 2007). Employability skills are some of the non-technical skills which can be transferred into a variety of occupations. (Hager and Holland,2006; Tome, 2007).

Overtoom (2000) defines employability skills as the transferable group's core skills that describe the main functions of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed in the workplace of the 21st century. Employability skill is a relevant skill to a variety of occupations and professions (Cassidy, 2006). Employability skills can also be interpreted as the person’s ability to actively adjust in a particular job so that it is possible to survive and realize their chances for success in work. Confederation of British Industry and the National Union of Students (CBI/NUS, 2011) states that the term of employability skills refers to a number of generic skills, including: the self-management, teamwork, business and customer awareness, solving the problem, communication, the calculating application, and the application of information technology. Meanwhile UNESCO Regional Bangkok (2012) states that employability refers to the attributes and competencies that enable job seekers to find work, including: (1) communication skills, (2) logical, analytical and problem solving skills, (3) personality, confidence, and integrity, (4) the flexibility and adaptability, (5) innovation and creativity, and (6) the spirit of the team.

According to the Secretary's on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS, 1991), employability skills cover workplace competencies and foundations skills. Workplace competencies consist of five skills that can be used by workers effectively in improving productivity, among others: resources, interpersonal skills, information, systems and

technology. Meanwhile, the foundation skills needed to improve the performance of workers include: basic skills, thinking skills and Personal qualities.

This century is the century of knowledge. In this era of fierce competition, people with knowledge would survive and prosper. Academicians and researchers have been advocating a shift from teacher centric education to learner centric education. The researches done so far have proved that the level of achievement depends on student's ability to think independently and their level of professional achievement depends on their skill of putting into practice their learning. Today, Education is perceived as a knowledge process of nurturing human capital as the agent of growth for a knowledge society. All these mean that education should produce such students who are useful, usable, employable and adoptable. At present, the scenario of school education is not very inspiring. All the stake holders of education are in a state of despair and indifference. Parents, consumed by the ambition of highly paying lucrative careers for their children, continue to push them for examination success and high grades. As a result, the focus has shifted from learning for better understanding to learning for examination success. This promotes rote learning. Students are forced to rehearse same things again and again without understanding. They are forced into cramming and their minds are stuffed with trivial information which leaves no room for understanding, application and skill development.

Students are provided with readymade study material which they have to memorize and reproduce at the examination. Only strategy used is memorizing and writing answers to question papers again and again to master the syllabus. The entire process becomes very monotonous and machine like and learning becomes dull and loses its significance. There is hardly any possibility of checking student's understanding and comprehension giving them opportunity to use their knowledge in new situations or adopt suitable strategies for problem solving. At this juncture, it becomes need of day to pay more and more attention on the development of skills in them.

Skills are viewed as both essential to the appropriate functioning of a business and important to the employability of recent graduates, but also necessary for students to feel confident in their abilities when entering the workplace (Andrews and Higson 2008). It has been noted that there is increasing pressure on education to verify that students are, indeed, learning what is needed in both technical and non-technical areas (Aasheim and Williams, 2009). Much research has been done on the importance of skills for students as well as

employees. Hagan and Bouchard (2016) revealed in their research that non-technical skills are mandatory for the students of information technology.

Bailey (2014) indicated that non-technical skills are necessary for success in this technical world. He revealed that the students who have skills of problem solving, team work, listening, the ability adapt to new technologies and languages, time management, the ability to transfer knowledge to application, multi-tasking, verbal communication, visualize and conceptualize are mostly required by IT companies. Yahya et al. (2017) studied the technical and employability skills of the students and found that implementation of scientific approach has significant effect on the development of the skills among students.

Makasiranondh et al. (2011) examined the students' opinion on the development of non-technical skills and found that those students who had workplace experience more fully appreciated the role of workplace soft skills than those who did not have such experience. Diamante (2014) studied the influence of career development learning on the employability skills of ICT students. He found that the level of their employability skills was moderate. Further, it was confirmed that career development learning is predictor of employability skills.

Though the current education system prevailing in our country; there are many academic institutions who have given emphasis on development of technical skills but most of the educated unemployed youths are found lacking in soft skills. Therefore there is need to acquaint the youth with soft skills in the most practical way.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Government of India, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET) has taken initiative in this direction and has designed Course Curricula under Skill Development Initiative Scheme (SDIS) based on Modular Employable Skills (MES) designed in 2008 'Soft skills for Employability'. According to it service sector contributes 53% in GDP; it is becoming crucial that government of India along with other nodal agencies play an important role in providing employable skills, with special emphasis on Soft skills.

New framework for soft skill development has been evolved by the DGET to address the employability issues. Realizing the need of Soft skills in service sector NASSCOM is designing the development programme to facilitate manpower development for the short and long term. It is aiming to build a base manpower which will be certified, in tune with the needs of the industry and geared up for the future requirements of the sector. The Ministry of

Rural Development, Government of India had formulated several schemes specifically targeted at rural BPL. Among these, is the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY). Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) was designed to equip the unemployed rural youths from the BPL households with marketable skills, which would enable them to either secure placement in the industry or pursue sustainable self-employment opportunities through micro enterprise. These programs aim at delivery of training, largely through the government machinery, supported by some civil society participants.

The ministry has set up a skills and placement sub mission under NRLM. (Aajeevika-National Rural Livelihood Mission, NRLM). One of the objectives of this program is to impart skills necessary for regular employment, so that the initial wages are not less than the prescribed minimum wages. In addition to technical skills, soft skills are also to be imparted to beneficiaries to face transition challenges of moving from an agrarian backdrop to the industry environment. For effective implementation of such schemes there is requirement of a very active participation from the state governments. The states are in a better position to identify deserving poor candidates, assess local skill gaps, propose suitable skilling programs, monitor training and placement and muster support for the trainees in the initial stage. Government of India has accordingly taken a decision to entrust the responsibility of implementing the programme to the states as soon as the necessary capacity for the purpose is available.

The characteristics of the work world have been changing rapidly. One of the main characteristics of knowledge-based industry is the growing demand for generic skills attributes that must be owned by the workers (Gibbs,1992). In addition to technical skills in the field, workers must also have skills that are generic. Cairney (2000) states that the industry in the era of knowledge-based economy requires workers who are able to work independently, able to manage themselves, to work in teams, to adapt to change, to solve complex problems, and to think in a creative and innovative way.

In Indian economy the demand for skilled employees is at boom. With special reference to service sector; communication skills, self-management, creativity, teamwork, leadership and customer services is highly required. India has target of creating 500 million skilled workers by 2022. As the proportion of working age group of 15 to 59 years will be increasingly steadily, India has the advantage of demographic dividend. Thus, there is a need for increasing capacity, capability and skills of the students for the optimum development of the country. For this more and more skill development program should be incorporated by the

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government. Besides this, it is also important to examine the current level of various skills among students and to observe the impact of various socio-psychological factors on the skill development of the students. So that, some major step may be taken to equip them with necessary skills.

SUGGETIONS

^ All these suggestions are made with a view to improve the quality of education in the area of skills which enables students to meet their future needs. The suggestions are provided under the following headings:

1. For Parents and Family Members

Families have the first and most important influence on a child's social-emotional development. For the most part families naturally fulfill this responsibility by simply being responsive to their child's needs and providing a safe environment to grow and learn. It becomes the responsibility of the parents to develop the necessary skills for the overall development of their children. Parents should act as good role models. Children learn by imitation, and parents who display these virtues or soft skills in their day-to-day behavior provide an environment where children automatically learn. They grow up to be caring, committed, efficient and effective human beings. When parents are unable to impart soft-skills to their children, the least they can do is not to underrate its importance. They can send the child to either a pure-play soft-skills trainer or somebody who imparts both life skills and soft skills. Besides, awareness should be created among parents for the skill development and to support their children and provide path to develop their skills.

2. For Curriculum Makers

The Indian educational system is producing more graduates every year. But the graduates have lack of basic skills. When present curriculum of India is viewed, it is observed that it has out dated nearly 30 years old. Some institution sticks on an old curriculum. Few want the change and fight a long futile battle trying to change it. So there is a need of massive change in present curriculum and development of new curriculum along with administering the planned one. Vocational training should be mandatory alongside lots of practical work, as more importance has been given to theoretical classes rather than practical classes due to many issues like lack of facilities, lack of trainers etc. Therefore, proper facilities and trainers should also be provided to the educational institutions.

3. For Policy Planning

It is unfortunate that in India, importance of skill is an unattended aspect except in few areas like Medicine, Engineering etc. that too not everywhere. Skill India Mission has been introduced for the youth to meet their domestic demands and also for the betterment of economic growth of our nation. Through this mission, jobless, school dropouts, graduated, uneducated and women will be given training based on their knowledge and ability which will certify them to get the jobs. For the students it will be starting from the school to provide communication skill, entrepreneurship, problem-solving skills, etc. There is need to implement and follow the policy properly and in the right direction. The policy planners should make some policies for academic institutions, public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations etc. that they plan and bring some short-term courses for the development of communication skills, personality development skills, behavioral skills, life and positive thinking skills, including job and employability skills which may be conducted through group discussion, games, brainstorming, simulation, practical experiences and case studies etc. Policies should be made with regard to the teacher training institution, where prospective teachers would be trained in such a way that they can recognize the hidden talents and skills of the students and develop them.

4. For Administrative Authorities

Administrative authorities may get some important line of action through the findings of the present study. The generic and soft skills are those skills that students need to become successful learners and successful practitioners in their fields of study and work and in other aspects of their life. In a society where change is rapid and where knowledge and information are now marketable commodities, it has become indispensable to develop these skills in the children with the formal education. Besides imparting formal education, the administrative authorities put their proper attention on the development of communication skills, information skills, self- management and competitive skills, physical skills, numeracy skills, problem solving skills, co-operative skills, work and study skills not only in the students but also in the teachers and other staff of the institutions. The provision of generic and soft skills and competencies can be undertaken through a variety of forms. Traditionally it has been attempted through 3 main types of learning activity: integrated approaches, stand -alone approaches or approaches where key skills are developed in parallel with the conventional curriculum. But the administrative authorities must pay attention to create their own set of generic skills based on the needs and demands of the course and programs, which are running

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in their educational institutions. They should consider modifying the learning environment according to the needs and demands of the students. It may be possible to modify the learning environment in a number of ways to address those skills in which the students are particularly interested and to which the students give lesser importance.

5. For Educational Fields

Skill development is critical for economic growth and social development. To enable employment ready workforce in the future, the youth need to be equipped with necessary skills and education. The skill development ecosystem in India is skewed towards a formal education system with limited vocational training. While the vocational training is in a dismal state both qualitatively and quantitatively, the higher education system itself is grappling with issues related to scale and quality. Moreover, there is disconnect between the formal education system and work requirements, compounding the challenges related to the skill gap. A concerted action is thus required on the supply side to ensure sustained employability of the Indian youth.

About 90 per cent of employment opportunities require vocational skills. Only 20 per cent of our graduates get employed. The rest are unable to get suitable employment due to the lack of employable skills. In the present context of globalization, the demand for skilled and multi skilled workers has increased. Therefore, in the context of developing countries, such as India, there is a critical need for quality skill development and training. Transforming the skill development ecosystem and making it responsive to needs of both industry and citizens requires a scalable, efficient and comprehensive vocational training ecosystem to meet future requirements. There is a need to assess the traditional approach of skill development delivery in India in light of the successful models and best practices in other economies. The learning can be imbibed and custom adopted to address the skill development challenges of India.

To make India the skill capital of the world, the school curricula will have to go through a dynamic change. Skill development should ideally begin at the age of 13 years, from the eighth standard. Integration of skill development and education is essential for skilling to take wings. Skill development will remain a dream if carried out in isolation through centers alone. It has to be imparted in schools alongside academics. If a student opts for motor repair as a skill development course while in school, at a later stage, he can opt for a diploma or degree in automobile engineering. In the Indian society, an individual pursuing main stream education has a glorified status. Vocational education is viewed as a reluctant option for those who are less privileged, incapable of pursuing main stream education or for

the vulnerable sections of society. This degree will be a judicious mix of skills relating to a particular profession and appropriate content of general education and will suggest a symbiotic link with industries. Hence, this will open up opportunities for millions of students to pursue a graduation in various vocations apart from the regular main stream subjects.

Skills are at the core of improving individuals' employment outcomes and increasing countries productivity and growth. This is particularly relevant as today's global competition is characterized by a higher share of knowledge-based content which heavily relies on high-level cognitive and behavioral skills, so it becomes the duty of the parents to have more cohesiveness and organization in the family. Skills training should be an important aspect of school enrichment programme.

6. for Educational Institutions

The students are the future professionals of our country. They will have to face the global competition and the ever-changing situations. Young students require that educational institutions provide these future professionals with more than technical skills. In order to practice professionally in the new global society, they must have professional skills. Although these skills will be strengthened during their professional employment, they must be first nurtured at schools or their institutions. Information management, the ability to solve problems, initiative, creative decision making and teamwork, will be indispensable skills in the coming decades. Hence, educational institutions should try to develop these qualities in the students during their training and education period.

CONCLUSIONS

Skills are at the core to improve the employment outcomes of the individuals and to increase the productivity and growth of any nation. This is particularly relevant for today's globalized world which requires a high-level cognitive and behavioral skills. Expressiveness, acceptance and caring and organization were important contributing factors influencing the level of skills of students, so it becomes the duty of the parents to have more expressive, caring and organized environment in the family. They should provide their children a balanced environment of independence and control to become skilful, useful and employable youth. Skills training should be an important aspect of school enrichment program also. The teachers, administrators, policy makers, counselors and especially parents may provide the platform for influencing skills development among students. Thus the current education system prevailing in our country; there is a need to reform it so that emphasis is given to acquaint the youth with technical skills along with soft skills in the most practical way. Now

this is the right time to act on transformational skills-sites both at individual as well as national level to transform India to make it a model for other societies.

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