

“Integrated Learning in Higher Education- A Core Catalyst of Skill Development Culture in India”

Jitendra Singh

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to highlight much required revolutionary shift of how our pervasive, aged and struggling Higher education institutional setup can complement the current opportunity and need of germinating a culture of skill development in India. If implemented effectively with practical learning orientation and industry integration approach higher education will prove to be a pragmatic tool.

India today stand as the most promising global economy with number of domestic and foreign business opportunities queued up. To cater and take advantage of present economic momentum of growth and development there is an ongoing need of competent manpower. The government of India is committed to facilitate the process by focusing its policy interventions on skill development as its top priority.

At such a promising state of economic development the role of integrating higher education (under graduate and post graduate courses) with industry is imperative for enrichment of large proportion of the human capital, that too at crucial initial stage of higher education in terms of pre-employment learning inputs and outcomes. Specific skill development programs can be more effective if the fundamental and already existing system of higher educational institutions is capitalized in a concrete qualitative manner with special stress on implementation and sustenance of a mutual mechanism which facilitates psychologically instilling learning, through and with industry as ground level active participant bridging the skill gap and talent crunch.

Keywords: Higher education Institutions, Skill development, Integrated Learning

Introduction

Being in a transition phase by joining the league of fastest growing economies of world, India as a nation is stepping towards the developed arena. Throughout the planned development endeavors since independence there have been priority challenges which we identified to be addressed as basic key issues. These core issues have mostly fell under the category of physical resources like food, shelter, medical facilities, basic infrastructure, employment and literacy rate. To some extent planned economic development has been a success in terms of growth but qualitative development is still questionable and carries a lot of potential opportunities.

According to the estimates released by central statistical organization (CSO), Indian economy is expected to grow at a 5-year high of 7.6% and the growth estimate of Indian economy has exceeded china's growth. The size of the economy is projected at Rs.124.9 lakh crore. The share of gross value added (GVA) by service sector at current price stands at 52.60% in year 2014-15. The annual growth rate of service sector in 11th plan period 2007-2012 followed by industry at 7.2% stood at 9.7%. India's services sector covers a wide range of activities such as financing, insurance, trade, hotel, transport, storage and communication, real estate, professional services.

The services sector is the key driver of economic growth in India. Contribution of service sector in Indian

GDP (gross domestic product) is 50.7% followed by industry contribution 31.8%. Service sector attracted maximum flow of FDI at 17.5%, thereby becoming significant foreign exchange recipient and the most striking sector for FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) inflows. India stands at number 8 in terms of services export in the world. The services exports have in 2014 stood at US\$ 155.6 billion, which constitutes 7.5 per cent of the GDP. The sub-sectors covering financial services, real estate and professional services contributed 21.6 per cent to the GDP, and mounted the fastest of other sub-categories at 10.3 per. According to the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) the amount of FDI inflows through service sector in the period April 2000-March 2016, amounting to about US\$ 50.79 billion which is about 18 per cent of the total foreign inflows. The employment statistics exhibit an upward movement due to the economic boost. According to sixth Economic census 2013, the number of people employed in country rose to 34.35%. The proportion of women in total workforce increased to 25.56%. India stands at number 2 after china in the global Innovation Efficiency Index-2012 and at number 9 in top 10 economies of world (2014).

National development depends heavily on the quality of efforts made in direction of maximum Enrichment of humans' ability to learn and expansion of creativity. Development of the human minds through proper implementation of educational resources is a national responsibility. Higher education is a vital tool for the purpose of developing requisite skills. Emerging economic state calls for a shift of the focus from quantitative figures of success to qualitative development i.e. development aspect of human resources. Young college students are the significant seeds and fuel to national development. And there learning oriented development holds a pivotal significance in accelerating and sustaining economic momentum. There is a need to germinate a culture of learning and skill development through the active participation of industry in higher education as a collective responsibility mutual collaboration. The issues related to responsibility of mentoring and shaping the learning patterns of UG pursuing college students along with conscious, sensitive & collective efforts in the direction to enrich human resources inventory with skilled minds holds pragmatic significance. There is a need of much required revolutionary shift of how our pervasive, aged and struggling Higher education institutional system can complement the current opportunity and need of germinating a culture of skill development in India. If implemented effectively with practical learning orientation and industry integration approach higher education will prove to be a pragmatic tool.

India today stand as the most promising global economy with number of domestic and foreign business opportunities queued up. To cater and take advantage of present economic momentum of growth and development there is an ongoing need of competent manpower. The government of India is committed to facilitate the process by focusing its policy interventions on skill development as its top priority. At such a promising state of economic development the role of integrating higher education (under graduate and post graduate courses) with industry is imperative for enrichment of large proportion of the human capital, that too at crucial initial stage of higher education in terms of pre-employment learning inputs and outcomes. Specific skill development programs can be more effective if the fundamental and already existing system of higher educational institutions is capitalized in a concrete qualitative manner with special stress on implementation and sustenance of a mutual mechanism which facilitates psychologically instilling learning, through and with industry as ground level active participant bridging the skill gap and talent crunch. The required KSA (Knowledge, Skills and Attitude) set includes (1) Basic practical knowledge of subject concerned and application of Information technology. (2) Basic communication skills, Creative thinking skills, and Comprehension and reasoning skills. (3) Ready to learn confident

mental state, motivation and awareness of self. For the success of startup schemes and make in India campaign, skill development in current scenario is of priority importance. By definition learning connotes to measureable and relative permanent change in behavior through experience, instruction or study. In fact learning itself cannot be measured but its outcomes can be. According to Harvard business school psychologist Chris Argyris learning is detection and correction of error. Where an error means any mismatch between our intentions and what actually happens.

Skill has been defined as an ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic and sustained efforts to smoothly and adaptively carryout complex activities or job functions involving ideas (Cognitive/conceptual skills), things (technical skills) and people (interpersonal skills). Government of has been spending generously on school education but stills higher education has not been given due importance and its lags behind. There is an evident lack of professionally devoted teachers and infrastructure also in few regions.

The Skill Crunch and Education-Industry gap:

Somewhere a gap between Higher-education and industry is clearly evident in India. This particular issue has been discussed and heavily debated in academic conferences, seminars, workshops and widely written and published. The prominent likely reason contributing to the problem of increasing skill and talent crunch is the quality of education and ignorant attitude towards the learning outcomes, which ultimately influence the extent and quality of basic key skills of passing out students through higher education. The higher education set up in reference of majority states has failed to be at par with current skill requirements and in relation with the concrete quality of educational outcomes in an individual student. Institutions are going through their own challenges failing in determination towards value addition to the mental development of students. Industry on the other hand has been the biggest beneficiary of the available skill inventory of country. And there have been needful intellectual contribution from industry's side in form of syllabus contents and discussions. But considering the current state this is the right time to hit the nail by participating actively on a regular basis. As a traditional practice companies usually visit colleges at the end of an academic year for annual campus recruitment drive. And with the increasing demand of suitable skilled candidates companies now find it difficult to get candidates with sufficient skills set. Service sector with rise in job opportunities is experiencing the heat of dearth of skilled manpower.

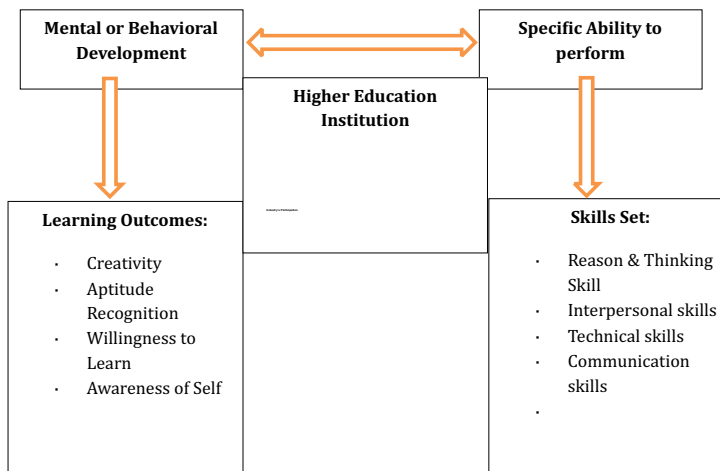
Understanding the need of hour few companies as a remedial corrective measure after diligent contemplations have initiated partnering with few premier higher educational institutions for campus recruitment. Few private employment agencies have come up with an idea of playing the role of agent to fill the gap between colleges and companies in need of human resource. These agencies offer short pre recruitment training to the about to pass out students only. But there is no clue yet in direction of innovative active participation of industry on a regular basis from the beginning of academic session till passing out phase. Companies have not yet joined hands with colleges in enriching the learning motivation and abilities of students in higher education. Skill and talent crunch can be treated with mutual and continuous learning focused efforts of institution and industry by affecting pragmatically the process of how the young minds and specific needed skills should be developed.

Scope and dimensions of Learning Orientation in Contemporary Higher Education:

Having few premier institutions like IITs and IIMs is not enough for an ever growing economy. Mainstream

development can't be restricted to few already bright minds rather it should involve maximum mediocre minds too. Education in India has been labeled as sub-standard in terms of learning orientation and skill-aptitude enrichment. The plight of higher education is patently in a sorry state. Majority of Higher education institutions are going through poverty of innovation and are restrained due to narrow parameters of education and lack of vision for contributing through qualitative change. A revolutionary shift in terms of learning outcomes is imperative in higher education system of India. The basic objectives of higher education are not being met in respect of quality and development of human creativity.

Here learning orientation refers to psychological learning outcomes. Learning as a tool to complement, facilitate and enhance the prospects of skill development. The following diagram exhibits the interrelationship between learning and skills as two sides of same coin:



At such a decisive point of education i.e. the under graduate courses a radical changes are required. Higher education should act like an amplifier magnifying and directing the young minds towards learning. But still the system is dominated by textbooks over self-learning. A skilled workforce is an outcome of combined relevance of curriculum, capable teachers, and supportive system of education. But this is not the sole purpose. Aptitude and knowledge of other type which is not considered relevant in economic terms is ignored and suppressed.

The higher education institutions in the country are a source and medium of national development. A large Proportion of students enroll every year for 3 years degree course in various streams especially in faculty of commerce and management, these three key years of UG course can be utilized inearly level skill development. In present times Indian education system is going through challenges in terms of quality of education, major challenges are enumerated as follows:

- Challenges of working effectively on average mediocre minds which makes a major proportion of students enrolled in higher education
- Lack of trained teaching staff, gap of faith between students and college education
- Failure in continuous and effective evaluation techniques and ignorant attitude resulting in isolation of learning process.

- Innovative student centric and participatory classroom approach is missing, failure in influencing the psychology of students in desired direction and extent
- Lack of required due significance to learning outcomes, failure to inculcate basic skills like application of English language, ability to comprehend, think and reason

As per the inputs provided by Debbi Morrison in article titled “3 Trends that will Influence Teaching in 2016” published on January 10, 2016:

- **Alternative Credentialing**
 - o Focusing on the learning outcomes
 - o Multidimensional credentialing
 - o Encouraging creativity of all kinds
 - o Giving due importance to unique talents
 - o Broadening the purview of education in light of personality
- **Experimenting in new teaching models and learning space**
 - o Inspiring and arousing models of teaching
 - o Effective cognition and higher order of learning
 - o psychological driven Teaching aides
 - o Experiments in pedagogy in direction of Participation of Students
 - o Exploring new techniques and effective methods of their implementation
- **Student-driven personalized learning**
 - o Participatory and Interactive classroom sessions
 - o Problem Identification and solving by students
 - o Based on aptitude & student psychology
 - o Student at the center of Teaching
 - o Empowering emotional and logical attitude

Higher education is in a need to tune itself with present and prospective economic scenario of the nation. And it is no doubt a mutual responsibility but higher education institutions stand at the pinnacle of accountability. Colleges must focus of qualitative aspects of practical learning to create a culture of skill development. And in this direction learning orientation with mutual participation of Industry will play a remarkable and revolutionary role. It is also expected from colleges to invite, facilitate, cooperate and sustain the productive learning and skill development partnership with industry in the interest of students and the nation.

Aptitude recognition and enhancement is only possible when colleges work on uncovering student's inner interests through interactive classroom sessions. Development of mental profess should be the objective of all educational activities in higher education institutions. Developing a will to learning facilitates learning and learning eventually enables honing of skills. Our country is in a need of Model Higher education institutions which work for behavioral development of students through maximum participation at point where a student is most receptive and in need of basic skills with prospects of

expanding his capabilities. Higher education is a pivot of country's human resource development machinery. There remain ample of scope of improvement and it's yet to find the correct path and reach the majority of minds with much needed learning outcomes i.e. the true purpose of their existence.

Innovative and sensitive Academic Leadership:

In order to accelerate a culture of learning orientation the role of academic leadership holds significant place. Leadership is an ability to influence and inspire the behavior of others. And higher education is witnessing continues scarcity of effective leaders who possess the zeal to transform education into a performance driven effort of human development. And leadership too has to be innovative yet sensitive with clear objectives of learning orientation.

Academic leadership by Director or Principal or Head of an institute is significant in terms of Initiating, Developing and Sustaining Learning orientation by following:

- Activating an overall academic environment and sentiment towards significance of pragmatic learning
- Action oriented implementation of outcome focused educational mission statement.
- Encouraging and participating in teaching learning activities centered on students.
- Regular training & development of teachers through guided and directed experience sharing sessions
- Analysis and discussion on learning outcomes and enhancement of teaching-learning methodologies adopted by teachers.
- Analysis and corrective remedies on the basis of students' feedbacks on teaching-learning.
- Experimentation in developing innovative techniques to teach.
- Facilitating and holding regular group and individual interactions between teachers and with the industry.

Integration & Mutuality – Industry's active Participation:

•The required shift and responsibility of Bridging the Gap

In wake of "Make in India" drive Indian Army has initiated an innovative mission to involve college students in science and technology based solutions and indigenization of its infrastructure.

Army has chosen academic resources specially the young bright minds as a means to address its need. Confederation of Indian industries (CII) Coimbatore, Indian Army and higher education institutions in joint collaboration embarked first of its kind initiative. Such innovations are much required to take full advantage of educational system of country.

On 31 August, 2016, Army Design Bureau inaugurated the drive to encourage participation of college for scientific research. Indian army has also resolved to take maximum realistic advantage of IMPRINT (Impacting Research, Innovation and Technology) initiative, launched by president of India on 15th November, 2015. IMPRINT's main objective is to look into the scientific research problems faced by the country. 70 IMPRINT projects have been aligned to cater the current needs of Army.

CII, Coimbatore has also come up with an open competition for students from engineering to all arts colleges to submit their projects aiming fulfillment of the needs of army. The best project idea will be forwarded to Indian Army for further necessary implementation.

·How Industry can contribute and complement higher education:

Service industry including Banking, BPOs, KPOs, Stock market operations, Financial or investment services, FMCG sale and marketing etc. can contribute in following manner:

- o Implementing parallel career skill development courses along with syllabus through effective psychological trainers and use of technology
- o Industry specific Basic skills development workshop certificates
- o Providing training to teachers of private colleges on effective teaching learning methods
- o Adoption of colleges and develop them as model center for development
- o Providing learning ratings to students in terms of skills learnt
- o Utilizing the three crucial years of under graduate courses.
- o Keeping records of learning outcomes and skill inventory
- o Encouraging student centered, participatory, interactive and innovative teaching-learning culture in colleges and Region wise Human development analysis
- o Resource integration, practical industry exposure and small problem solving projects
- o Interest, aptitude and personality recognition and career guidance
- o Laying early foundation in direction of Human resource development before recruitment

Benefits to the Organizations and economy as a whole:

- Assurance of required skill inventory for expanding economic activities
- Creative, motivated, receptive minds as prospective employees for organization
- Lower cost of recruitment, selection and training of human resource
- Efficiently performing manpower as competitive resource
- Retained and loyal Talent for organization

Conclusion:

Industry happens to be the direct beneficiary and always in need of skilled manpower considering the growing economic sphere of India. The need of the hour is to expand and move out from the traditional passive or on papers contributions of industry. It's time to be active participant in shaping up the higher education by refraining from the orthodox practice of visiting the educational institutions only at harvest season of in campus recruitment. Higher education system in India is witnessing challenges specially in respect of learning outcomes and skill development of the most fertile young minds of the nation.

The current economic state of country provides with an opportunity to revolutionize the higher education transforming its approach from degree centered to learning centered. Every year a major proportion of Indian youth get enrolled in colleges for pursuing under graduate courses, but due to the lack of required attention, guidance and effective learning inputs they fail to develop basic soft and technical skills to comprehend, communicate or think and reason.

In absence of qualitative learning orientation majority of college have become examination centers only. The Under graduate degree course has turned to an act of fulfilling minimum formal requirement to get a degree. The probable cost incurred by the industry on enhancing higher education promises much higher

returns in form of skilled, creative, motivated, ready minds for training and loyal army of manpower. By adopting college to be developed not in terms of physical infrastructure rather through culture of qualitative and innovative learning centered inputs industry will help its own growth.

Higher education is the backbone and a source of blooming buds. It's time to capitalize and focus on qualitative aspects and outcomes of higher education. Skill development and higher educational institutions cannot be the sole obligation or concern of government and it also should not be left on chances or on rule of thumb. Pre-employment learning inputs will ultimately serve the performance of industry.

**Research Scholar,
Department of Business Administration, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur**

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