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- Mr. Ravi Sreedharan
- Ms. Revathi Kasturi
- Mr. S. Giridhar
- Mr. Shailendra Kumar
- Mr. Shyaam Subramanian
- Dr. Vishal Shah
Education, Employment and Employability Landscape of India
About the Journal

The National HRD Network publishes a semi-academic quarterly journal where in each Issue is dedicated to a theme.
The Journal publishes primarily three categories of articles:
• Conceptual and research based.
• Contributions from thought leaders including a limited number of reprints with due permission.
• Organisational experiences in HR interventions / mechanisms.

About this Issue
The theme of the current Issue is “EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY LANDSCAPE OF INDIA”.

Editorial Board Members
Dr. Pallab Bandyopadhyay, Managing Editor, is a Leadership Architect, Career Coach, Change and Transition Specialist with thirty years of successful professional experience in managing entire gamut of Human Resources Management with proven expertise in managing multicultural globally distributed knowledge professionals. He has rich experience in companies like Citrix, Dell Perot, Cambridge Solutions, Sasken and ALIT. He is a doctoral fellow in HRD from XLRI, a product of NTL, USA and provides HR consulting with many large Indian and MNCs and start-ups in the area of Leadership coaching, Organisation development, Long-term capability building, Strategic change and Organisation alignment.

Dr. Arvind N Agrawal is Managing Partner at Lead Associates. He was the President and Chief Executive of Corporate Development & Human Resources and Member of Management Board of RPG Enterprises. He held senior positions in Escorts and Modi Xerox. He was the past National President of National HRD Network.

Dr. Agrawal is an IIM, Ahmedabad and an IIT, Kharagpur alumni, and also holds a Ph.D. from IIT, Mumbai.

NHRD firmly believes in and respects IPR and we appeal to the contributors and readers to strictly honour the same.

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Dear Readers,

First my apologies!!

We have been delayed in coming out with our January 2018 issue. However as we attempted to touch upon a theme which is of utmost importance not only to HR profession but also to the whole country as well, we missed our deadline this time. Hopefully our readers will bear with us.

I would like to begin this editorial with an apt quote from Manish Sabharwal who have been a pioneer in not only bringing this issue to the forefront in our country but also has been working towards building solutions to this problem as an entrepreneur, policy maker, thought leader and advisor for many years. To quote him aptly “It’s something we have known for a while, that industry finds the graduates universities are churning out unsuitable for the jobs they are offering. That there is a mismatch between what’s being taught and the skill-sets industry needs. The market has an oversupply of people with low-level skills, while there’s a shortage of those with advanced, high-level proficiencies”

Sounds familiar! Yes this is the theme of our current issue; Education, Employment and Employability landscape of India. We have tried to touch upon this important theme on this issue which perhaps is the most important one in an emerging economy like ours. As a country we have made a lot of progress and yet there is lot to achieve. We have made a significant progress in ensuring access to education through its Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) programme and the implementation of the landmark Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act. According to an UN report the number of out-of-school children has decreased from approximately eight million in 2009 to just over six million in 2014. However at the same time India has the largest youth population in the world. Almost a third of Indians are between 15 and 29 years old. And we are set to become the world’s youngest with 64% of our population in the working age group. By 2020, the average age of our country will be 29. In order to take advantage on India’s remarkable demographic dividend, we need not only to improve the quality of our education but also create employment opportunities, while ensuring increased participation of young men and women in our work force. Young, educated and job-ready young Indian citizens must be motivated, empowered and provided with adequate opportunities to participate in decision-making, and policy making especially in areas that have a direct impact on their future. As of today, young people contribute to about 34% of India’s gross national income which must improve year by year to sustain a viable growth for our economy.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, who served as the 32nd President of the United States from 1933 until his death in 1945, once told “Not only our future economic soundness but the very soundness of our democratic institutions depends on the determination of our government to give employment to idle men”

Who better than us as HR professionals know that to offer employment we need to build employability in our young graduates. Employability is that set of attributes that makes a graduate worth employing by industries: how well a student’s learning matches with what the job market needs. It is the number one outcome that, in increasing proportions, prospective Indian students pursuing higher studies expects to get from professional education. Above all else, it is the raising of students’ self-awareness about employability that develops it. Therefore, being more transparent about employability should be a mandated clear, simple and deliberate goal of our education policy. Since it is a form of personal development, helping students to understand the various ways they will be benefited by pursuing higher professional education should be a welcome feature for any professional course, irrespective of the students’ initial reasons for studying it. I think that’s where the veracity...
as well as enormity of this problem lies in India’s context. As aptly summarised by Manish Sabharwal, “The poor functioning of the 3Es of education, employment and employability has resulted in growth not being translated into sustained poverty reduction in India. Added to this is the fourth E of entrepreneurship which, had it been effective, could have delivered the desired employment outcomes”

So how serious is the problem of this employability? Let’s look at higher education in the field of engineering. Nearly eight lakh engineering students graduated last year, but only less than half of them got jobs through campus placement, says AICTE. A few years ago, a McKinsey report said just a quarter of engineers in India were actually employable. Of late, some other studies put it at less than 20%.

And what is happening to IT industry which has been creating lots of jobs for fresh engineers and also been majorly responsible for building mushrooming engineering colleges in the country?

Let me quote from Aspire Minds National Employability report for Engineers. Here we go:

We had found that only 18.43% of engineers were employable for the software services sector, 3.21% for software products and 39.84% for a non-functional role such as Business Process Outsourcing. Unfortunately, we see no massive progress in these numbers. These numbers as of today stand at: 17.91%, 3.67% and 40.57% respectively for IT Services, IT Products and Business Process Outsourcing. This is despite the fact that the number of engineering seats have not increased in the past year. We are not inferring that all initiatives for employability improvement have failed and there may be pockets of excellence present. However, the need of the hour is to find these pockets and scale them up to make an exponential impact on employability.

One would assume, if this is the case of engineering graduates (a predominant career choice for students and parents across the Country) what could be the plight of other professional graduates? Leave aside millions of graduates without specialization and even young Indians, without any formal education, more in numbers who are engaged in informal sectors to earn their livelihood?

To contextualize the problem, I will quote Sebastian Thrun, an innovator, entrepreneur educator, and computer scientist of our current time who co-founded Udacity. According to Thrun, the origin of the name Udacity comes from the company’s desire to be “audacious for you, the student”. While it originally focused on offering university-style courses, it now focuses more on vocational courses for professionals to make them job ready. To quote him “At the end of the day, the true value proposition of education is employment”

Employability is the most important issue our country is facing today. Do you want to address it as a student, a teacher, an HR Professional or as a citizen? I leave the choice with you. In spite of quoting him repeatedly, I will end my editorial piece with an apt quote from Manish.

“It is late but not too late to change the tragic reality that the two most important decisions a child in India makes are choosing their parents and pin code wisely. Mughal Emperor Jahangir told his gardener in northern India that if a tree takes 100 years to mature, that is all the more reason to plant it as soon as possible. In other words, the best time to start changing our 3E system was 50 years ago. The second best time is today.”

From the core of my heart, I want to thank two fellow professionals, our joint guest editors Sudheesh Venkatesh, Chief People Officer from Azim Premji Foundation and Professor Sujatha Rao from Azim Premji University, Bangalore. They have picked up a diverse group of professionals and specialists engaged in this area to share their views, experiences, reflections and thoughts to enrich our readers and sensitize them. I am very confident; this issue will continue to be a collector’s item for all those who are interested to contribute to the cause of this theme.
Once again a “Big Thank You” to our guest editors for completing this task most professionally.

As always, in line with our continuous endeavour of bringing out contemporary HR themes, I am happy to inform you that the themes and the respective guest editors for the next four issues for this year as well as next year as follows:

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Those of you interested in contributing please get in touch with me or our guest editors.

I am also glad to share with you that this edition also brings to you the latest NHRDN B-School Ranking 2017. Refer to page 7 and 8 to know which B-School leads the education, “Education, Employment and Employability Landscape of India”.

Keep reading and send us your feedback at me@nationalhrd.org

Happy Reading!

Dr. Pallab Bandyopadhyay
Managing Editor
Mr. Sudheesh Venkatesh is the Chief People Officer at the Azim Premji Foundation and a member of the Board of Management of Azim Premji University. After a degree in Engineering and a post graduate degree in Management from Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata, Sudheesh worked for close to a decade each with Asian Paints and Tesco, two large, global organisations. He is in his eighth year at the Foundation and his role is to attract, develop and retain good people who can help the Foundation realise its vision. He is often invited to speak and write on matters relating to people & organisations. He was President of the National HRD Network, Bangalore (2013-15) and served on the National Board of the HRD Network (2013-17).

Dr. Sujatha Rao is Founder-Director of Viridus Social Impact Solutions and faculty at Azim Premji University. Sujatha holds a PhD in Organisational Studies from the University of Sydney and is an alumnus of XLRI, Jamshedpur. Sujatha has worked as a consultant as well as an academic in institutions in India and overseas. For a number of years, she worked closely with the New South Wales Department of Education and Training on structuring educational opportunities for disadvantaged communities and on implementation of educational reform projects. She has been a faculty at the University of Western Sydney, University of Sydney and at Azim Premji University. She consults with NGOs and Social Purpose Organisations particularly focused on education, on matters relating to organisational design, effectiveness and programme theory.
With an estimated population of over 1.3 billion people, representing close to 18% of the world’s population, a median age of 27 and over 45% of its population under the age of 24 it can be unequivocally stated that India’s greatest development potential lies in its youth. What can help transform the lives of millions of India’s young and enable them to enhance their capabilities and freedoms and live lives that are embedded in human wellbeing? This edition of National Human Resource Development (NHRD) Journal deals with this fundamental issue.

The question of human wellbeing and development needs to be explored against a backdrop of stark education, employment and employability statistics. In spite of near universal enrolment in primary schooling, zones of exclusion continue to exist throughout the school system. Student learning levels identified by multiple ASER reports indicate low levels of learning for children in schools, consistent drop-outs from primary to secondary schooling and even lower numbers of enrolment and successful completion of high school degrees. While an estimated 259 million children enrolled in schools (2014-2015) only about 23 million children enrol in grades XI and XII (GOI, 2016). These figures suggest that a relatively small proportion of children enrolled in primary schools move on to senior secondary school where completion rates fall further. The skewed school completion rates continue into higher education where enrolment in undergraduate, graduate and post graduate programmes increasingly become smaller and smaller with less than 2 million youth emerging with a post graduate degree! The state of employment and employability for college graduates, school graduates and school drop-outs remains precarious. At the All India level, 58.3 per cent of unemployed graduates and 62.4 per cent of unemployed post graduates cited non availability of jobs matching with education/skill and experience as the main reason for unemployment. Further employment in the informal sector is the most prevalent form of employment in both agriculture (over 90%) as well as in non-agricultural sectors (close to 70%). NSSO estimates that 84.7% of jobs in the Indian economy are in the informal or unorganised sector and further, most of the employment growth in the country comes from very small, small and medium sized enterprises and an estimated 95% of all firms employ fewer than 5 wage workers with average numbers falling in the last two decades.

These numbers highlight the very real problem facing India today – that of meaningful education, employment and employability. The challenge of solving the complex problem of enabling the young in India to thrive, predominantly rests in addressing three kinds of questions: What is the education that we aspire all our young citizens to acquire and why do we aspire for such an education? What will be the nature of employment and its potential for helping young people lead fulfilling lives? How do we think of and address the question of ‘employability’ – that requisite knowledge, skills, mindsets, capabilities and behaviours which enables our young citizens to seek out and chart career options for themselves in the 21st century?

The articles in this edition each seek to address these three interconnected issues from multiple lenses and from different structural viewpoints. Each of the articles makes explicit the need to make real, meaningful change to the way we approach educating and employing our youth; whether in schools, higher education institutions or within organisations and in workspaces. Yet from within these different perspectives emerges a consensus around fundamental shifts needed both in education as well as in the workplace. These fundamental shifts emerge from an imagination of a future very different from the past and of a recognition that unless there are significant shifts in the way that curriculum is designed and taught, in the way that the young approach work and careers and in the way that organisations approach ideas of employment and employability, India’s tremendous demographic advantage will be squandered. At the heart of this issue is the central concern of human wellbeing.

The articles cover a wide range of issues and domains – from what is human capital to the nature of schools and higher education and reimagining the nature of work in society and organisations. Amman Madan’s article presents a moral view and understanding of human capital and argues that simplistic views of human capital do not take into account the multiple institutional, social and political environments in which work and work related
knowledge and skills occur. Pramath Nath examines the interconnected issues of education, employment and employability holistically, looking at the need for greater interconnections and collaborations between these sectors and between public and private actors and stakeholders.

Articles by Harpreet Grover, Mekin Maheshwari, Revathi Kasturi and Vishal Shah focus on addressing the question of what is the kind of education that we need to aspire to if we were to fulfil both curricular aspirations as evident in the National Curriculum Framework, as well as preparing young people for a world where change is the only constant. They look at the kinds of temperament, skills and knowledge required to lead meaningful, productive lives in an environment of change, flux and rapid technological innovations. These articles examine the broader purpose of education, but also question the role of various stakeholders in the system and the different kinds of partnerships necessary to fulfil these educational and employment aspirations. They also begin to ask questions around what should be organisational cultures and processes that allow for individuals with such knowledge and skills to flourish meaningfully in work spaces. Amit Basole’s article highlights this connection between kinds of education and skills required for young people to lead more secure lives and India’s current job crisis to ask how can more structural changes take place within the Indian employment market.

There is also a focus on specific sectors within education. S Giridhar’s article begins from reimagining the moral purpose of schools and uses the case study of model schools in Uttarkashi a district of Uttarakhand to show how public schools can address the challenge of meaningful education for the most marginalised of communities in our country. Shailendra Kumar’s article draws on lessons from present day Stanford university and ancient Nalanda university to reimagine a vibrant higher education system that enables quality and meaningful multi-disciplinary education for our youth. Ravi Sreedharan provides a dialogic approach to the problem of higher education, employment and employability. Using the case study of a higher education institute, his article focuses on the very real need for multiple stakeholders – students, educators and employers – to come together to have meaningful conversations about how partnerships can be built that addresses the question of meaningful education for students, higher education institutions as well as employers. Nandini Chawla looks at what are those mindsets required for young graduates as they seek out employment and work opportunities in organisations. In a similar vein, Ateet Jayawal’s article focuses on the mindset changes required in the interconnected spaces of education, employment and employability and proposes a framework that incorporates influencers, individuals and the broader society working together to bring about fundamental changes.

Other articles in the issue focus more clearly on employment and organisations. Madan Padaki explores the idea of sustainable work for the youth of the country through the idea of ‘Rubanomics’ - focusing on the creation of a generation of entrepreneurs, job creators not job seekers. Ajay Batra also focuses on the idea of entrepreneurs but within organisations as ‘intrapreneurs’ and examines how organisations can support and unleash creativity and meaningful disruption in the workplace and what would be the underlying organisational structures and processes to support these. Arvind Krishnan brings together both the idea of human wellness and wellbeing and organisational responsibilities towards ensuring such wellness for all its employees by making the case for organisations to focus on their employees’ health and fitness. Finally, Shyaam Subramanian and Nikita Sehgal present a case study of immersive experiential leadership that is required to catalyse the changes required for organisational leaders to act in this space, by examining the fellowship programme of Teach for India.

Together these articles compel us to understand the interconnections between human wellbeing and empowerment, meaningful work, employment and the development of a Nation and the scaffolding structures, systems and processes needed to enable the youth of this country to craft their own lives and careers meaningfully. It is also a cautionary tale – of ignoring the very immediate need for deep structural changes in education and employment – a peril that India can ill afford. To make this happen, it is essential for educationists, organisations, policy makers, students and the larger community to come together and reimagine how education and work come together for the youth of the nation for a more sustainable and flourishing future for all.

Reference

2016. Government of India Ministry of Human Resource Development Department of School Education & Literacy New Delhi
Dear Reader,

Greetings!

The field of Management and Management Education in India is critical to the success of the economic activity of our Country. All the stakeholders of the Management Education actively search for a credible ranking which is backed by Corporate and recruiters and involves the rigour of validation visit leading to dependable ranking output. As a matter of fact, the mammoth number of B-School Ranking exercises have left the stakeholders confused. Be it Students, Parents or the Corporate, the question crossing the mind of all stakeholders is: ‘Which Ranking to refer to’?

At the heart of every Research process lies its credibility, without which the entire research loses its relevance. So, six years ago—when NHRDN started its first ever B-School Ranking exercise, the fundamental thought focus of the NHRDN National Board was: ‘How to make the Ranking process completely credible’? We are delighted to share that since its inception, NHRDN B-School Ranking is based on Data and Validation of data. Further, even today, it is the only Ranking exercise which has a team of Research Partner (Cinque Education Pvt Ltd) and NHRDN Senior Corporate representatives investing time with the participating B-School, which helps us validate the data.

We are delighted to present the NHRDN B-School Ranking 2017! At NHRDN, Ranking exercise is our contribution to the society and we want to make the process a Gold standard process which can serve the society and others can emulate. We are grateful to Shri Prakash Javadekar Hon’ble Union Minister for HRD. Government of India for referring to NHRDN B-School Ranking in one of his Facebook Post.

We thank the National Board, B-School Advisory Committee Members, all Esteemed Professionals, Subrat, Nalin and Team NHRDN for making this a huge success.

Happy Reading!

Regards,

Dhananjay Singh
Director General
National HRD Network | National Secretariat
NHRDN B-School Ranking 2018

IIMs Top Management Rankings

RANKINGS IIMs continue to rule the roost as per survey by NHRDN and Shine.com

HT Correspondent

The prestigious Indian Institute of Management have once again topped the 2018 management institutes ranking by National HRD Network (NHRDN) and Shine.com. Given the sheer dearth of rankings, the key aspect that stakeholders are using to determine the trust in the credibility of rankings is credibility. The first NHRDN B-School ranking was conducted in 2012 and was entirely dependent on qualitative data without employing any quantitative component. The methodology involved a research partner (Crisis Education Pvt Ltd) and senior NHRDN corporate representatives spending an entire day at participating B-Schools to verify the data they have shared. Following are the key attributes of NHRDN B-School rankings:

Holistic Parameters for Evaluating a B-School

The process looks at the most comprehensive and holistic definition of what it means to be a B-School, and involves the three elements of knowledge creation, knowledge application, and knowledge dissemination, rather than being myopic and skewed towards only one parameter.

Key Focus on Leadership and Governance

Success and future direction of any organization depend on the Leadership and Governance, and B-Schools are no exception. NHRDN Ranking evaluates Leadership and Governance related components in a robust manner.

Unique Triangulation Approach

Globally, research methods are increasingly employing triangulation methods to ensure the validity of data collected. NHRDN ranking process also uses triangulation method to ensure data correctness.

Involvement of Industry Stalwarts

NHRDN B-School Ranking process further stands out as the only process, in which Industry stalwarts are involved at all the stages. The advisory board includes P. Dwarkadhish, director (Group Human Capital), Mahindra & Mahindra; Dr. B. K. Bajaj, senior vice president and head, global HR, Tata Consultancy Services; A. R. Babbar, executive director (OS); D. B. Birla, chairman, D. B. Birla Group; M. R. K. V. Srinivasulu, chairman, Birla Financial Services; and R. N. Srinivasan, chairman, IIM Calcutta. The advisory board also reviews the research instrument exhaustively every year and suggests changes to make the instrument more relevant.

Evolvement of Academics

The ranking process also includes soliciting the views from academia every year towards making the research instrument more contemporaneous and also seeks their feedback to make the process more robust. The process gains tremendously from the insights of these thought leaders, including Dr. Pratibha Singh, Dr. A. M. Mehta, Dr. Gautam Sinha, Dr. H. Chaturvedi, among others.

The NHRDN Ranking process is rigorous, data-based and objective exercises and has the potential to turn into an accreditation exercise in coming years.

The NHRDN Ranking Study for the year has revealed some interesting highlights about the B-Schools.

First, there is a growing trend among Indian B-Schools to opt for international accreditations, which points towards their commitment to quality standards and dreams of competing globally.

Second, the research output across B-Schools has shown an increase in terms of absolute numbers, but quality output is still restricted to a few top B-Schools, where there is a lot of scope for improvement.

Third, leadership and governance across Indian B-Schools remains a concern and has tremendous improvement opportunities.

Fourth, placements across B-Schools have shown improvement in the previous year, and the outlook remains positive.

Finally, some of the new IIMs are also ranking their mark, but older private B-Schools are still holding the fort. The complete ranking can be viewed at www.nationalhrd.org.
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Emerging B-School 2018

Faculty of Management Studies, Manav Rachna International University
Faridabad

IILM Institute for Higher Education
Gurgaon

Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies
Hyderabad
Goodbye Employees
Hello Intrapreneurs

Mr. Ajay Batra is the Founding Director of Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Bennett University. The following article is adapted from his book, “Startups and Beyond: Building Enduring Organizations”. Ajay can be reached at ajay@startupsandbeyond.com
Abstract

With the advent of the gig economy, startup movement, design thinking and digital connectedness, the narrative for organizations worldwide is shifting from employer branding and employability to intrapreneurship. Taking a cue from leading companies like Google, Apple, and 3M, organizations are creating work culture and systems that develop and empower their employees to provide them with innovation-based competitive advantage. It is amply clear that these companies invest a lot more resources (beyond, for example, Google’s commitment to have their employees pursue ‘other’ interests for 20% of their time) in this endeavour.

Welcome to the new bold world of employees as internal champions of creativity and disruption, i.e. the intrapreneurs. The debate of hard versus soft skills has given way to developing the organizational capabilities in meta-skills of the 21st century – to identify opportunities, find creative solutions, build agile teams and launch internal or external startups. Already, the entrepreneurial employee or the intrapreneur is the focus of many Board Room and HR conversations.

Extending this notion beyond the organizational boundary, it is imperative that if India intends to deliver on its socio-economic promises, we will need to build these skills of innovation and entrepreneurship in our schools and communities as well. This article explores key principles and practices that bring about the cultural and systemic transformation in organizations to promote continuous support to the budding intrapreneurs, and to become entrepreneurial workplaces themselves.

The Context

In today’s connected knowledge economy, organizations that foster independent thinking are better equipped to serve customers and gain competitive advantage. An intrapreneurship focus prepares the workforce to ideate freely, discuss openly, experiment and implement their ideas. While results of intrapreneurship deployment can be experienced within the existing organization, there are times that such attempts cause new ventures to be created or spawned-off. Besides the obvious benefits of employee engagement, leadership development, and collaboration, intrapreneurs add business value by helping introduce new product/services in the market and enhance economic value through job creation. Since innovative ideas can emerge from many quarters, the organizations also develop capabilities to explore opportunities by observing trends (e.g. industry, social, technological), and by working closely with customers and partners.

Institutionalized practices of intrapreneurship develop an organizational culture with enduring agility and innovation. The notion of prolific innovation is at the heart of developing an entrepreneurial environment under which the new “employees” thrive. To cite a few examples: Today’s bluest-of-the-blue IBM has reinvented itself continuously from its inception to be the admired and successful company that we know it to be. Not many people recall that IBM has evolved its focus from weighing scales, coffee grinders, punched card equipment, and even guns, to cognitive computing and modern-day systems integration. This journey has not been without its pitfalls, but with an unrelenting focus on innovation, customer service, and human capital management, IBM has endured as an icon. Google epitomizes the notion of being an entrepreneurial organization by enabling its employees to innovate continuously in close partnership with its partners and customers. Besides its prolific innovations, Google also tops the charts in terms of profitability, growth, and employee-focus.
Challenges

In a recent Wall Street Journal article, CEOs of global companies unanimously voted for talent and culture to be the lynch-pins for their survival and success. The war for talent continues. Not just companies, but nations and cities are also competing to attract the best talent. The presence of a young, tech-savvy Gen-Y and Gen-Z workforce places a premium on creating fluid work cultures that deliver business results while remaining exciting workplaces. The new generation of the workforce is digitally connected, intensely independent and socially aligned as a global community. Providing it with work opportunities that inspire and help unleash its creative potential is an ongoing challenge for leaders and human resources professionals. The current dynamic environment demands leaders to promote work cultures where new-age talent engagement and empowerment are priorities. With the trends of gig economy and open innovation, organizations need to view and support their employees as intrapreneurs who are a strong source of ideas and business growth.

While most CEOs and HR Leaders will agree with the principles associated with building an intrapreneural workforce (and an entrepreneurial organization), most do not know how to translate them into meaningful actions. Additionally, they face challenges like:

- Disruption is perceived to be the prerogative of startups, and not of established corporates
- The ‘control’ mindset towards employees mitigates the very notion of empowered ideation and action
- Innovation is viewed as a flash of creativity leading to sporadic ideas, and not as a disciplined and repeatable process
- Innovation and creativity are perceived to be the exclusive domain of “artists” or “gifted” people
- Intrapreneurship is perceived to apply only to “business-minded” people
- Organizational culture does not promote collaborative work or does not embrace experimentation and failure
- The organization generates many promising ideas but lacks disciplined approaches for developing, validating and commercializing them
- Inadequate participation of external stakeholders in identifying triggers of innovation.

Ten Practices for Creating an Impactful Culture of intrapreneurship in your Organization

Leaders need a framework of action that integrates the process and cultural aspect of building an entrepreneurial organization. The following practices have been curated from various organizations around the world who have demonstrated repeatable success in leveraging intrapreneurship for internal efficiency and external effectiveness. These practices serve as suggested milestones in an organization’s journey. Specific actions and decisions, of course, will vary based on the context.

PRACTICE 1: The organization establishes an enabling framework to promote innovation and intrapreneurship

Initial traction, and certainly lasting success, cannot be achieved unless the organizational culture is groomed to reflect the core values of intrapreneurship. An enabling framework helps create the pre-conditions for the launch of an innovation and intrapreneurship-driven culture.

Typical components of this framework are:

- Policies that enable individuals to implement innovative ideas without fear of retribution, recognition for individuals who suggest ideas for innovation
- Appointment of a process owner (e.g. Chief Innovation Officer) for overall responsibility of evangelizing continuous business innovation among the workforce and partners
- Funds for seeding innovative ideas as internal startups and for forming/supporting learning communities
• Time off for learning and experimentation
• Training in design thinking, lean startups, financial analysis, opportunity analysis and project management.
• A shared understanding of the threats and risks of not creating intrapreneurship work cultures

PRACTICE 2: The organization establishes and shares its beliefs for intrapreneurship development
Examples of areas in which the organization may develop its beliefs:
• How ‘risk-taking’ and ‘failure’ are treated
• The business rationale for supporting intrapreneurship
• An acceptable definition of ‘innovation’
• Culture of empowerment and sharing
• Support for the launch of new startups by employees
• Shifting focus from classroom training to continuous and experiential learning
• Culture of learning and experimentation
• Balance between external and internal triggers of innovation

PRACTICE 3: The organization creates a framework that enables the continuous creation, sharing, and usage of knowledge across individuals, teams and units
1. Meaningful innovation and intrapreneurship require a social and structural environment of collaboration and sharing of knowledge, skills, and experiences. Hence, organization’s values support voluntary knowledge creation and sharing at all levels
2. Individuals are informed of the organization’s framework, related values, and methods related to knowledge creation and sharing

PRACTICE 4: Organization creates and supports learning communities
1. Current business goals, vision and expected competencies of the future are analyzed to determine the architecture and purpose of learning communities.

Examples of purpose of creating learning communities:
• Share knowledge and experience
• Forming alliances between Startups
• Promote common interests
• Promote empowered learning
• Increase retention
• Achieve business goals
• Innovate for the future

Examples of architecture of learning communities:
• Formal or informal
• Empowered or managed
• Voluntary or nominated
• Temporary or permanent
• Geographic or virtual
• Intra-unit or organization-level or extra-organization
• Limited or open membership

2. Members of learning communities exchange views, ideas and experiences related to the team’s purpose

3. Knowledge elements created as a result of the learning communities’ activities, discussions or projects are submitted for incorporation in the organization’s knowledge repository

PRACTICE 5: Focus areas and goals for organization-wide innovation and intrapreneurship efforts are defined

1. Internal and external triggers for innovation, including industry trends and competitors’ offerings, are analyzed

2. Within selected focus areas, specific performance goals may be established to guide the organization’s intrapreneurship efforts

   Examples of goals:
   • Reduce time to market by 90%
   • Improve product performance by 10X
   • Reduce marketing costs by 50%
   • 5X gain in proficiency in a specific competency
   • Improve customer satisfaction index from 7.5 to 9.5

PRACTICE 6: An operational approach for supporting innovation and intrapreneurship in the organization is defined and shared

1. Organization creates an inter-disciplinary group to coordinate organization-wide intrapreneurship activities. Unit-level groups may be created for coordinating unit-specific activities related to continuous innovation and intrapreneurship. Similarly, a separate inter-disciplinary group may coordinate innovation activities with external stakeholders.

2. Relevant methods of systemic innovation and intrapreneurship are identified, and individuals are oriented in the methods

   Examples of methods:
   • Brain-writing
   • Benchmarking
   • Lean Startups
   • Business Model Canvas
   • Design Thinking
   • Six thinking hats
   • Biomimicry
   • TRIZ
   • Osborn checklist

3. Organization’s mentoring, performance management, orientation and learning activities encourage participation in the unit or organization-wide intrapreneurship activities

   Examples of initiatives to encourage participation:
   • Special recognition and rewards
   • Innovation mentors
   • Flexible work arrangements
   • International collaboration and learning visits
4. Organization establishes channels for inviting innovative ideas from individuals
Examples of channels for inviting ideas:
- Email
- Portal
- Wiki
- Suggestion boxes
- Discussions with manager

5. Methods for involving partners, customers, and users, both existing and potential, in the innovation process are identified. Examples: off-sites, group discussions, surveys

PRACTICE 7: Innovative ideas are collected from internal and external stakeholders, and analyzed
1. External stakeholders who need to be involved in generating innovative ideas are identified and encouraged to share their ideas
2. Individuals, or groups, within the organization, are encouraged to submit their proposals for innovative ideas
3. Submissions from internal and external stakeholders are received, documented and acknowledged in a timely manner.
4. Criteria for evaluating and prioritizing innovative ideas are established
   Examples of criteria for evaluation:
   - Expected impact on business results and competitive position
   - Expected impact on organization culture
   - Knowledge and skills required
   - Cost of prototyping and final development
   - Alignment with organization’s purpose and goals
   - Time to develop the solution
   - Intellectual property rights issues
   - Brand risk
   - Legal issues and clearances
5. Using the established criteria, submitted ideas are evaluated and assigned a status
   Sample status of submissions
   - Approved for piloting
   - Need clarification or more information
   - On hold
   - Rejected
   - Combined with another submission
6. Status is shared with individuals or team who have submitted the idea
PRACTICE 8: Pilots of innovative ideas are planned, conducted and evaluated

1. Pilots are planned to be performed in an environment that is aligned with the actual organizational or market context

2. A plan for piloting each idea is developed, reviewed and approved by affected individuals and groups.
   Typical components of the plan are:
   - Description of the idea being piloted
   - Impacted product, processes or services
   - Expected benefits
   - Expected costs
   - Value framework scope
   - Organization scope
   - Success criteria (e.g., quality, timeliness, budget)
   - People resources
   - Other resources (e.g., technical infrastructure, funds, training)
   - Data collection
   - Piloting activities with timelines
   - Risks

3. Pilot results are collected, documented and evaluated against their defined criteria. The benefits and impacts of broader use in the organization are estimated. The uncertainty in these estimates is also assessed.

4. Based on the evaluation, the decision is made to proceed to large-scale deployment, startup launch, repeat of the pilot, or abandoning the idea altogether

PRACTICE 9: Successful pilots are launched as organization-wide changes or as independent Startups

1. Business impact (e.g., revenues, profits, customer delight, market share) and organizational impact (e.g., employer branding, business process efficiency, attrition, employee delight) of the deployment are analyzed for each organizational deployment or startup

2. Sometimes, an external evaluation or audit of the deployment is conducted for an objective confirmation

3. Appropriate rewards and recognition are offered to individuals and groups who originate, implement or support the transition of the idea into an organizational asset or a startup

PRACTICE 10: Impact of each innovative idea, and the status of the overall program, are shared with internal and external stakeholders

Periodically, the organization evaluates its investment in intrapreneurship and innovation programs. The results of the analysis are shared with relevant stakeholders and used as an input in strategic and operational planning.

In Conclusion

Broadly speaking, a culture of intrapreneurship and innovation unleashes the human spirit of discovery and creation in an organization. Developing such cultures is not just a business responsibility for leaders, but their humane charter as well. Organizations that espouse such cultures deliver great results and become admired and enduring institutions over time.
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Understanding India’s Jobs Crisis

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Abstract

The Indian economy faces an unprecedented challenge, that of providing gainful, decent, and secure employment to its half a billion strong labour force. In the absence of such employment, high rates of GDP growth are not socially inclusive and instead foster inequality. As a result of “jobless growth” the Indian labour force is still predominantly informal and poorly paid. In addition to this there is also a serious problem with low labour force participation rates, particularly for women and educated youth. Our ability to understand these phenomenon is also hindered by lack of timely and reliable data as well as by inappropriate instruments to measure skill levels and employment rates. The multiple crises of education, skills and employability require fresh thinking and commitment to the right of every Indian to lead a secure, dignified life in a just and sustainable way. The Centre for Sustainable Employment at Azim Premji University has been set up to support such thinking and to provide a space for an informed debate.

Understanding India’s Jobs Crisis

The Indian economy has experienced a compounded annual growth rate of around 7% in real terms over the past two decades. At this rate average incomes double every decade. As a result, the nature of the labour force is being transformed. Even though, as per the latest available data, 75% of the labourforce remains uneducated beyond secondary school level (Labour Bureau 2016), the college Gross Enrollment Ratio, i.e. percentage of those between ages 18-23 enrolled in college, has gone from 19.4% in 2010 to 25.2% in 2016 (AISHE 2016). As a result of rapid economic growth and higher levels of education social aspirations have also risen rapidly. An increasing number of college-educated youth from farming or artisanal families are no longer interested in continuing their traditional occupations, and prefer formal sector employment. But the quantity as well as the quality of employment leave much to be desired. The number of good formal sector jobs that are accompanied by regular working hours, decent pay, and benefits have increased far slower than the numbers of new entrants to the labour-force (Papola and Sahu 2012; Mehrotra et al. 2012), to say nothing of accommodating those who are leaving agriculture and other traditional occupations. Only 15 percent of Indian workers have regular, salaried jobs and only 20 percent have some kind of written contract (Labour Bureau 2016). There is some evidence that the total volume of employment in the economy may even have shrunk in the past few years (Abraham 2017). Furthermore, 67 percent of Indian households report a monthly income of Rs 10,000 or less. And disturbingly, this is not only a problem of lack of education. Half of those with graduate and 38% of those with postgraduate degrees report a monthly income of INR 10,000 or less (Labour Bureau 2016).

The formal or organised manufacturing sector, in particular has shown very weak capacity for decent job creation in recent years. This has two aspects to it. The first is a clear trend towards replacing workers with machines across all industries. The Annual Survey of Industries indicates a secular fall in the labour to capital ratio over the entire period from the early 1980s to today. A clear impetus for this has come from the pressure to compete in the global marketplace and a cheapening of capital relative to labour due to access to the global financial market (Sen and Das 2014). The second is an equally clear trend towards replacing regular or permanent workers with contract or short-term workers (Kapoor 2015). While the overall trends are as stated above, there does exist some diversity across industries. One research question is therefore to identify those formal manufacturing industries that have succeeded in bucking these trends and seeing if their experiences can be replicated elsewhere. However, the approach more likely to succeed, in the short-run, is to place our emphasis on those sectors of the economy that are relatively harder to mechanise. As for the growing contractualization or precarity in the workforce, this is clearly a matter for policy intervention. While a more flexible labour law regime obviously suits employer interests in the short-run, this has to be balanced with its
effects on skills, productivity, employee morale, and aggregate demand in the economy. Indeed, at this point, it seems that too much has been made of the virtues of flexible labour regimes in spurring economic growth and job creation. In fact, economic theory as well as past experience indicate that strong wage growth and resulting increases in demand are far more reliable drivers of GDP growth.

In addition to the problem of “jobless growth”, which points to the inability of the economy to generate high quality employment in required numbers, there is also a problem of inadequate data and confusion surrounding terms such as “formal” and “informal.” For several years, the most reliable sources of data on the labour force have been the quinquennial National Sample Surveys on the Employment- Unemployment situation. The latest of these came out in 2011 and this information is now too old for policy purposes. More recently the Labour Bureau attempted an annual survey modeled on the NSS. The latest of these was in 2015-2016 and remains the most recent available data. A task-force on employment statistics set up under the then vice-chairperson of NITI Aayog, Arvind Panagariya recommended carrying out high frequency (annual or even quarterly) large-sample labour force surveys. This task has been undertaken by the National Sample Survey under the name of Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) of which the first round of data should be released shortly. Another dimension to the data debate is over survey versus administrative data. A recent study (Ghosh and Ghosh 2018) has argued that payroll data such as enrollment in Employee Provident Fund (EPF) or National Pension Scheme (NPS) databases can be used to study employment trends. Its main conclusion is that an estimated 7 million new accounts were added into the system in FY 2017-2018 and that this provides evidence to counter the claim of jobless growth. There are major problems with using this data straightforwardly to infer job creation trends, such as failure to distinguish between gross and net new jobs and between formalization of existing jobs as opposed to creation of new ones. But the use of such data constitutes an important advancement in the debate.

In addition to frequency, quality, and source of data, there is also some confusion around key concepts and definitions. The NITI Aayog has recently argued that any worker enrolled in a provident fund scheme should be deemed a formal worker. This expands the proportion of formal workers in the workforce to 15-25 per cent instead of the usually quoted figure of 7-10 per cent. However, this has not been the traditional understanding of the term, which is usually taken to mean some job security and a range of protections and benefits. This issue remains unresolved. To take another example, the unemployment rate is an internationally comparable measure of the percentage of workers who are willing to work but without a source of income. This has traditionally been low in India because most workers cannot afford to remain unemployed. Thus the common understanding has been that India’s problem is not unemployment but low wages and poor quality work. This may also be changing now. As the proportion of workers with some higher education rises, unemployment also becomes an issue. Labour Bureau data show that 10% of graduates and postgraduates were unemployed. This is more than twice the overall unemployment rate. However, the problem of joblessness among educated youth is likely much more serious than this number indicates. This is because it does not take into account those educated youth who are employed in part-time jobs or jobs they would rather not do (such as driving taxis). It also does not include those who are not in the labour force. Worryingly 38% of graduates and 31% of postgraduates report not working or seeking work (Labour Bureau 2016). India has one of the lowest labour force participation rates in the world and it is time we take this very seriously. The aggregate number also hides a large gender disparity. 22% men but fully 68% of women graduates are out of the labour force. While social norms can account for some of the women graduates not opting for jobs, it is also likely that a poor job market is responsible. There is urgent need for good quality, high frequency data on both the quantity and quality of employment as well as on what is happening to those working age Indians who are not in the labour force.

Another large lacuna in our understanding of the Indian labour force is its skill status. The common approach in policy-making to equate skill with formal education or training fails miserably for two reasons. One, a large number of educated workers are not skilled. While there are no nationally representative surveys, a recent study of 150,000 engineering graduates by Aspiring Minds, a Delhi-based employment solutions company found that barely 7 percent were suitable for engineering jobs. Another, by the Associated Chambers of Commerce of India, also found that around 7 percent of graduates from 5,500 business schools were
“employable.” There is currently vast excess capacity in the education sector driven in part by the profusion of poor quality educational institutions delivering paper qualifications with little content.

Second, most workers are skilled but uneducated. Despite the surge in educational enrollment, only 11% of the labour force has a certificate, diploma or degree at the graduate or postgraduate level. And only 5% report any vocational training (Labour Bureau 2016). On the other hand, studies show that the informal sector, where the vast majority of the labour force is, has its own system of skill generation and transmission (Basole 2014). Millions of workers in sectors as varied as food, textiles, leather, chemicals, repair, and retail possess specific skills acquired informally and therefore unrecognised by the official statistics. In the words of the Sharada Prasad Committee Report on Skill India, “our great country is characterized by an educated person who has no skills and a skilled person who has no education” (Prasad et al 2016, p. 30).

The solution to this problem requires us to reimagine our conception of skills. Just as lack of formal education cannot be a proxy for lack of skill, in a labour surplus economy neither can low wages be such a proxy. To grasp this fact it is only necessary to glance at an industry like the silk weaving industry of Varanasi. Here highly skilled weavers earn INR 200-300 a day. Such examples may be multiplied. As long as we have excess labour reserves, wages will perforce be low in the open market. The Indian workforce is predominantly an informally skilled, low-paid workforce, not an unskilled one. In policy discourse skillling has become a buzzword. Under schemes such as Skill India (PMKVY) millions of young Indians are being put through short-term skilling programs, frequently as short as three months. The government’s own report has made a severe indictment of such programs, saying they only serve to fulfill targets and do not create a employable workforce (Prasad 2016). There is scarce data, official or otherwise, on the proportion of youth trained in such programs who have secured jobs and retained them. Further, reducing the problem of job creation to skill creation also has the danger of leaving the non-youth workforce out of the picture completely. Rather than attempting to deliver skills to a vast labour force, it may make more sense to work via informal institutions already in place to generate and transfer skills. In this respect, the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program to award formal recognition to informally acquired skills has promise. But its implementation needs a lot of further work (Prasad 2016).

Resources may be better spent on labour subsidies that guarantee universal basic services, i.e. public, high quality education, health, and housing. Not only are these services non-tradables and difficult to mechanise, and therefore good candidates for job creation, but delivering them effectively will relieve the burden on a very large portion of the household budget. This leaves resources free for skill upgradation on part of the workers themselves. Such “labour subsidies” have been discussed recently by NITI Aayog vice-chairperson Rajiv Kumar.

In sum, the crises of education/skills and employability call urgently for fresh thinking that does not bind itself to any ideological pre-commitment except the right of every Indian to lead a secure, dignified life in a just and sustainable way. This thinking must be both, anchored in the real-world, and imaginative. The Centre for Sustainable Employment at Azim Premji University has been set up for this purpose. We support research in job creation, quality of work, skills, and related areas, and are currently at work on a Report on the State of Working India. We also plan to work with advocacy groups, policy-makers, activists, and corporate actors in addition to researchers. The Centre’s website (cse.apu.edu.in) will, in due course, be a repository of data and a “one-stop-shop” for all matters relating to the Indian labour market. Our vision is decent work and regular incomes for all, at a minimum equal to the least paid regular government employee; a modest goal that is yet to be realized for the majority of our workforce.
References
Rethinking Human Capital

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Rethinking Human Capital

The notion of human capital is an old one, reaching back to the times of Adam Smith at least. Since the 1960s it has gained widespread popularity because of the promise it holds out for enriching a poor country. The works of Gary Becker (1975) and Theodore W. Schultz (1977) spread the notion that countries which wanted to empower their citizens and increase their wealth should cultivate their human capital. It was difficult to share and equalize other forms of capital like land and machinery. They were limited in supply and controlled by people who resisted their transfer to others. But human capital was something you could increase almost without limits. Unlike land and money, you did not even need to take it away from anyone. It seemed that building new institutions to give people greater education was sufficient to decrease the problems of poverty and human misery. For countries struggling to come out of the darkness imposed by colonialism, human capital seemed the answer to all their problems. Particularly where there were large numbers of poorly paid labour. Even in today’s times the idea of investment in human capital remains very attractive and it is being said that a country’s freedom and safety is dependent upon a knowledge economy.

Half a century of theoretical and empirical work has led us to a more balanced consideration of human capital. It is indeed a concept of enormous potential. But it should not be seen as a panacea and ought to be used instead in a more weighed and cautious manner. Here I try to delineate some of the sociological and educational considerations that delimit the notion of human capital.

The Hidden Face of Human Capital

It is well known that several economists including Michael Spence (1973), Joseph Stiglitz (1975) and Kenneth Arrow (1973) said that education may lead to greater employability for reasons other than the knowledges, values and skills that it conveys. “Signalling theory” says that recruitment may be done at least in part because the recruiters spot certain signals which promise a good worker, not just because of the actual knowledge of that candidate. For instance, many employers of engineers select students from NITs and IITs not on the basis of how much engineering they know, but with the thought that a person who has gotten into these institutions must be having the ability to work hard and in a systematic manner. As a result they often do not pay much attention to how much the student scored while doing her B.Tech.

In parallel with these economists, sociologists like Randall Collins (1971, 1979), Raymond Murphy (2001) and Ivar Berg (2003) have pointed to some more reasons why education may lead to higher salaries or great chances of employment without actually contributing to the better performance of a task. “Credentialism” occurs when there are too many people with the basic ability to do a job satisfactorily and too few jobs to absorb them. In such times some people may seek higher degrees which then make them more likely to be hired, without the degrees actually contributing to better performance. To take an engineering recruitment example again, the undergraduate degree holder will be quite capable of doing a programming job. However when there are too many undergraduates clamouring for a small number of jobs, then the post-graduate degree holder may have a better chance of landing a placement.

A further complication in our view of human capital comes from studies of the politics of organizations. It is now a truism to say that all organizations are arenas of tussles between contending groups and ideologies. This seems to be an inevitable aspect of human social life. Randall Collins (ibid.) and Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) have pointed to the role of education in constituting the membership of contending groups. Collins argues that groupings and factions form within organizations on the basis of cultural beliefs, values and orientations. Recruiters look for degrees which correspond to their own values, beliefs and cultural styles. These have the consequence of validating their own positions and increasing their support within the organization.
Pierre Bourdieu said that education can become a way for the powerful to retain their hold on a society, while apparently speaking the language of free opportunity. Bourdieu has pointed out that what constitutes capital is not necessarily what is always good. For instance, fluency in English is much sought after today as a necessity for membership of higher salaried circles. But this is not because of any intrinsic goodness of English, which would be to say that it is somehow better than Kannada or Hindi, etc. Instead the premium English commands is because English speakers have a higher and dominating presence in certain kinds of organizations and social formations. The domineering groups possess this cultural capital and use it to control and regulate entry into their networks.

Bourdieu and others who use a conflict-based perspective on society say that what constitutes human capital and what does not is often defined by struggles between contending social groups. This partially an expression of the distribution of power, the class system, caste, patriarchy, imbalances between regions and languages and so on. And it may be only partially the requirements of a particular situation of technological, organizational and cultural development.

**A Moral View of Human Capital**

It is unwise to throw away the notion of human capital simply because it may often be used in a distorted and partial manner. Perhaps we can improve upon the idea to couple it with principles of greater justice and freedom. A classic example of this comes from the freedom struggle. Gandhi and many others who stood up against British colonialism could see the role of the economy in colonial rule. British goods were gradually displacing Indian products, enriching the colonial rulers and impoverishing the colonized. In this situation a simple understanding of human capital would have been to training Indians to be part of the market, viz. to aid in the distribution of British goods. However Indian freedom fighters were able to take a deeper, morally informed view of what it meant to labour and produce. They understood that the displacement of Indian products by products manufactured in Britain was central to British domination of Indian society. Seeking greater freedom and autonomy for Indians they took a significantly different approach to the cultivation of human capital. Instead of promoting a culture of being good employees for the British, they cultivated a culture of autonomy and swaraj. This meant promoting knowledges that led to self-rule and decreased dependence. It meant teaching cooperation and discipline. It also meant promoting values of standing up against immoral and exploitative behaviour.

The broader view of human capital exemplified in the struggle for swaraj is that the education of human beings should be aimed at cultivating truths of human existence, not in making people tools for others to exploit and manipulate. This is also the broad approach taken in Capability Theory, as developed by Martha Nussbaum (2011) and Amartya Sen (1999). They argue that societies and their economic organs should give importance to the cultivation of human capabilities. The purpose of social existence is the wellbeing of human beings - of all human beings and not just a few. For this people cannot be made means for a few individuals to reach their own ends. Instead of seeing human capital as cultivation of abilities which are required by the rich and powerful, it should be seen as the cultivation of generic human capabilities. The cultivation of knowledges, skills and values related to work should be for the flourishing of all and not just the owners of a firm. The purposes of work and of learning to work should include the cultivation of one’s imagination and of one’s ability to think. This cannot be restricted to mechanical skills merely because the market makes a broader human growth less profitable. Human wellbeing should matter more than the accumulation of profit by a few.

**Structural Constraints and Human Capital**

A vision of human capital that is guided by moral considerations seems preferable to one that is guided only by arbitrary market considerations. The social and economic structure, however, raises important challenges for those who would seek to follow such a vision. The balance of power may be tilting into a greater concentration of wealth and influence into a smaller set of hands. We are seeing the gradual strengthening of big business in this country and the relative weakening of social classes which earlier had a greater voice in public affairs like
farmers, small and medium businesses, government employees, organised workers and so on. The change in
the relative powers of classes would not be an issue if it led to greater wellbeing of all. The evidence for a
significant increase of wellbeing across all sections does not seem persuasive, though gross economic wealth
of the country has substantially increased. For instance, we do not seem to be having a substantial growth in
the numbers of organised workers in the formal sector. Employment numbers for this group seem to more or
less stagnate. Meanwhile, at least three-fourths of the country remains at very low levels of consumption and
income. My own calculations on the basis of the 68th NSS show that in 2011-12 about 75% of the country lived
on less than Rs 67 per person per day. Today that may have risen to about Rs 100-125 per person day at the
most. In other words, if there are five members in a household, about 75% of India is consuming less than Rs
15,000 to 20,000 a month. About 33% households may be consuming less than Rs 7500 to 10,000 per month.
This is at the end of seventy years of the overthrow of British colonialism. The very slow rates of movement of
people into a middle class level of earning and consumption are a matter of concern. While there are bright
spots here and there, the overall picture suggests that our political economy so far has not been able to focus
on a rapid empowerment of the poor.

The present economic circumstances make it easy to slip into a version of human capital that just tries to fit into
the current market conditions. The small numbers of people who get regular and decent salaries puts
pressures on the rest to conform and accept the kind of knowledge and culture which they desperately hope
will enable them to also join the ranks of the secure and well-employed. But that is exactly what the morally
informed view of human capital warns us against. It appears that today’s market conditions are opposed to the
rapid expansion of better paying and more dignified work. It is important to independently ask what good work
and good labour is. That would then guide a better way of formulating notions of knowledge and culture that
lead to productive work.

Another way of looking at the challenges facing a morally informed vision of human capital is to say that there
are endless exciting possibilities around us. Some examples include being creative in thinking of a technical
education which also includes knowing about sustainable and ecologically healthy technologies, not just
whatever big businesses are chasing today. Another example could be teaching organizational knowledges
and skills which focus on cultivating people’s broader understanding and growth, rather than only getting
employees to do what the institution needs today. This might also include promoting and valuing cultures of
equality, dignity and compassion, rather than of hierarchy, control and competition. A last example could be
promoting entrepreneurship knowledges which build nurturing organizations and which emphasize
production and service, rather than only financial accumulation and profiteering.

To sum up, a simple view of human capital may fail to take into account that work and work related knowledges
operate in an institutional, social and political environment. Keeping that environment in mind will lead to far
ter better formulations of how to design and enhance human capital. However the environment cannot be seen in
an acritical and status-quoist manner. It is when we start asking moral questions including the purpose of work
and the purpose of human capital that we begin to move towards human wellbeing in a more complete sense.
References


HR and the Health of Employees: A Case for Enlightened Self-interest

Mr. Arvind Krishnan

Founder and CEO of The Fuller Life (TFL), India’s most experienced employee health and engagement company, since 2001. Also founder of Runners for Life (RFL) - a running community that organizes some of the best foot races in the country. Graduate of IIM Calcutta and an engineering graduate from Mumbai. Has 20+ years of experience (16 of them running TFL), and has worked in companies as diverse as indya.com, Kale Consultants and Amitabh Bachchan Corporation. The only commonality is that all of them were start-up environments. Thinks of himself as a student of business. Hobbies include running and fitness. Is needlessly proud of writing and living the “One Life. Do More.” credo of The Fuller Life.
HR and the Health of Employees:
A Case for Enlightened Self-interest

Abstract

Increasing obesity and lack of fitness coupled with companies building value on the basis of intellectual capital leads to the premise that **companies are growing more valuable on the strength of the minds of employees even as the employee’s bodies grow unfit.**

While HR can choose to ignore or act on it basis its philosophy and the culture of the organization, it would be failing in its fiduciary duty if it does not take cognizance of this trend. This state of affairs should be treated as an emergency for at least the key people in the enterprise. They need to inform, intimidate, inspire or incentivize these key people to get fitter to make sure they safeguard the value of the enterprise.

Part of being an urban professional in India today is the real risk that you are likely to be less fit than your parent (of the same gender) was at your age. I am using increasing obesity (both general and abdominal – which Indians are more prone to) as a measure here. As research shows, obesity is a marker for a raft of illnesses and conditions.

Given that employees spend most of their waking hours in the office or work related tasks (commuting, phone calls, email), it seems a fair to say that working in companies makes one unfit.

What is an HR person supposed to do in the face of the information that working at their company is making their employees unwell?

The first option is to ignore it, since it is part of the devil’s compact between employee and employer. The employee works at the employer’s and all other bets are off the table. If that affects the employee’s or employer’s (i.e. the organization’s) health adversely, well – then that is part of the cost of the arrangement.

The second option is to act on it, out of goodwill towards mankind in general and her colleagues in particular.

Let’s take a tangential approach and start by look at the 50 most valuable, publicly traded companies in India

A quick bucketing of the companies into three baskets can be done as follows:

1. Where most of their value is predicated on their intellectual property. So the company’s output can be technology or financial products (or combinations) where IP or brands are key.
2. Where most of the value is predicated on physical property. Control of natural resources or manufacturing plants can drive value here.
3. Where both kinds of property are stores of value – where both parts are reasonably important. An FMCG company with a few factories and brands is a typical example here.

At first blush, more than 70% of the companies have intellectual property as a key part of their value (i.e. category 1 and 3 above). It is a fair argument that this number has increased over the years. And there is no reason to believe that this trend will change.

If one looks at the 50 most valuable companies in the world, the data is more biased towards intellectual property. 85% seem to have intellectual property as a key part of their value. Now, there is no reason to believe that India will not go the same way as the rest of the word.

So that means that companies everywhere are growing more valuable increasingly on the basis of the intellectual property that is created, embodied and nurtured by their people, rather than on the back of their physical property.

These two things (increasing obesity, value of intellectual property of companies) put together paint a disturbing truth about companies world-wide: **Companies are growing more valuable on the strength of the minds of employees even as their employees' bodies get unfit.**
If you look at data about commute times in cities, working hours and sleeping hours – they point the same way. People are working hard and getting unfit. It is a reasonable assumption that if people were not working so hard, at least some of them would get fitter.

Before we get our feathers all ruffled by this, let me point out that this is not a terribly new trend. Textile and coal mine workers, people working in retail and now IT/ITES employees are testament to the same broad trend. It is probable that the security guard in your office has no days off a month, and possibly does two 12 hour shifts a day.

So I would suggest a third alternative to the question of what is HR to do in the face of unfit workforces.

Treat it as an emergency for senior management and a serious problem for the troops – but not because of goodwill, but enlightened self-interest.

The data points the way. Let’s take three vantage points to view the terrain.

1. Across companies in various sectors, most of the intellectual heavy lifting is done by a small bunch of people. In an IT or pharma company, it is not the vast majority that drives value – but the small bunch at the top of the pyramid. This commoditization of labour (across industries) is unfortunate, but real. Also, the key people are most often older, putting them in a category of higher health risk.

2. When these key people become unfit, their intellectual output drops. They suffer time outages, need to recuperate while working and are therefore sub-par or preoccupied with their health woes. In many of these cases, they are unable to do the higher order things (thinking ahead, taking risks, imagine possibilities) that are drivers of value.

3. If anything would happen to put these key people out of action either permanently, for a long enough period or at a critical time; the firm would suffer a loss of value.

So all three vantage points lead to one conclusion - If these critical people are the most important part of an enterprise, then just like the maintenance division of a plant, there has to be a maintenance division for at least this part of the workforce to safeguard value. This is no longer a nice-to-do; it is very much an emergency. Though, being mildly socialist in ideology, I would argue that this thought needs to be taken across the whole enterprise.

And before anybody says “We have insurance!” as repartee, let me point out that insurance is at its heart a financial product that takes care of an employee being unwell. It cannot prevent a person from becoming unwell. It is, therefore, “illness money”. Not “wellness money”.

So, how does HR get the company’s employees to try and get fit?

There are four broad approaches – inform, intimidate, inspire and incentivize

1. **Inform**: Get people to know what the risks are. Tell them what is good or bad about what they are doing. Where possible, use the idiom that they are most responsive to. Younger audiences respond better to humour, older audiences to data. Remember, that like all messages of value, it will need to be repeated hundreds of times before people notice. In most cases, it is not as if people do not know; just that they need to be reminded at the right time.

2. **Intimidate**: Scare them. Remember the “A cigarette is 11 minutes of your life” line. It works. Cigarette smoking in the world overall is going down (as a % of population). The data from a developed economy from the US points to a steep decrease. There is no reason India will not follow that curve.

3. **Inspire**: Ideally, one should do this with examples of people they can relate to. Of course, one can always send across the latest weight loss story found on the web. But a better option is to find the person who did this in the office and to send that tale across. Making it relatable and real to the employees makes it more effective.
4. **Incentivize:** Everybody loves a good contest! This one has the added benefit of being good for all the participants regardless of the final outcome. So, it is not the Olympics, where there are just three medals on offer. This is one of those situations where everybody can indeed win. In our office, we have been running a weight loss contest for north of a decade, and the weigh-ins and weigh-outs are times of intense conversation and joie de vivre.

An approach like the one above comes with a few nuances.

1. Get the branding right. I cannot overemphasize this. No point spending time, effort, money and emotion on something that is forgotten overnight. This is truer for plans in the health space since they take time to catch on, time for people to adapt behavior and time for the results to show.

2. Health and wellness needs to have several flavours to gain traction across the workforce. In our experience, physical health, financial wellbeing, mental health and sports are the cornerstones to start off with.

3. Privacy concerns are real and need to be taken care of. This is truer for companies with HQs abroad.

Lastly, while one can safely assume that improvement in health indicators of employees leads to a corresponding improvement in productivity and business results, it is hard to empirically establish this. Most of the memorable results that we see are at the individual level (which we have seen across *Runners for Life*, our running community) and seldom at the corporate level.

This is due to the variables and vagaries (for e.g. the industry not doing well or doing very well, change in management team, approach to health and wellness plans, shift in direction of companies and subsequent impact on results, the local firm being a part of a large international company, health plans not having overall coverage) that do not allow us to correlate aggregate health indicators of employees to business results.

So HR has to act on faith in this - as more than one of the panellists in our conference, the Corporate Health Summit, candidly admitted. Also, to set expectations in line with reality, these are typically multi-year projects. So action will have to precede results considerably. The analogy I favour is again Olympian. You certainly have to be training a few years before a medal hangs around your neck.

So, all the best in getting your workforce to be healthy. The path ahead will not be easy, even though you are trying to do something that is of great value to all parties concerned. But I do think the tide will turn. More and more CEOs are coming to terms with the fact that they need to be custodians of company value. And when that value resides in people, they need to take care of the people first and foremost. It will be interesting to see how this thought evolves into action over the next few years.

I think the day will come when the company’s value proposition to employees includes trying to keep them as fit this year as they were a year ago. For that to happen, the basic contract between the organization and the employee would need to change quite drastically.

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Education, Employability and Employment – An Interplay of Influencers, Society and the Individual

About the Author

The author is the Global Organization & Talent Development Leader for GE Digital based at California, USA. Prior to this, he was the HR Head for GE's Healthcare & Digital businesses in India, where he spent 12 years. He is an Economics graduate and an alumnus of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and not reflect that of the organization he works at.

Mr. Ateet Jayaswal
Abstract

India’s challenges are often intertwined with the ecosystem we live in. This article explores the interconnections between Education, Employability and Employment through a lens that includes influencers, society and the individual and the opportunities each of them have, to drive a mindset shift. In addition, it explores certain themes which may help to bridge the gap by broad basing education, employability and employment, thereby determine the social, economic and political landscape of India in time to come.

From the time an individual is born, the process of education is set in motion. Each interaction, be it with an individual, with nature or any element becomes an educative opportunity. In this article, interactions involving another individual, in their distinct capacity or in a defined role is what is referred to as ‘influencers’. It would comprise of parents, family, family friends, neighbors, friends, teachers, colleagues, mentors, leaders and the list goes on.

Society, also has a defining impact on an individual. It is this institution, of which influencers collectively are a constituent, that set the “un-written rules,” establish the “hierarchies,” which may shape the individual. A society is a collective of influencers, which takes us to the 3rd element - the individual.

The individual, is each of us, the person herself / himself, in our own capacities. The individual is shaped by influencers, i.e., interactions involving another individual in their specific role, as well as by society, which is a collective of influencers.

The solution to India’s biggest challenge of education, employment and employability could be explored through some of the below themes:

1. Changing the paradigm from ‘individual to education’ to ‘education to individual:’ Until the time we believe (or place higher in the hierarchy) that education will ‘only’ take place in formal set ups we are bound to be constrained by challenges of capacity, quality and the list goes on. A great deal of work is being done by both the government and the non-governmental bodies in creating the formal set ups.

2. In my mind, these formal set ups need to be aided and the paradigm of taking ‘education to the individual’ is at the very first level about inculcating a mindset of leveraging the ‘influencers’ in the process of education, at each step of an individual’s growth journey. Think of it as a nation-wide training program on the constituents of education – formal and equally important, informal education and a ‘train the trainer’ of the influencers.

3. Next, it is about leveraging technology and creating an environment that enables individuals to “self-educate” themselves - in technical, application oriented skills, softer skills, values. This could be a way to get past the capacity challenge that I mentioned earlier.

4. A combination of leveraging ‘influencers’ and channels of ‘self-education’ would, alongside with the formal set ups help us take ‘education to the individual.’

5. The role that society plays in this context is to relax the unwritten rules and undo the hierarchies. Apart from hierarchy of birth, gender, economic and social disparity, which are far more complex matters, in our model this could first and foremost start from breaking the hierarchy between formal education and the self-taught or informally educated; where opportunities are not determined by basic qualification but ability and building an assessment mechanism that measures ability, at scale. Next comes enabling the building of employability through seamless movements between different types of employments, sans hierarchy, such as between the formal and informal sectors, between steady and intermittent employment etc. Most jobs require an average level of common sense and hence should allow smooth transition from one to the other. Such a
seamless movement builds employability and enables employment. Another aspect to be considered is creation of employment through entrepreneurship. **Entrepreneurship** along with employability will help solve India’s challenge and society must look at employment and entrepreneurship as two sides of the same coin.

Along with society, the role of the government and industry bodies must be that of an enabler, defining an environment in which all of the above thrive and prosper and continue to aid erasing the unwritten rules, breaking the hierarchies, partnering with influencers and scaling self-education avenues and opportunities. The role of the society is closely linked to the individual, who we will explore next.

Once freed from some of the biases listed above and in an encouraging environment, the onus for education and employment, for most parts, lies on the individual:

(i) How does the individual, select, unselect and leverage the various constituents of influencers to continuously educate oneself. Education is as much from an ecosystem as it is from a formal set up and from those ‘designated to educate.’
(ii) How does an individual self-educate on a mix of skills – technical, application oriented skills, soft skills, values from time to time in one’s growth journey
(iii) How does the individual, leverage self-education to build employability and employability through the acquisition of diverse set of skills. Here, it is also important to not build a mental hierarchy of types of employment but treat them the same, contributing to each with an equal amount of pride
(iv) How does the individual play the part of an influencer, for others

As nature of employment becomes more open ended in the ‘formal sector’ there will be forcing factors as notions of long duration continued employment get questioned. In that environment, the above themes could stand an individual in good stead and help build the social and economic landscape of the country in the next decade.

Organizations such as The/Nudge Foundation ([https://www.thenudge.org](https://www.thenudge.org)) are addressing some of what I have mentioned above, in an attempt to alleviate poverty, through employment, sustainably and at scale. Through their flagship ‘Gurukul’ program, The/Nudge is building a strong 360-degree life, learning and economic foundations for underprivileged youth, building their employability, along with a lifelong support system. They focus on life-readiness for these youth by addressing mindset and behavior changes, job skills and employability. Life-long learning is another aspect they focus on and provide the necessary support to their alumni for continuous learning after they graduate from the program. By continuous post-training support on career, health and wealth management through their Life/Guard program, The/Nudge plays the role of an influencer to enable alumni and their families stay out of poverty and have a trusted support system they can rely on even after the ‘education.’

Here is what each of us can do as a custodian of human resources - understand the impact that you have as an influencer, an educator in all ecosystems that you are a part of. The next time someone shares a business idea, encourage them and channel that towards entrepreneurship - an employment creation opportunity. And, in your own way promote transfer of individuals from one employment to another, building employability and breaking the societal hierarchy of employment.

**Conclusion**

an attempt at solving some of India’s biggest challenges of education, employment and employability must be in partnership with influencers, society and the individual. Education needs to go to an individual rather than always trying to get the individual to education, self-education must go hand in hand with formal education and together they can serve as a means of building employability. Employability along with entrepreneurship can help employment. The society, comprising of influencers and the individual, herself or himself, have an equal part to play.
Purpose and the Pygmalion Effect

About the Author

Mr. S. Giridhar is Chief Operating Officer of Azim Premji University. The University is a philanthropic initiative with a clear social purpose and is sponsored by Azim Premji Foundation. Giridhar is one of the earliest members of Azim Premji Foundation. He joined the Foundation in April 2002 after 24 years in the corporate sector where his last job was with Wipro. His work with the Foundation has taken him to the various districts where the Foundation is contributing to improve the quality of education in government schools. He believes this has been the most enriching phase of his life. He writes extensively from what he observes and experiences on the ground and has contributed to a variety of publications such as Wall Street Journal, Indian Express, The Hindu etc. Giridhar is also the co-author of two books on cricket that have been very well received. These books are ‘Midwicket Tales: From Trumper to Tendulkar’ published in 2014 and “From Mumbai to Durban: India’s Greatest Tests” which was published in 2016. He can be contacted at giri@azimpremjifoundation.org
Purpose and the Pygmalion Effect

Abstract

In the Public education system, very often an entire life of service as a teacher can go unnoticed and unrewarded. The sheer size and complexity of the system wraps such a cloak of anonymity on the heroic teachers who overcome great constraints to do extraordinary work. Therefore, in such a setting for teachers to listen to the bugle from within their heart and reach beyond themselves to consistently do better than their best for their students who come from difficult backgrounds is most remarkable. Explaining this within the context of how teachers come together as a team for such a superordinate goal of excellence is the crux of this essay.

The sheer size of the public school system in a vast country ensures that our teachers remain unknown and unsung. In a typical Block / Taluk of a district in a large state, there are around 250 elementary schools with around 7500 teachers. A Block Education Officer (BEO) supervises these schools and his / her boss, the District education Officer (DEO) would in turn have around 2000 schools in his or her charge. Even within a block, one would have in addition to the state language medium, schools that cater to people from other languages. Even the most conscientious BEO can visit schools at best once a year and sometimes only once even in three years. I am using broad brush numbers and facts to lay out the context, size, span and complexity of our Public School Education System.

It is in such a scenario that our rural school teachers perform their task, answerable only to their conscience. Their responsibility and sense of duty to the children, the community and the feeling that they must ‘earn their salary’ is what ensures that less than 3% of our teachers play truant. It is also a fact that over time, in a system with limited resources and without adequate academic support, a sense of fatigue creeps over many of them. A teacher’s job is very different from most other professions; each class is different, each cohort is different, why even each day is different, determined by either the topic or the children’s mood. The energy teachers need to bring to the classroom every day - it is a unique aspect of this profession.

Over the past few years, a concept that has gained ground is to create a “Model School” in every block. The implementation of this varies across states but I will restrict myself to Uttarakhand. In 2015, the education department decided to create one Model Primary School (for classes 1 to 5) and one Model Upper Primary School (for classes 6 to 8) in every block of the 13 districts of Uttarakhand. They did not create new schools; instead they selected from the existing schools. The criteria for selection varied. Some schools were selected because they served a particularly disadvantaged village/ community while others were chosen because they were good and merited this upgradation. Even within the state, there are variations in the manner in which the model school concept is implemented. For instance, between Uttarkashi and UdhamSinghnagar, districts as different as could be possible in a state like Uttarakhand.

For the rest of this essay I will talk about the implementation in Uttarkashi and make the connections to the title of my essay. The district officials were clear they would ensure the model schools would be resourced with sufficient teachers to ensure a favourable Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) and a teacher for every subject. To ensure quality, they announced that teachers would be selected on the basis of a written test and invited applications from interested teachers within each block. For each of the model schools and for each subject, applications were received from around 20 teachers which is a small number. Interestingly, the reasons stated by the people who applied ranged from, ‘I get to work in a school with good resources’ to ‘I can do better in such an environment’ and ‘it is a chance to really contribute and make it a model school in the fullest sense’.
When we visited some of these model schools in August – September, 2017, they were into their second academic year after being so designated. Each of these school visits was an uplifting experience. The teachers seemed to be filled with purpose and energy; some kind of ‘junoon’ had possessed them. Some well of energy had been sprung; they could not wait to come to school, they did not care if it was past 5 pm. It seemed as though the teachers had sworn to a common solemn covenant: ‘Hame kuch karke dikhana hai.’

Let me conclude by sharing experiences from one of the model schools we visited at Veerpur Kuraha, one of the more backward villages in the Ganga Valley. The school was established in 1962 but enrolment had dwindled down to 40 children. Though hard-up, parents forked out Rs. 1000 every month to send their children to private schools in the vicinity of Veerpur Kuraha. In 2016, the government decided to make this a model school, solely based on the fact that this was a greatly disadvantaged village. The principal of the school, an elderly lady is in very poor health with neither physical strength nor energy but the people who carry Primary School Veerpur Kuraha on their shoulders are the teachers who have joined the school since 2016 - Ajay Nautiyal, Chandan Singh, Jaiveer Agarwal, Rekha Aswal – and Sunita Rana who has been here since 2006. “We have a shared goal, nothing is a burden for us here”, they almost say in chorus. The teamwork and bonding is like electricity.

Ajay, 42 years old, has a B.Sc. in Biology and an MA in English. When he arrived here, after serving for years at another primary school in the same block, he saw a ‘low energy school’ and a disillusioned community who placed faith only in the mushrooming private schools. Ajay who teaches English and his colleagues - Chandan (Maths), Sunita (science), Jaiveer (Sanskrit and general awareness) and Rekha (Hindi) - decided that the first step was to rekindle faith in the community and convince them that their school will become one of the best in the region. They fanned out into the community, visiting the homes of parents, spending hours before and after school every day. They committed to what the children will learn and explained what this meant for them. They shared ideas about how they will conduct the school. Over the ten months of the academic year 2016-17, the team backed their assurances with quality work in the classroom. Their emphasis was: A vision of all round development of the child; learning with comprehension; establishing conceptual understanding at every stage before moving to the next topic even if it meant ‘syllabus’ was behind schedule. As they began to implement this they also mapped each child’s learning level and abilities and identified children who needed extra coaching and support. It meant they spent Sundays and holidays in school with these children. The community saw these teachers slog. They noticed. Within a year, in April 2017, when it was time for admission for the new academic year, enrolment jumped from 40 to 67 because the parents of the 27 newly enrolled children pulled them out from the private schools. ‘Reverse migration’ says Ajay Nautiyal with a broad grin.

Meanwhile, Maths teacher Chandan Singh identified six children from Classes 4 and 5 with a very good ability in the subject and invested personal time to prepare these children for the District Math Wizard program. The children cleared the Block level examination and were among the top in the District. The community again noticed. They now came when the teachers called them to the formal monthly meeting to apprise them of their children’s progress. The teachers found time to prepare meticulous individual portfolios for every child, implementing the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). ‘Doesn’t seem like work, more a mission-like adventure’, said Chandan. More than 60 percent of the parents are illiterate and almost all of them eke out a livelihood as daily wage labourers. But they can sense what is happening in Veerpur Kuraha. Jaiveer adds, ‘It hurts us that these poor people spend around Rs 1000 on private school education. That is why we want our school to truly become an adarsh vidyalaya so that these parents can send their children here and also have a huge economic burden lifted off their shoulders’. The team invariably contributes money from their salary every month for an unbroken supply of notebooks and other learning material to ensure the children’s work is not interrupted.
Ajay Nautiyal says, ‘the challenge and excitement of teaching in a government school is completely different. And at a model school, my colleagues and I have a unique opportunity to provide quality education – we must do it because we are well resourced with teachers, material and better infrastructure compared to other schools. We are relishing this challenge.’ All round development of the children, which the teachers stated as their goal is given shape and substance through a combination of activities. The morning assembly has an important role in this, with exposure to music, public speaking and general awareness. Ajay, who excelled in hockey, football and music in his student days is seeking ways and means to make sports an important part of the school activities. ‘If one has the initiative, one can find plenty of autonomy within the system’, says this passionate man. His colleague Jaiveer, says, ‘Our team has only made a good beginning. We must sustain the tempo. We have divided our responsibilities according to our capacity. The three of us come on our motorbikes to school and invariably you will see that we bring eight to nine of the smaller children with us. I am just sharing this to convey, that we belong to them as much as they belong to us. We are deeply and emotionally involved with our school. We believe that we can prepare these disadvantaged children adequately for a rapidly changing and demanding society. For each one of us, this is a great opportunity to realise the dream with which we joined the teaching profession.’

Conclusion

If we care to look we will find many such valiant soldiers. They do not need supervision or exhortation from outside or above. They respond to something indescribable inside them. It is a challenge only they can see. Somehow internally their expectation of themselves gets recalibrated and they settle for nothing less than rising to meet the challenge. In the process they re-equip themselves, they learn new things and they find a new resolve. It is somewhat unique because, in normal professional spaces, people rise above themselves when they are presented with a challenge or an opportunity; or when someone explicitly states such an expectation. Here in a government school system, the bugle is from within. No one else can see or hear it. For that reason alone these people are remarkable.
Education, Employability and Employment

About the Author

Harpreet is an entrepreneur who graduated from IIT Bombay with a dual degree. He built CoCubes (along with his co-founder Vibhore) and recently sold it to Aon Hewitt, the world's largest HR Consulting firm. CoCubes (the name comes from the first two letters of three words, connecting, colleges and companies) pioneered helping candidates get access to jobs across India and using online assessments to match candidates with the right opportunities. Apart from work, Harpreet spends his time reading and mountaineering.

Mr. Harpreet Grover
An

Our education system is flawed.
Whole system needs to be overhauled.
Only 2% of our graduates are employable.
>50% of our workforce lacks skills for the new jobs being created.
New jobs are not being created.
We are entering an era of jobless growth.

Let us take the above statement as facts. So that we get them out of the way and do not make them as part of our discussion anymore. So that we don’t spend our energies in outlining our problems. Let us all agree we are in deep trouble, because only then a momentous effort will ensue.

I have no background in HR or education except what came my way as a young entrepreneur out of college trying to build a company. I hadn’t heard the word ‘employability’ till a few years ago. I think the word only became popular when jobs really became a problem. And I often wrestled with just thinking about education and employment. I thought that in one way ‘thinking about employment as the end goal of education’ is as short sighted as one can get. This thought came because education is a lengthy process and is supposed to be so much more than just about getting a job. At the same ‘thinking about employment as the end goal of education’ is as far sighted as one can be. Because if you can’t make a living for yourself at the end of education then of what use was your education.

And so I was caught for a few years till employability came to rescue.

And I suddenly had a framework.

Education is about sharing with children our understanding of the world. So that they can communicate with the world and choose a starting point from which they will contribute formally (economically, intellectually). As they choose their starting point employability is about teaching them the skills which will help them be the best in the path they have chosen. Employment (part-time, full-time, contract, gig or any other) is about earning the currency that one needs to live in this world (figuring out one's economic needs is a role of education that has been provided).

This framework above is idealistic framework. Idealistic because things never happen in such clear and cut fashion and one learns all the time. But the framework works because it segregates responsibility. And that is important. Society owns the responsibility to leave the child curious at the end of education and the rest is on the individual. Most of the problems we see today are a result of education having gone wrong and employability being used as the buzz word to solve for that. Employability can’t solve for years of faulty education.

We need to accept that we can make limited change for folks who are finished with education. By ‘finished with education’ I mean folks who are now in the twenties where most formal education ends. They have evolved in a certain manner and their personalities are already built. So noticeable change in ability to learn, willingness to learn (the cornerstones of learnability) is difficult. A life altering event can cause it but through mass systems and policies it would be difficult to achieve. But it is important to do something to prevent a tipping point which could lead to mass social crisis.
So, what can we do? What should we do?

So, the three points of focus that come to my mind are to

- Identify jobs which are not being disrupted by technology (jobs like nursing, plumbing) and diligently train our young teens in such jobs
- Find countries where there is shortfall of talent in blue collar workers and ensure our folks are trained to the specification required. For a country like Philippines, overseas workers accounted for 9.8% of the gross domestic product in 2016 (reference 1).

Current initiatives of NSDC are in this line but as the government also says need a lot of improvement in quality implementation. This single-minded focus on producing candidates good enough for even foreign markets can prevent our demographic dividend from becoming a demographic disaster.

Also make entrepreneurship simple to do and aspirational. Give tax breaks to entrepreneurs and conduct nationwide classes on which areas can entrepreneurs focus on. We don’t only need people building billion-dollar companies, we need people who can employ a few others – theoretically if one person can run a company which has 19 folks, everyone has employment. For e.g. we need a creative person to understand that they can make personalized gifts and sell them online on Flipkart. And as their sales grows, we want them to employ 3-4 people to help and generate employment. In earlier years, to run a small company, one had to do everything themselves, product creation, finances, marketing. Today with marketing and aggregation it is possible to make the product and leverage help from existing platforms to do the rest. It is easier to find customers than before if you have the right product.

In my mind the challenge which we need to solve for is to prevent children under the age of 10 from becoming unemployable later. We need to ensure that we revive our education system today to leave our children curious at the end of education. One simple change example that comes to my mind is from an experiment conducted by Robert Rosenthal. He is known for his experiments on experimenter expectancy effects, which is the influence that a researcher can have on the outcome of an experiment. Rosenthal's most famous study was conducted with Lenore Jacobson in 1963 at an elementary school just south of San Francisco, California (Spiegel, 2012). His purpose was to figure out what would happen if teachers would react differently towards certain students if told that a select number of students were expected to learn more information and more quickly than the pupils in their class. To test this, Rosenthal issued a Test of General Ability to the students in the beginning of the year. After the students had completed this IQ test, some were chosen at random to be the students that were expected to academic bloomers; however, the results of the test did not influence which students of the class were chosen. He continued to observe the interactions between teachers and students and decided to issue another IQ test at the end of the study to see how IQ has improved in students that were to be academic bloomers versus the control group. Rosenthal's and Jacobson's results had reinforced their hypothesis that the IQs of the “academic bloomers” would in fact be higher than those of the control group even though these academic bloomers were chosen at random. Especially in younger children like those in grades 1 and 2, there was a remarkable difference in the increases of IQ between the students chosen to be academic bloomers and those that were not. A reason for this is because younger children may be able to be influenced more greatly by their teachers, who are respected authorities. The conclusions demonstrated by the study greatly illustrate the Pygmalion effect, or Rosenthal effect, which is the phenomenon that explains better performances by people when greater expectations are put on them (Bruns et al., 2000). For example, the teachers in the study, may have unnoticeably given the supposed academic bloomers more personal interactions, highly extensive feedback, more approval, and kind gestures, such as nods and smiling (Spiegel, 2012). On the other hand, teachers would generally pay less attention to low-expectancy students, seat them farther away from teachers in the classroom, and offer less reading and learning material (Bruns et al., 2000).
So, if today we can place greater expectations on children coming into the education system and leave them curious at the end of exercise, if our employability program a decade from now is fixed to skill them, then we can ensure we will be in a place where the trinity of education, employability and employment will start making sense and produce results.

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Creating Job-creators in Rural India!

About the Author

Madan co-founded MeritTrac in 2000 as a pioneering idea in skills assessments and scaled it into one of the leading assessments companies in India. MeritTrac was acquired by Manipal Global Education Services, in 2011. He moved out in March 2013 to pursue the entrepreneurial journey again – in the social impact space.

With a vision of transforming rural youth to be entrepreneurs, he founded 1Bridge, a platform that empowers rural entrepreneurs to accelerate abundance of access, choice & convenience to rural citizens, leveraging technology. Today, 1Bridge is present in 30+ districts across South & East India and has over 1000+ rural youth engaged on its platform.

Madan is also the co-founder & Trustee of Head Held High Foundation, a non-profit that stands for human dignity. HHH focuses on initiatives for poverty eradication like Make India Capable, where a rural youth with no schooling is transformed into work-ready professionals and Global Action on Poverty (GAP) a platform that builds and supports Changemaking communities to eradicate poverty.

He is also a founding Partner of Social Venture Partners, Bangalore and is the Convener of the Million Jobs Mission. He is also an active member of the Governing Council of TiE Bangalore and had served as a Senior Advisor to Tata Trusts between 2015-2016.
Creating Job-creators in Rural India!

Abstract

This article explores the question of generating sustainable incomes for millions of youth entering the workforce every year. These youths are not looking just at livelihoods, but want to carve their own career paths doing something exciting. They want pride, not just mundane existence. They want choices and not default options of migrating to cities in search of greener pastures. This article proposes a model called Rubanomics, to create millions of entrepreneurs, operating locally at the villages and creating abundance in the villages.

Urdigere is a village of about 12,000 people. It’s roughly 14 kms from Tumkur District (Karnataka) and is on the highway. By most standards it is a large village boasting of 2 schools, 1 PUC school, Public Health Centre and all the works. Recently on a field trip, I met the Gram Panchayat leaders of Urdigere. ‘If it were up to you, what was the one thing you would change/improve?’ I asked him. ‘We need more jobs in our villages’ was his reply.

This sentiment is echoed in every village, town and city – very much making it a social, economic and political problem. Let’s look at some numbers to assess the enormity of the problem. According to data from the Labour ministry, approx. 1 million people enter the job market in India every month – that is 12 Million a year. As per various reports, the country’s organised sector created 4 lakh jobs in 2016-17 – and there are no accurate data available on jobs created in the unorganised sector. With automation, artificial intelligence, robotics and machine learning threatening the conventional jobs, the number of redundant jobs is likely to increase.

With a staggering 280 Million people entering workforce by 2050, we will have to deal with one of our biggest challenges towards eradicating poverty & spurring economic growth.

The theories of job creation are many. Whichever theory or combination of theories we decide to follow, I believe the following will determine the make or break of the job crisis:

Exploring new Theories

The common theory of job creation conjures up images of large manufacturing units, tech parks, food processing zones that generate tens of thousands of jobs. While that does provide impetus, it is also very heavy on capex and hence largely dependent on the Government or big corporate houses.

Almost 84% of India’s labour market is informal and unorganised – implying small and medium business (MSME) – more small then medium. A vegetable vendor, a grocery store owner, a farmer, a laundry store or the road-side ironing guy – they are all micro-entrepreneurs. As per data from the MSME, in 2017 there were 19.9 Mln MSME’s in India. Each of these enterprises has potential to hire 1-3 people. The numbers for job creation are obvious. However, at an economic and policy level, we don’t bestow them with support or ecosystem that an enterprise should be entitled to. Financial support – in terms of loans, working capital are hard to get, social security for MSMEs is almost negligible. The balance (easier said than done) is to provide the support required akin to the organised sector, without burdening them with compliance and regulations – essentially, making it agile and nimble.

At a recent event ‘Champions of Change’ organised by NITI Aayog and attended by the Prime Minister himself, I had the chance to meet Shri. Giriraj Singh – the Hon’ble Minister of MSME and these thoughts of mine resonated with him. He emphasised that the Government believes in providing this thrust at the micro-entrepreneurs to facilitate more jobs at the grass roots. Creating jobs at this level also helps curtail the large issue of urban migration.

The other widely believed view of a job is a full-time employment, preferably with a large organization, with assurance of continuity of employment and social security benefits. However, these are not the only ways of
earning a livelihood. What Uber has done with the taxi drivers is the model that will be more prevalent – a “gig economy”. Essentially, a person can be involved in multiple jobs or gigs during the day and earn a livelihood through various sources. An Uber or Ola driver today can choose to drive a cab for x number of hours and earn additional income. He/She can also choose to drive full time and make it a steady income. In my experience at 1Bridge, we have proof on the ground that this model works. We have 500 entrepreneurs (not employees) in rural Karnataka - mainly youth in the age range of 22-35. They perform a variety of tasks for 1Bridge – like registering a consumer, conducting an awareness drive, a market research etc. Every task has a revenue/compensation model. Most of the entrepreneurs have alternate forms of employment – either assisting their parents in farming, have a tea stall, or a small grocery store. The gig model of 1Bridge does not demand any minimum time commitment. Hence, the success. Many, entrepreneurs use it for earn additional incomes for their households by spending anywhere between 2 hours to 6 hours. We also have youth who have used this platform to earn up to Rs.10, 000 a month – a substantial income in villages, thereby also reducing urban migration.

Nano Credentialing

The traditional view on skillling/education need to give way to newer forms and content. With the ever-changing scenario of skills required, the traditional approach of providing long term training may well be out-dated. By the time an individual goes through a 4-year programme and is skilled, he/she may not be employable for the skill being not in demand anymore or technological advancements need further learning.

Just-in-Time skilling and ‘Nano Credentialing’ has proved effective in making people employable from the minute they finish the course. The course itself is a few hours/days long providing basic training on how to do a ‘task’ – For Eg: How does one deliver a package and obtain a signature/ or cash on delivery? How does one use maps to find a certain location? Once trained, he/she can be a delivery agent and start earning for every delivery!

We read about engineers not being able to find jobs, MBA graduates struggling to gain a foothold in the corporate sector – and hence it is time to re-visit the skilling & employability issues. The bulk of employment at the unorganised sector will work on education and skilling at a nano-level

Enabling Job Creators than Job Seekers

Addressing the nation from the Red Fort on Independence Day last year, our Hon’ble PM Shri. Modi said: "Change in demand and technology is changing the nature of jobs. We are nurturing our youngsters to be job creators and not job-seekers," he said.

This statement has never been more relevant than today. A thriving economy is one where jobs are created. With the importance and incentives given to the start-up sector, the Make In India initiative – are all rallied for us to enable entrepreneurs and job creators.

It all links back to the micro-entrepreneur at the centre of the job-creating universe… proper financial support, skills upgradation, social security nets and an enabling ecosystem which creates more of these entrepreneurs. In my work at the Head Held High Foundation, we provide a talent transformation platform where uneducated rural youth undergo a residential six-month programme that converts them into English-speaking, computer-literate knowledge workers. The link between education and employment is undeniable, but important to note is the amount of time to spend on skilling and education.

The knowledge and skills have provided an impetus for many boys and girls to find jobs, but there are those who have also started their own small business. We have Vinay - a grocery store owner who increased his income by finding another ‘gig’ with his new skills – and he then engaged another youth to manage his grocery store – thereby creating 1 additional “employment”. Empowering people to be job creators will be key!
CONCLUSION: The Rubanomics Model!

With ~65% of India, still being in rural, it is impossible for us to create a sustainable economy without addressing the rural economy. Farmer incomes need to be increased or supplemented, productivity and yields need to be improved, healthcare needs more facilities, doctors, trained staff, financial services (like loans, crop insurance) are still a far cry from the need on the ground. I see these as opportunities – to start businesses that address these problems and to generate employment in such businesses.

There’s an untapped consumer market, an untouched business potential and the prospect to create many million jobs – while creating an inclusive economic growth. The last 2 years of our work at 1Bridge has cemented this belief. With digital literacy bridging the knowledge divide, people in rural India have the same aspirations as those urban counterparts. Rural youth have unlimited potential that is untapped and there is a raw entrepreneurial resilience that is not harnessed. If you combine these forces, we see a new rural that we call as Ruban. And we believe that Rubanomics - a construct that harnesses that power of aspirations, youth potential, entrepreneurial spirit & technology will be the model to create millions of job-creators in rural India!
Enabling New Futures for Youth – Learning, Doing & Creating

About the Author

Mr. Mekin Maheshwari is extremely passionate about discovering & unleashing human potential and micro entrepreneurship. He recently started Udhyam Learning Foundation(udhyam.org) which works on developing entrepreneurial mindsets amongst youth from difficult backgrounds.

He was one of the early employees at Flipkart where he played various roles - He was Head of Engineering and built out a great tech team, which he counts as his biggest professional achievement, before running 2 small startups within Flipkart and finally took on the role of Chief People Officer. He left Flipkart in March 2016. He started his career with Yahoo! and then went on to joined Ugenie where he created weRead, a successful social network around books. Mekin completed his B.E. from PESIT Bangalore in 2002.

Mekin is passionate about learning, human potential and technology. He is a doting father, a forgetful husband and the obedient son. He loves sports and has recently developed a taste for yoga and meditation as well as experimenting with his diet.
As job creation numbers continue to show a bleak prospect in India, industry bodies have been busy pointing fingers at the skill levels & employability – to escape being labeled the culprit for lack of job creation. Elsewhere, science & tech proponents from Elon Musk & Sam Altman to Bill Gates & Stephen Hawking have openly suggested that with more technology becoming capable of doing what humans do – we are staring at fewer and fewer jobs.

Employment – as we know it, is going away

On the other side of the spectrum, Education continues to do what its been doing for the last 150 years, with utter disregard for human evolution – in content and in the methods employed. Its is clear to almost everyone that the systems needs a complete overhaul, but a system that is so deeply entrenched and has so many powerful people benefitting from status quo, change is hard.

There are enough theories about what education should be, but unlike medicine which in early 1900’s became research & evidence driven, education is still based on theories – probably because of the tenure of experiments needed. There are pockets of excellence who have followed the theory of J Krishnamurti or Montessori or others and seemed to have “done well” – but none at scale.

If we are to look for theories in Education – the National Curriculum Framework (2005) provides an excellent start, and is as good and comprehensive as any. It lists out 6 aims of education, which I have simplified & condensed (strongly recommend reading the original to anybody interested in the topic):

- Values of equality, justice, freedom, concern for others’ well-being, respect for human dignity and rights
- Independence of thought and action
- A sensitivity to others’ well-being, together with understanding of the world, should form the basis of a rational commitment to values.
- Learning to learn and the willingness to unlearn and relearn
- Ability to work and participate in economic processes and social change
- Enhance the creative expression and the capacity for aesthetic appreciation.

Keeping aside the lack of enough experimental evidence – these are beautiful goals for education, and if we could achieve these – we could be living in a world where the human potential is being realized at multitudes higher than today. Unfortunately, nothing in the current systems or the regulations and their implementations since NCF was published, give me the confidence that we are moving in this direction.

The Customer!

For both education, and employment: the customer is a citizen. The most important need for the largest number of the customers is a better life or even more simply told: a good livelihood.

As we stand today: education is probably the only business where the service provider gets to blame the customer for not being able to meet the customer goals: “Your child is stupid”. Even while we know that the whole education system is a sharp funnel:
• By definition there will be only 3 people in any class in the top 3 positions. Obvious – and yet that’s everyone’s endeavor.
• Only 25% of youth pursue higher education.
• Despite increase in seats at IITs & IIMs, these are amongst the most selective entrances in the world
• The only formal exit education provides to a better livelihood: A campus placement – which happens for 2% of people in that age bracket. (assuming 8% graduates get placed – which is highly optimistic given large majority pursue non professional courses like a B.A. or B.Com.)

The whole education system is a highly competitive tournament – which will only yield a few winners. Everyone lives with the promise of winning - despite the reality playing out year after year.

The Industry!
The Industry-Education interface is worth delving on. While there are massive issues with the education system, the industrial interface isn’t far superior. The industry has not developed scientific or data driven methods to be able to understand and hence predict performance of employees. Hence, hiring processes are subjective, giving inordinate value to “brands” of colleges. Anybody who has done enough hiring knows the flaws of predicting performance based on short verbal interactions with a candidate.

Barring some areas like sales and operations, measurement of performance is generally based on what others think & say vs what really happened. Leading to groupisms, biases based on regions, genders, colleges playing a large role in the growth of employees.

At a company I know well, when people had to face the idea of merit based promotions, which threw the idea of tenure out of the window, we faced substantial pushback from the people who had gone to the best business schools in the country!!

One silver lining that has emerged in hiring, at least in the field of technology, is a hiring process based on Hackathons or coding assignments that assess the participant on their work skill, and not just on how well they can speak in an interview. These have the power of democratizing hiring: making it available to people who don’t have a fancy brand on their resume.

In such a subjective and data less world of performance & hiring - I believe internships (or the idea of probation) is probably the best hiring process.

As tenures of employment keep falling, as do the sizes of companies (or the revenue per employee keeps rising); as flexibility becomes more and more important to an employee and the economics as well as stigma associated with not being in a steady job, get solved – we are looking at a world of entrepreneurs:

• Some changing the world by bringing together products and services that disrupt existing industries (think eCommerce, ride sharing).
• Some others providing their expertise to many of the first kind– think design and media agencies or technology outsourcing partners
• Some using the platforms created by the first to enable transactions with near zero investments : think a seller in eCommerce or a driver in ride sharing
What is Holding us Back?

Instead of trying to propose specific solutions to the challenges I have posed – I want to list out five common beliefs that I believe are holding us back from finding the solutions to these challenges:

1. **Learning happens in the first few years of our lives. Shift focus from education to learning.** Thankfully ‘LifeLong Learners’ is a phrase that’s bandied around: though, there is almost no system based effort towards enabling it amongst children or adults.

2. **Knowledge of something, will lead to action.** A student’s knowing civics does not translate into them being a good citizen or the knowledge of science does not mean the person has a scientific temperament. A candidate's ability to answer questions about managing a team, or showing courage to do the right thing in an interview do not often translate to actions. We have to shift from valuing knowledge to valuing actions.

3. **Strong systems & processes lead to highest productivity.** Systems and processes help in stabilizing and enabling a new solution to become commonplace. They unfortunately, also hold us back from finding newer solutions. The system defining that all students should learn in groups based on their age, with complete disregard to their capabilities or interest has killed motivation and creativity in far too many generations. Building a culture of questioning & creativity is the way to constantly improve on solutions. Creating is the highest form of learning as per Bloom’s taxonomy and if all our children could achieve that level of learning in a few areas…

"I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do.

Leonardo Da Vinci (1452 -1519 A.D.)."

4. **Recalling relevant knowledge from long term memory**

5. **Making sense of what you have learnt.**

6. **Using the knowledge gained in new ways.**

7. **Breaking the concept into parts and understand how each part is related to one another.**

8. **Putting information together in an innovative way.**

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One of the most damaging and widespread social beliefs is the idea that most adults are incapable of learning new skills.
4  We know best & children/youth can not be trusted.

Our education systems reek of distrust in children & a superiority complex of the all-knowing. We do not allow the learner to make any decisions at all. What to learn, when to learn, where to learn, how to learn. The time-table, syllabus, grade system, examinations, books are all artifacts where the learners have had no contributions, or even feedback. Obedience, following instructions & sticking to the book gets rewarded.

Thus creating a system meant to generate people who “follow instructions” - not think, or be creative. We need to trust our learners a lot more - most of them are far more creative than the adults designing the systems. NCF, John Holt, Montessori, Jiddu and many more education philosophers agree on this piece.

5  By skilling everyone, all will have a good job and we will have a prosperous country.

This stems from a belief that there are infinite jobs! Which is clearly flawed. While we need focus on education & skilling, we need as much focus on growing enterprises so that jobs get created. We need small entrepreneurs to grow to become medium and large enterprises so they create jobs or productivity. The start of this – needs to be recognition of the problem. Yes, the govt needs to create a better environment for business, but we also need a lot of our sharpest minds, to be creating new ventures and for a lot of those ventures increasing in productivity and the small ones becoming medium and the medium ones becoming large. We need entrepreneur development ecosystems – and no, the VC system is not enough. As that only caters to a very small percentage of businesses. We need entrepreneurship in schools & colleges. We need small and medium businesses to be able to attract good talent and partners.

Two of the largest risks we run, which seem to be playing out undeterred are

a. Large businesses using capital & their influence on policy to kill small businesses.

b. Small businesses, unwilling or unable to become productive because of themselves or the ecosystem

Therefore, if we have to change the course of this very large democracy called India we need to fundamentally believe, encourage and teach entrepreneurship in every place of learning, in a real life way to have a REAL IMPACT - By learning, by doing, by creating.

I have a deep belief in the power of every young mind to reach this place of fulfilment and prosperity: and with Udhyam Learning Foundation we are on our path to enable mindsets and democratize entrepreneurship.
Education, Employability and Employment—the Missing Links

About the Author

An Electrical Engineer and a PGDBA from NMIMS, Mumbai she began her career with TITAN Industries in the Retailing & Product Management functions. Thereafter she joined Indus League Clothing Ltd, handling the Scullers Brand. She brings to the table a live business exposure as a successful line manager, having interacted, managed & dealt with sales professionals, subordinates, peers, senior management and above all Customers.

She is the CEO of T V Rao Learning Systems, having set up the Bangalore Office in 2001. She has done extensive HR and OD Consulting assignments. Her articles in Leadership and Talent management have been published in leading publications like the HRD Network newsletter, Human Capital and Vikalpa.

She has co-edited the book on 360-Degree Feedback and Performance Management Systems Volume 2, 360 Degree Feedback and Assessment Development Centers Volume 3, Life after 360 and ADCs Volume 4.
Abstract

This article is based solely on the experiences of the author, who has taught in various Management Schools as a guest faculty and her experiences and interactions with the ‘new generation’ workforce in different settings. It begins with 3 short cases of young employees, each of whom had missed out learning one crucial lesson as a part of their formal education and consequently could be considered less employable even if employed. Put together, the three cases point out the weak or missing links that are necessary to ensure that the education that each individual goes through equips him or her to contribute effectively once they join the workforce. These three weak or missing links are:

I. The ability to embrace failure,
II. Humility and
III. The right work ethic.

The article explores the role these three links play in ensuring employability. It thereafter explores what more management schools, higher education institutes and other post graduate institutes can do to make sure that some of these crucial elements form an integral part of the curriculum and thus contribute towards making each individual more employable. The article ends with a contrasting example of someone not necessarily from the best institute, but who has gone on to make a mark in his area of work and is continuously growing. It concludes that beyond education, if one has the ability to continuously SELF EDUCATE by being a constant learner in one’s life, then such a person is always employable-irrespective of age. For real learning comes when one is willing to dirty one’s hands and begin at the bottom of the pyramid. It deals with the inner urge to continuously learn and keep free from ego, high monetary expectations and a sense of ‘Entitlement’ which are the biggest hurdles to being employable.

Education and Employability-two Sides of a Coin

Employability’ deals with general skills that are required to perform a given job at the time of recruitment, which make someone “employable”. Normally at starting levels these are technical and or functional skills. It is expected that education prepares the candidate adequately in these skills (commerce, engineering, IT etc.). However, there are soft skills that enable us to work well with others, apply knowledge to solve problems, and fit into any work environment. They also include the professional skills that enable us to be successful in the workplace. These are seen as transferable skills because we can apply them to a job in any industry. Typically, an individual’s employability’ depends on: Knowledge (what you know), Skills (what you do with what you know) and Attitudes (how you approach things). While formal education focuses on Knowledge and Skills, often an equally important component ‘Attitude’ is not given the due importance and is a key missing link in ensuring employability. The three cases shared below highlight the importance of a few aspects of this important component ‘Attitude’ and point out how these may need to be learnt not only through formal education but informally from the family, through self-exploration and introspection.

The Perfectionist

Soham was a topper all his life. He was first in his school, first in his graduation and amongst the top 10% even in his post graduation. While working hard was his strength, he was also a high achiever who felt good only when he achieved something or excelled at whatever was important to him. Within three years of entering into work life, due to his hard work and technical skills, he was promoted from an Individual contributor to a Team
Lead. His 10 member team had multiple generations coexisting. While he excelled as an Individual Contributor, Soham’s desire for perfection and excelling in each and every area was resulting in a fair amount of stress amongst his newly acquired team. Many younger employees who were fresh out of college and were working just to earn some pocket money, did not understand the fuss that Soham made on the need to pursue perfection. They felt that he was intolerant, did not make any effort to understand what employees wanted and was obsessed with his own agenda, besides being hungry for fame and growth. As the prevailing situation started to impact deliverables and attrition rates, the management had to finally coax Soham to meet their in house counsellor who could channelize his need to excel and be on ‘Top’ of things in the right direction. The counsellor explained to him that the world was not made to be perfect and neither were any of us perfect. He quoted Dr. Devi Shetty’s recent speech in which he mentioned that the source to maintain a balance in life is to accept that, ‘I am not ok’ ‘You are not OK’ and ‘that’s ok’. Every software company prepares for an imperfect release, creating space for its next release. The counsellor went on to point out that when we are so accepting of software imperfections, why are we not more accepting of each other.

This incident points out to the first missing link that formal education (or in attitudes?) seems to be missing-the lesson of embracing failure and accepting imperfections-in ourselves and in others.

The High Handed HR Executive

Shyam was a very successful and confident HR professional in an IT company. While he was from a humble background, his management education in a very suave Business School had given him a confidence that hid all traces of his humble background. Within a few years of joining the IT industry, he became the chief coordinator for all Training initiatives for one particular Line of business in the company. On one such occasion, he had tied up with a young Professor from a management school to conduct a one day workshop on ‘Change Management’ skills for a group of 20 Project Managers from his line of business. On the day of the scheduled workshop, the professor had a sudden emergency at his house and was unable to conduct the workshop. The professor called Shyam to explain his predicament and was shocked when Shyam mentioned that if the workshop could not be conducted, the Professor would have to pay an amount equal to the CTC for the day for all the 20 participants to compensate for the cancellation. In a country where teachers and professors are revered for the knowledge that they share, the professor was shocked and could not believe what he heard. While he had thought that the young professional would ask if there was anything the company could do to help him deal with the situation at home, he had difficulty digesting what he had just heard. He decided to have nothing more to do with the IT company.

Shyam’s ego had taken over, leaving no space for basic humility-a key ingredient that was missing in the way he interacted with the very people whom he had invited to disseminate knowledge in areas that his own company did not have prowess in. Shyam seriously needed understanding in humility and respect, especially when he was seeking help on behalf of his team. Lack of humility not only creates cracks in relationships, but also creates conflicts and unpleasantness-both of which are enemies of employability.

The Energetic Distractor

Maya had just completed her post-graduation. She joined an Event Management company with a lot of confidence and enthusiasm. A bundle of energy, her day began with answering every single call-be it from her mother or her friends or even random calls from mobile phone operators. A strong believer of self expression, she did not believe in compartmentalizing her official and personal life. She was very capable and fast at her work. What others took two hours to finish, she would complete in half an hour. Her speed of work resulted in her taking liberties and she slowly started coming late to work. Often during meetings, she would be seeing her ‘What's app’ messages. She would seldom think twice before screaming at her friend on the phone while others were busy trying to complete their work. She was oblivious to the impact her actions had on others. When asked about her reading habits, she would casually reply, “What’s the need to read when all that you need to know comes to you through what’s app?”. Born in an atmosphere of abundance, Maya had a huge sense of entitlement seen in the way that she believed she could do what she wanted without thinking too much
about her surroundings. If she was ever asked to go across the street to get photocopies, the frown on her face clearly showed her innate belief that she had been hired to do much more.

When she was not confirmed in the job after her 6 months probation period, instead of seeking feedback as to the reasons for her non-confirmation, she appeared quite happy to plan a trekking trip with her friends to the Himalayas. This incident clearly points out to yet another important link that is needed for employability and one that formal education may not necessarily focus on—the right work ethic, respect and attitude towards work.

The three examples shared above reiterate that no matter how intelligent or competent an individual is, one cannot undermine the importance of developing the right attitude—towards others, towards work and towards oneself. If these are ‘missing’ then the result is often separation—either voluntarily or initiated by the organization, thereby impacting employability. “Sometimes it’s the small things that make a big difference. For it only takes a small pin to burst a big balloon”

So what can management schools and other education institutions do to explicitly promote these 3 valuable lessons early on?

Embracing Failure

Every education institute—from primary to high school to postgraduate institutions today, celebrates those who are first in something—first in academics, first in art competitions, first in sports etc. It appears that the sole purpose of an individual’s existence is to compete and win the race in every possible field. It is widely publicized that the world does not remember those who came second or third. In doing so we are sending out signals that only one in a hundred can be celebrated and all the others are to be relinquished to the sidelines. And yet, the maximum growth that we can get is from our failures. Failure help us get closer to ourselves and the twists and turns that follow after a failure make for the most interesting learnings in an individual’s life. Why then are we not taught early on to celebrate failures? Is it not healthy for each and every individual to experience what it is to fail at something in life? Failure does two things—one it helps ensure required doses of humility and second it helps you in being much more patient and understanding of imperfections around. These qualities in turn ensure that we are better team players with greater empathy.

Humility

Most Management schools today have included a series of soft skills like communication, negotiation skills, Perfect Assertiveness etc. Yet, somehow, “how to be humble” has not got added on to the list of soft skills. It appears that we only have a place for those who are confident, who can be assertive and who know how to negotiate. Can we learn how to be assertive and yet humble? While we teach interviewers and recruiters on how to deal with aggressive candidates during interviews, is it not better to teach students on how not to be aggressive and how to be humble at all times. There are so many cases where lack of humility has created severe challenges at the workplace and has led to conflicts, poor team dynamics, negative work environment and even terminations.

The Right Work Ethic

One has often heard the saying ‘If one cannot be on time for an important event, one cannot do much else in life’. Basic work ethics of respecting time, giving complete attention to the job on hand, completing a job before leaving the workplace and respect for all kinds of work—are no longer basic. The time has come when formal education may need to make way for inculcating these ‘taken for granted’ values to ensure employability. We may need to explore effective methods to replace the sense of ‘entitlement’ with viewing work as a ‘privilege’.

If these attitudes are so important, how can we imbibe them ourselves? The answer may lie in developing these attitudes by augmenting formal education with self education.
The Case of the Self Educated Man

Rohan was an engineer born in a very humble background. His hunger to do something and become something more in life got him to give tuitions while completing his BE, distribute papers early in the morning and use the extra money to educate himself. He left no stone unturned to learn how to speak good English and used second hand laptops to upgrade his knowledge by surfing on the net. While he could not study beyond engineering due to family pressures, he never stopped learning. His thirst for knowledge, his work ethic and respect towards work got him a fantastic job in a well known FMCG company and he has never looked back ever since. This and many more examples in real life point us in the direction of the importance of self education. Individuals who continuously try to quench their thirst for learning by exploring different ways to grow and develop even without any formal education have clearly been able to enhance their employability.

It is clear that formal education plays an important part in ensuring employability of an individual by disseminating knowledge and skills. However, the third element of employability i.e. the right attitude can perhaps be got more effectively if we embrace “Self Education” which deals with an inner thirst that an individual has that no matter where he/she is in their work life. It deals with the discipline of introspecting to sieve out behaviors that are helping one progress in the direction that one wants to go or become the person one wants to become. The missing link is for us to take charge of our lives and continuously invest in our own growth and learning-this will ensure employability. In the words of Bruce Lee: “We must find ways to empty our cup so that it may be filled again”.

Affiliations

The views expressed here are purely based on personal interactions and experiences.

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India’s Public Policy Challenge –
Making its Human Capital ‘Employable’

About the Author

Mr. Pramath Nath is a Human Resource professional with 20 years’ work experience across many sectors and locations. He has also successfully done a stint in a business leadership role. He is MBA (XIM-B), LL.B (Delhi University), Certified 6 sigma black belt (ISI, Bangalore), GPHR (HRCI, USA), Certified Trainer (ISTD) and Certified Coach (PCC, ICF).

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India’s Public Policy Challenge – Making its Human Capital ‘Employable’

Abstract
India demographic dividend seems to be a case of perpetual paradox. On one side, it gives an advantage to India over several major economies of the world and on the other side, it’s a puzzle we are grappling with. Education, employment and employability in our country run akin to parallel lines which need to converge at a point of inflection, to yield the desired results. While several government departments are working towards fulfilling their objectives, a nodal ministry is needed which can aim at positively impacting the troika of education, employment and employability by leveraging their strengths. From a concerted effort to address the issue of school dropouts to strengthening the apprenticeship and skill development programs, it’s imperative to focus on the softer aspects of personality-building with a view to making our youth scalable and productively employable. The implementation of government- run initiatives must happen on the principle of federalism by building on the unique core-competence of each state yet balancing to operate within the overall national frame-work. Private sector, industry bodies and professional education institutions are important stakeholders who would need to contribute their mite to this national cause. The demographic dividend, would then, reap rich benefits for the present generation and posterity.

Introduction
We often read media reports with disturbing, eye popping headlines such as “India graduates millions but too few are fit to hire” or “Nearly 47 percent graduates in India - unemployable”.

The troika of education, employability and employment is yet to manifest a cumulative result to demonstrate the widely believed idiom that India is at a fair advantage by virtue of its demographic dividend vis-à-vis the economies which are ageing faster – US, Germany, Japan, France, and even China.

In India, economic growth and the resultant positive impact have been seen in select industries limited only to a few cities and clusters around them. Lack of growth beyond these cities have resulted in painful migration coupled with lopsided urbanization putting pressure on existing – and in many cases – non-existent urban infrastructure.

The wheel of development depends upon the seamless functioning of several cogs – infrastructure (roads, ports), power, minimal governmental interference, readily available and productive skilled manpower, health and education. And education, in isolation, will not be able to create socio-economic impact unless it becomes a vital catalyst in generating employment by producing employable human resources.

Let's delve deeper on the interdependencies of the relationship between education, employment and employability.

Post-independence, India embarked upon the journey of educating its young population with the objective of making the nation self-reliant. In an eagerness to enable students do well in the examination, the teachers restricted their pedagogy to mere textbooks, leaving little room for the students to look beyond the obvious - the classroom, textbooks, class notes – thereby subtly embedding the culture of memorization and cramming to score well. The competitive examinations – medical, civil services – too depend a great deal on verbatim reproduction of the classroom teachings. Despite undergoing many subsequent changes, the superstructure on which our educational framework is based continues to be academic learning which goes against the principle of aiding students imbibe the nuances of putting-to-practical-use the application of what is taught in the classroom. Out of the six million graduates passing out every year, 93% of the MBA graduates, 80% of the engineering graduates, 97% of the accounting graduates and 89% of the hotel management graduates in India are unemployable. This alarming statistics casts a poor aspersion on our overall educational system which is driven by the sole aim of become a graduate instead of focusing on the qualities which sustain employment till the age of superannuation.
So what constitutes ‘employability’? It is defined as “doing value creating work, getting paid for it and learning at the same time, enhancing the ability to get work in the future”.

The National Association of College and Employers (NACE) has listed down the following 20 skills (in order) needed to become employable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Analytical skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Computer skills</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Detail-oriented</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Risk-taker</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
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<td>Friendly</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Organizational and time management skills</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Real-life experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Strong work-ethic</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Tact</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Team-work skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Technical skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Well-mannered &amp; Polite</td>
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</table>

These qualities need to be inculcated at the level of school to ensure it becomes a way of life, embedded in one’s personality and grooming. Except public schools, it’s seldom the objective of educational institutions. When these students acquire degrees and try to enter skill-based jobs, the biggest impediment they face is absence of some of these skills mentioned in NACE’s list above. Moravec’s paradox adds credence to NACE’s list and explains the phenomenon whereby automation is impacting skills based jobs. It propounds that computers find those jobs hard which humans find easy, such as manually folding a towel. This simple example illustrates the limited utility of India’s educational policy framework which has not served the desired objective of preparing skilled workforce of the future.

Besides, the framework of education, placements, upskilling are parallel lines in the implementation arms of India’s government machinery. There is no correlation in efforts of the nodal government agencies, thus, leading to fragmented results. Our latest unemployment % of under 5 doesn’t reflect in the actual functioning of the ecosystem fuelling education and employment. A cohesive approach of relevant curriculum, trained, skilled manpower, robust apprentice training mechanism, strong career-oriented placement cell in the form of employment exchange is the answer. Let’s evaluate them briefly:

**School Education and Vision Beyond RTE**

Indian political system sometimes takes policy decisions wherein the spirit of the legislation is ideal but execution leaves much to be desired. This gives an impression of the country being in a state of perpetual paradox. Once such decision pertains to the Right to education which has failed to meet its desired objective. In
its effort to include 25% of needy students in private schools, it has excluded a vast majority from the ambit of education by prohibiting unrecognized schools. The purpose of education is not to differentiate but provide a common opportunity without any discrimination. In India, education has become a privilege as the government, which ideally should provide free, quality education to all, has failed in its constitutional duty to the benefit of private enterprise. Besides, basic written and spoken communication is not considered important enough while that forms the basis of interpersonal skills which is at the core of people and organizational dynamics. Need of the hour is to strengthen access of under-privileged to education; stem the ever-rising rot of school drop-outs.

The latest available DISE data suggests that the average dropout rate at primary school level was 4.34% in 2013-14 as compared to 4.67% in 2012–13. The percentage for upper primary level went up from 3.13% in 2012-13 to 3.77% in 2013-14. At the secondary level the average dropout rate in 2012–2013 was 14.54% which went up to 17.86% in 2013-2014. The intangible loss of human intellect and capability is an opportunity cost which has added to manpower in the unorganized sector to the detriment of adversely impacting the growth of employment in the organized sector.

**State-wise Implementation of Apprenticeship Act Based on Core Competence**

The Apprenticeship Act, 1961 has confined its reach to electricians, plumbers, fitters in ITI. Ironically, India, inspite of 300 million people in the age-group of 18-35 years has only 300,000 apprentices. Compare this to USA’s 0.5 million; Japan’s 10 million; and China’s 20 million apprentices. Since skill-based employment needs a robust base of workforce ‘ready-to-deliver’, on-the-job apprenticeship becomes imperative to aid enhanced productivity of business processes and human resources. This easy-to-implement initiative needs consistent push from all state governments. Sadly, few state governments have shown thought leadership in implementing the apprenticeship act on the basis of their core competencies. For example, Odisha focusses on plumbing as a trade in apprenticeship training and the result is visible all over the country. Most of the plumbers working across India are from Odisha. The state is the single most supplier of plumbers to middle-east countries as well. Such an approach needs to be replicated by other states to increase the employability of their human resources. For example, Goa and Kerala can prepare a blueprint for training its skilled manpower in tourism and fishery related apprenticeship.

**Easy Access to Education Loan in Skilled Education Sector**

Presently, bank loans are available for those professional courses like MBA and BE which guarantee post-qualification repayment. This excludes a large section of needy students from skill-based courses who are deprived of any financial support. Even Microfinance companies promote entrepreneurship and exclude potential blue-collar workers from the purview of its core objective. Financing of loans to complete their skill-education will boost chances of employment, hence, enhancing employability. There is no pressure from any central ministry on the nationalized banks to broaden their ambit of beneficiaries beyond the existing.

**Multiple Ministries in Union Government Defeat Purpose of Cohesion**

Had their being a nodal ministry of education, skill development and employment, it would have cut red tape and framed a more cohesive policy to address the inter-linkages of education, employability and employment as vital inputs to one another. In the present scenario, the ministries of education, skill development, labour, training and employment are separate with their own agendas which is akin to being parallel lines, never to intersect at a common point. A simple solution is to link these departments within an umbrella ministry responsible to drive the entire people chain of education to employment and training, thus, helping the workforce to remain relevant. A missing link in the existing set-up is the lack of a co-ordinated placement organization. The existing network of employment exchanges need to be reinvigorated in tune with contemporary times to provide a strong support system to place the qualified skilled workforce in suitable employment, working in close tandem with the industry and private sector. It is time we evaluate the consolidation of labour, skill development and education into a single entity – HRD Ministry – with a clear objective to help seamlessly manage the end-to-end imperatives from education to employment.
Technological and Career Support

Educational institutions, potential employees and employers need to be brought under a common platform to broaden the exposure and visibility of students. Mere academia-industry interface in engineering and management institutions do not suffice. The government bodies and legislations meant to promote this platform through employment exchanges became irrelevant way back in late 90’s. Less privileged students need to be coached, guided and mentored by a neutral body before these potential employees benefit from the power of professional social media. Employment exchanges have not reinvented themselves and are completely clueless about keeping pace with the changing times. Revamping employment exchanges might be a solution given their current reach and registration base. In the last few years, employment exchanges in India have managed to help just 0.57% of the overall students registered with them which is abysmal and perhaps needs no effort to reach this figure.7

Another pertinent question to ask is, whether post qualification employability is the only worrying factor? Or, the relevance of a degree or skill acquired lasts a lifetime? In today’s continuously evolving business context, reskilling and keeping oneself updated is necessary to remain gainfully employed and meaningfully engaged. How else would one gear up to face the challenge posed by analytics, artificial intelligence and robotics? Is it the sole responsibility of the individual or the government has a role to play in creating a platform on continuous learning and skill upgradation?

Manufacturing Sector and Make in India – Probability of Employment Generation

A total of 10.3 million establishments are engaged in manufacturing in India, employing 30.4 million workers. While the number of establishments increased by 28 per cent over the eight years, the number of workers in the sector rose by 19 per cent.8 This shows that establishments are getting smaller with a decline in average employment per establishment.

Low productivity and the resultant poor crop yield has led to the decline of people engaged in agriculture from 70% two decades ago to 50% in 2016. This is also resulting into mass migration from rural to urban areas. In comparison, only 12 per cent people are engaged in the manufacturing sector compared to 50% in China. In order to be competitive on labour cost, India needs to ensure 25% of its population moves from agriculture to manufacturing.9

In the last two decades, services sector has propelled GDP growth. But, a lot of this development is dependent on external factors beyond the control of the Indian government. Outsourcing is one of them which in recent times has added significantly to both employment creation and revenue generation in the country. Tourism, aviation, infrastructure sectors have got a fillip as a result. But, in order to have a sustainable long term growth of the economy, emphasis on internal factors like indigenous manufacturing – make in India and from India – is needed.

Conclusion

If we can take the liberty of considering education as an input into the opportunities in the bourgeoning economy, the resultant employment can easily be the output, given other variables are constant. Employability, hence, seems key in connecting the input – education – meaningfully with the output- employment. This must be the objective of policy makers and those responsible for implementation of initiatives in job creation. After all, any skill and knowledge-gap leads to redundancy, making the product (skilled / qualified manpower in this case) ‘unfit for use’. This wastage of social capital of the nation has intangible far reaching ramifications. Industry bodies – FICCI, NASSCOM – have been vocal in raising their voice and concern on the lack of employable human resources, the government till now has been primarily focusing on skill development instead of the equally important – employability. Some of the private sector organisations have found another solution in the form of working with academic institutions by drafting a more relevant curriculum; sparing senior professionals to teach in these institutions, thus, helping the students come in touch with reality and get exposed to practical learnings. The state needs to reignite its vast network of educational institutions, apprenticeship boards, ITI’s,
Polytechnics, employment exchanges with a common objective of producing high quality, skilled and qualified manpower, readily available to employers and productive during their employment. The demographic dividend, would then, reap rich benefits for the present generation and posterity.

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Collaboration to Strengthen the Triumvirate of Higher Education – Employability – Employment

About the Author

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Collaboration to Strengthen the Triumvirate of Higher Education – Employability – Employment

Abstract

Education, Employability and Employment has become a topic of discussions across the nation. This triumvirate of Education-Employability-Employment is among the most crucial challenges the country faces today. Higher education plays a particularly important role in the triumvirate given the biggest swings in employability and employment being linked to Higher Education.

India has an exploding young population and this population pyramid is very different from any developed country and requires a lot of attention from the ‘triumvirate’. A growth that is not supported with enough jobs for 330 million citizens of employable age and another million youngsters coming into this bracket every month, the current demographic structure can be catastrophic and one that can potentially lead to wide-spread chaos and possibly crime.

Today the triumvirate is failing due to a breakdown in communications between the key stakeholders and a flawed idea that free market forces can also drive public goods in the best interest of entire society.

For the triumvirate to work, there is a crying need for the various stakeholders to bring down barriers and engage in deep dialogue. Indian School of Development Management has been creating a new path in Higher Education and offer several recent examples for other institutions to consider and absorb.

You have no idea how many men are spoiled by what is called education. For the most part, colleges are places where pebbles are polished and diamonds are dimmed. If Shakespeare had graduated at Oxford, he might have been a quibbling attorney, or a hypocritical parson.

— Robert G. Ingersoll

The debate about the triumvirate of Education, Employability and Employment has reached high decibel levels in the country. This is because of double edged sword the country faces – India has the largest young population any country has ever had and probably will ever have. While there is a wide-spread belief that this huge bubble coming through in the country’s population pyramid is a demographic dividend, there is also an increasing recognition that if the three elements of the triumvirate do not work well and in tandem, the same bubble could be a demographic curse which will haunt the country for the lifetime of everyone alive in India today!
The education system has been the primary driver of employability and employment. People dropping off at different points in the education hierarchy tend to enter at different levels of the employment hierarchy.

The PhDs, Post Graduates and Graduates from top Professional colleges are likely to be the ‘Creators’. Their research, innovations, designs, development work, experiments result in new ideas for the betterment of society and directly or indirectly into employment opportunities. They also go onto become teachers and faculty who teach people in the junior wrung of the education hierarchy.

Those who discontinue after graduation including those who graduate from tier-2 and tier-3 professional courses typically go on to do white-collar jobs.

Those who discontinue before graduation either after school or with diplomas in various trades and vocations end up as blue-collar workers.

Those who do not complete schooling end up doing low skilled manual work or odd jobs with lower wages.

Clearly, education at the PG Level and Professional Courses have the biggest impact on Employability and Employment. Given its relative importance, I would like to focus this article on Higher Education (HE) within the triumvirate.

The current picture of the triumvirate in HE is very bleak. The NASSCOM-McKinsey report “Perspective 2020: Transform Business, Transform India” (2009) said that only 26 percent of India’s engineering graduates were employable. An ASSOCHAM survey (2012) reported that only 10 percent of MBAs in the country get a job at the end of the program. We have heard Narayan Murthy making a statement that a majority of IIT graduates are not employable. Meanwhile, the government and a big section of civil society has been pushing the education system to focus more on skills and the colleges have been increasing time curriculum time on internships and immersions. Meanwhile students and parents are harassed by the ever-increasing costs of Higher Education and the poor salaries that follow these expensive courses.

There are some actions being taken by all quarters to address this issue. Several of these are also making some difference to the triumvirate in Higher Education-Employability-Employment. However, there are more fundamental issues to be addressed. The biggest challenge to this triumvirate comes from the fact that at the heart of the matter, the agenda and objectives of the key stakeholders involved do not align – and, as long as this alignment is not fixed, all solutions will be band-aid solutions and not make the triumvirate sustainably strong.

So, who are primary stakeholders in this triumvirate? They are Students and Parents, Employers, Educators and Educational Institutions, Society at large and indeed the Regulators and Government.
• Students are spending a fair amount of time and money and clamoring for seats in Higher Education. They see them as passports to getting jobs, hopefully at high salaries.

• Employers are looking to maximize the value of their recruitments – students who can hit the road running and reduce the time and money the company needs to spend on Training and Development.

• Educators and Educational Institutions generally want to maximize their commercial margins. The purists among them who are not driven by margins are keen to stick to their subject matter. Excluding the ones that are rote based and continue the poor pedagogy which is the bane of our schooling system, the good institutions want to remain pure to their academic subject pursuits and do not want to be influenced by the narrow demands of employers.

• The Society at large would like the education system to produce people who will become good citizens, contribute to the betterment of individuals and societies, ready for a future world that is rapidly changing while partaking in the economic progress of society.

There is a lack of alignment and maybe even a clash of objectives and aspirations across the key stakeholders of the triumvirate. And, therein lies the challenge to the triumvirate and in-turn the country!

To strengthen the triumvirate, we need to solve this complicated problem of aligning or complementing the divergent objectives of various key stakeholders. For this to happen, we need these different stakeholders to see the larger common good and find/create areas of overlap in their objectives and mission. Each of the stakeholders need to recognize that they are part of a larger whole and stand to benefit individually and collectively from more alignment. This can happen only through meaningful and constructive dialogue to align each other’s objectives and aspirations.

Most Educators, Employers, and Students do not talk to each other and have minimal influence on each other. And, the ones who do have reaped benefits in many ways. The dis-engaged idea that market forces will drive the right actions on the part of each of these stakeholders is misplaced as each one will try and find their path of least resistance and maximize their rewards in a very narrow and selfish sense, to the detriment of other sections of society.

• There is now enough literature out there today that does not condemn Markets and Market Forces but see serious limitations when it comes to matters of morals.

• There is also discourse on the idea of free markets not only being a free exchange of goods and prices but should also an equal opportunity and ability to participate in the exchange of relationships with dignity and equality.

• Finally, Free Markets work when there is perfect and symmetric information. It does not work in spaces where the less privileged and marginalized consume public goods which have huge social and intellectual capital that deliver returns in the longer term.

For the triumvirate to work, Students will have to be involved in expressing their aspirations and expectations from a course/program/college/university. The educational establishments should be willing to engage, listen, adapt. This dialogue hardly takes place—certainly not in a safe, equal, symbiotic manner

Educators will have to engage with Employers and understand their expectations and plans looking ahead. Educators must see value in engaging outsiders in defining their mission and be willing to make course corrections and more strategic changes if required to ensure they remain relevant and add value.

Employers will have to be more open to talking to students and engage them in their work, in dialogues about directions the industry is taking, what creates employability and real opportunities in terms of internships, working sabbaticals, etc.

These conversations are not something individuals and institutions need to wait for a national forum and a large-scale debate and discussion. There is a huge opportunity for these discussions to take place at individual institutions and organizations. Several of the premier institutions in the country are already doing a lot of these and reaping the benefits of these dialogues.
From our experience at Indian School of Development Management (ISDM), we have learnt that to have these healthy conversations there are some basics:

- **FIRST:** Each constituent needs to have the opportunity to articulate why they exist both in their isolated context and the context of the larger society. There then needs to be a clear and shared articulation of what success means to each one singly and collectively.

- **SECOND:** A clear recognition that there is a lot of synergy to be drawn from positive, engaged conversations and building on the collective good of all constituents. This needs spaces for dialogue that are safe, non-judgmental, and mutually beneficial.

- **THIRD:** Have the humility and agility to accept ideas and suggestions and then be able to make changes in direction along with the confidence to steer through new paths. This requires a very collaborative mindset.

At ISDM, we have been able to engage the various stakeholders, and this has been the primary reason for the runaway success that ISDM has seen in terms of quality of program, quality of faculty, quality of students, galaxy of recruiters, and range of partners from the sector in a short span of time.

ISDM is creating a new discipline of **Development Management** and engaged with all the stakeholders in defining what the curriculum, pedagogy, assessments, source of faculty, characteristics of students, placement options, key partners, etc. should be. Here are some examples of what we did with much success and could be adopted by other institutions of higher learning:

- At ISDM, we did ‘placement’ work before even we went for ‘admissions’. Only after we created a program that would be of value to prospective employers did we open for admissions. We had over 150 high quality jobs lined up even before we started admissions for the first batch of 60 students.

- We had had extensive outreach into ‘enriched ponds’ i.e. where a concentration of our prospective students would be. Based on student’s feedback, we designed a one-year program. Our prospective students would be giving up jobs to join the program and two years would mean double the opportunity cost compared to a one-year program which we offer.

- We carried out a series of ‘Dialogues on Development Management’ where we engaged with groups of 20+ senior leaders of the sector at a time in open discussions to build a shared idea of Development Management. This has not only resulted in buy-in from the sector but also opened doors for strategic partnerships for ISDM.

- Most faculty in the ISDM PG Program come from the sector

- 25% of the curriculum time is out in the field working on real problems supported by key strategic partners across the country.

- The dominant pedagogy is Problem Based Learning (PBL) working on challenges faced by society in diverse districts across the country. The PBL approach prepares students to be able to solve complex, real problems in diverse contexts.

I would like to close by saying that while Higher Education must engage with other stakeholders and be willing to incorporate ideas and plans to support the triumvirate, it must not stray from its fundamental aims as stated in the 1986 Education Policy. I quote:

> Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical, social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skill. Being at the apex of the educational pyramid, it has also a key role in producing teachers for the education system.
Skilling Youth for the Jobs of the Future

Ms. Revathi Kasturi is an Entrepreneur, heading LAQSH Job Skills Academy, Bengaluru, a Company focused on employability skills and on bridging the talent gap. Building world class skills in employees is the key to higher productivity, strong growth and a sustainable business. LAQSH engages with all the stakeholders including students, academia, governments and corporates to deliver solutions and transform the skills landscape.

Ms. Revathi Kasturi has a distinguished corporate track record in her various roles as the MD of Novell West Asia, Founder - Tarang Software Technologies, and a 17 year stint with Wipro Technologies the last position was Chief Executive - Finance Solutions Division.

She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Electrical Engineering from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay. A former board member of the NASSCOM Executive Council, she is currently an independent Director on the board of VA TECH WABAG LIMITED.

A fitness enthusiast who loves mountaineering and a spirited soul looking for new possibilities is how she would like to describe herself.
Skilling Youth for the Jobs of the Future

Abstract

This article is based on my experience of over 10 years spent in training youth; both in school and out of school; to make them employable & attractive to potential employers.

There is universal agreement that youth in India lack employability skills. How is this problem to be solved?

In my experience, the concept of standalone “vocational training” has failed in India. The proof of this is the low interest shown by youth in these institutions. The idea mooted in some quarters of building new “vocational only” institutions is also bound to fail.

On the other hand courses imparting practical skills integrated into the standard curriculum are proving popular. Students are clearly judging these to be useful. A government initiative in operation for 5 years, covering 15 states, 1000 schools and over 1 lakh students is showing a lot of promise and is a good start.

However, a lot more needs to be done. The practical skill development oriented courses currently at the high school level need to be expanded in both directions – into the middle school years as hobby classes and into the college programs so that students acquire depth in the skills whilst pursuing academics.

The idea that a school skills program should be judged by placement metrics alone is misplaced. Some stakeholders view these two viz skill development courses and placements as tightly coupled. In my opinion youth want the freedom to decide where and how long they will study and what vocation they may eventually take up. This cannot be mandated by the government, parents, schools, corporates or skill development trainers. We have to impart a broad range of practical skills to enable youth to be ready to take on new jobs that we are not even aware of in 2018!

Skilling Youth for the Jobs of the Future

There is universal agreement that youth in India lack skills that will help them get employment and perform better in the jobs they take up. How is this problem to be solved?

One school of thought favors a specialized vocational training curriculum.

Countries such as Switzerland and South Korea offer a vocational training stream at the school level itself. High school children in these countries with aptitude for theory and academics pursue one curriculum and those with a practical orientation a different one.

However, what we have now in the form of Industrial Training Institutes (ITI's) in India is precisely this model and this is currently in shambles. Seats go a begging. Candidates with less than 30% marks can secure admission. On completion jobs are difficult to come by; students take up delivery jobs for Pizzas after spending 3 years studying welding or refrigeration!

Our polytechnics set up to create skilled supervisors are also not serving the purpose. 85-90% of students from the polytechnics go on to join engineering; so at best it is a springboard to get into an engineering college. (Bhagubai Mafatlal Polytechnic Mumbai & Acharya Polytechnic Bangalore *)

Employers are yet to embrace the short term skill courses and give due increments or recognition to candidates with certificates leaving them feeling shortchanged and devaluing the whole skilling & certification process. Young people and their parents shun vocational education, which they regard as a ‘second-choice’ or ‘dead end’ education option. Its low status is often rooted in our colonial past, associated with the training received for blue-collar jobs.
In my view, the approach of standalone “vocational training” is a failure in present day India. A different approach that is being tried is to integrate courses imparting practical skills into the standard curriculum in schools. The government has an existing program called “Centrally sponsored scheme for Vocationalisation of Higher Education” (CSS for VHSE) that is part of the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) (Chauhan 2014)

**Our Experiences with Skilling Youth**

The RMSA Vocational Skills program has been in operation for 4 years, covering 15 states, 6186 schools and over 1.23 million students and is a good start. Courses on Electronics, IT/ITeS, Beauty & Wellness, Financial Markets, Agriculture, healthcare and security are offered in government schools. Currently only two skill development courses are offered per school. I will detail our experience with this program below.

My company, LAQSH, trains 35000 students of 436 government schools in 10 states. The school locations include remote Poonch in Jammu & Kashmir, the forests of Bastar, metro Delhi and the lush mountains of Meghalaya. The scheme is in operation for State Board curriculum as well as CBSE.

The program runs from class IX to class XII for 4 years alongside the regular courses and helps the child build a solid foundation in skills like computers, communication, English proficiency, financial literacy and the specific domain skills all of which are woven into the course. Activity based learning, guest lectures, industry visits and an emphasis on practical work have made a deep impact on the students and there is transformation happening before our eyes on a large scale. Industry linkages are an integral part of the scheme be it through curriculum, or the engagement with guest faculty from the industry.

Finding qualified talented teachers to take these courses has not been a problem. (LAQSH Data **) Teaching is a much respected profession in our country and we get hundreds of applicants even for a remote school. Yes of course we have to train them on pedagogy and the domain to make sure they are effective. We have leveraged technology, especially the smart phone and applications like ‘Workplace’ and ‘Whatsapp’ to build a community of teachers where they share their experiences, showcase their student projects and share their successes. This builds a supportive community. To supplement the face to face classes we have digital content with videos and activities to improve the learning outcomes.

In some government school’s enrolment in higher classes has improved thanks to the job oriented courses being offered by the school and the community outreach initiatives taken up. Dropouts in class X have also been stemmed. Many children have taken up part time jobs whilst they pursue their academics; working in photo studios, working for telecom companies in data entry of forms etc to supplement their income thanks to their skills training. This further builds their self-confidence.

There are of course areas in which the program can be improved.

Getting the labs ready in time to conduct the practical work has been a challenge. Not all the Principals are supportive. Their sensitization needs to improve. The number of skills development courses offered in the schools should go up from 2 to 4 to 6 catering to differing interests and aptitude.

The program plans for placement at the end of class XII. Majority of the children do not want to take up a full time job. They want to study. Further whilst the schools are in the villages, most jobs are in the towns and big cities and parents are loath to send their 18 year olds far away. Thus encouraging the youth to take up part time jobs in the local area and pursue graduation side by side can serve multiple goals. It can meet the youth’s aspiration to study as well as provide some financial support and a chance to improve his/her skills.

Skill development could start early in the middle school years as hobby classes for Std 6, 7 and 8 followed by credit based courses from Class IX onwards. This way, students will have a bigger horizon to explore, get career guidance, exposure to multiple skills, and make a sound decision on the career track they wish to pursue.
Skill education also needs to be continued at the college level. A credit framework for skills in college education was approved by Ministry of Human Resources & Development (MHRD). Currently very few colleges (around 450) offer skill courses as part of the BA, BCOM, BBA courses. This must become mainstream like the school program. For that we need one or two universities to pilot it successfully and then scale it without diluting the intent. The colleges must make investments in lab infrastructure and faculty for these courses. Standalone Bachelor of Vocation (BVOC) courses could again become one of those “second choice” or “dead end” options. The name itself tends to discriminate and reinforce the old mindset of academic arrogance towards skills. Why not BA-Retail or BCOM-Insurance? (Sharda Prasad Report, 2016)

Corporate India too can play a major role in improving the program.

Through their network of dealers, ancillary units and suppliers they can engage with these students in remote schools through talks, visits and apprenticeship programs. They can share their vision of the new jobs & opportunities that will be created. While recruiting candidates they should take care to suitably reward & incentivize candidates with certification.

Initiatives like this are long term, bold and transformative. Corporate India must fund and support these institution building initiatives. The government has so far implemented the scheme in 6186 schools across the country. Corporate India can scale this many times over with their CSR budgets.

Before concluding, let me share with you a story.

A Story from Real Life

My story has two heroes - Sukha Singh our 17 year old XI" class student and his Vocational skills IT teacher Gurjeet Singh. Bhindi Saidan is a government school in a village in Amritsar district, Punjab, 10km from the Pakistan border; close to Lahore and difficult to reach. Students in this village are sons and daughters of farm labor. There are no buses and the roads are far from motorable. Gurjeet Singh travels to the school on a two wheeler 40km one way from Amritsar where he lives. He is a passionate teacher & believes in practicals. His lab setup is perfect. His classroom is full of posters to inspire the students. He is a good teacher & gets his students interested and engaged in his class. He is not only their computer teacher; he mentors them in every aspect of life. Students simply adore Gurjeet Singh.

Sukha Singh our student hero lost his mother as a toddler & was raised by his father. Guided by his teacher and supported by his father he started his enterprise. He helps students from nearby schools file for their scholarships. He also helps with PAN cards, Aadhar cards and other government forms. All this whilst at school! He earns up to Rs 6000/ month and supports his family.

“After my 12" Class I plan to work in a “Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) in Amritsar and join evening College for my graduation. I will manage my business also. While working at the BPO I will improve my English speaking skills.” says Sukha Singh.

Living in rural India, in an area where drug addiction has wrecked families; with very minimal support, Gurjeet Singh and Sukha Singh have achieved a lot and have emerged as shining role models for the youth of India. This is the power of Vocational education. It can transform lives.

There are many more Sukha Singh’s across the country whose story is waiting to be told. This is what we want to replicate across the country by integrating Vocational skills into formal education.

Conclusion

While standalone vocational training is unable to attract students, the conventional high school and college curriculum leaves youth inadequately prepared for jobs. A beginning has been made by introducing skill development into the high school curricula and in our experience this is a move in the right direction.
Skill development could start at the middle school level and continue through college programs. Education and skill development should go hand in hand providing mobility and multiple career pathways.

Finally, I cannot say this strongly enough. Skills education should not be seen as a ‘repair’ strategy for dropouts! It should be seen as a ‘prepare’ strategy to equip our youth for job roles that we don’t yet understand in 2018.

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Acknowledgements
*Shri Badve, placement in charge Bhagubai Mafatlal Polytechnic Mumbai, Dr. Ismail Sheriff placement in charge Acharya Polytechnic Bangalore, who shared placement data for their respective institutions.
** Ms. Himani HR Manager LAQSH for sharing LAQSH recruitment data (Last 6 months data for hiring teachers)

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Lessons from Nalanda University of Ancient Times and Stanford University of Modern era for a New India

About the Author

Mr. Shailendra Kumar is the Founder and President of Nalanda 2.0 (www.Nalanda2.org) and author of Building Golden India: How to unleash India’s vast potential and transform its higher education system. Now. (www.shailkumar.com) In addition to receiving international acclaim from academic and business leaders, in 2017, a Nobel Laureate presented this book to India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Prior to writing the book, Shailendra was an administrator at two world-class multidisciplinary research universities: UC Berkeley (ranked #5 in Top 500 of Global Rankings, ARWU, 2017) and UC San Diego (ranked #15 in Top 500 of Global Rankings, ARWU, 2017).

Earlier, he was co-founder and CEO of two start-ups and executive in several Fortune 500 and Silicon Valley high technology companies. Alumni leader since 1991, he was President of the IIT Foundation and co-founder of the Pan IIT alumni movement in the US. Shail is a recipient of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur’s Distinguished Service Award. He also serves on the Advisory Board of Lab-X Foundation.

He has an MBA from the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University, Bloomington and a B.Tech with honors in Mechanical Engineering from IIT Kharagpur.
Lessons from Nalanda University of Ancient Times and Stanford University of Modern era for a New India

Abstract

India’s future will be defined by how well it educates its young men and women. India must also address its mega challenges—problems that affect over 100 million people each—such as water, health, energy, law and order, urban migration, climate change, and poverty. A vibrant higher education system can address these challenges and opportunities. However, India’s higher education system is in crisis. Five big ideas can transform this system. One of them is to establish several new worldclass multidisciplinary research universities and transform many existing institutions. There is a tsunami-wave of young men and women arriving at the doorsteps of their lives and careers. Thus, the time to transform the higher education system has never been more critical or urgent. It is also time to move beyond individual brilliance towards building institutional excellence. The lessons from Nalanda of ancient India and Stanford of modern era offer a compelling roadmap to create a better future for India’s youth, society, and its economy. Doing so will be a lasting legacy for the government, industry and academic leaders, and philanthropists and a win-win for all the stakeholders.

The Case for Transforming India’s Higher Education System

India’s future will be defined by how well it educates its young men and women. With 20-26 million children born every year, over the next 35-50 years an estimated 700 million to 1.3 billion of India’s youth will require access to higher education. Providing them with excellent higher education and preparing them for their lives and careers is India’s defining challenge and opportunity of the 21st century.

India must also address its mega challenges—problems that affect over 100 million people each—such as water, health, energy, law and order, urban migration, climate change, and poverty. India’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is $6,700 and on this metric it is ranked 160th among 230 nations (CIA World Fact Book, 2016).

We live in a world that is increasingly being disrupted by technology and business innovation. Being prepared for a hyper competitive and rapidly changing world is the only certain path for individuals to lead a fulfilling life and have a productive career. Higher education system prepares young 18 year olds for their lives and careers. Professionals in all sectors of the industry and society, including teachers in primary and secondary school are educated in colleges and universities. A world-class college and university system also enables the research, innovation and start-up ecosystem and solves problems that matter to the society.

Thus, a vibrant higher education system is the engine that can address all these challenges and opportunities. Unfortunately, India’s higher education system is in crisis.

Even after 70 years of independence India does not have even one world-class multi disciplinary research university. And, just one university was ranked in the Top 500 of Global Rankings (ARWU, 2017). Its premier institutions of IITs, IIMs, and AIIMS enroll less than 0.5% of students.

India’s gross enrollment ratio (GER), one of the measures of access, is a measly 27% (UNESCO, 2015). This is in sharp contrast to most developed countries, which have a GER of 50-95%.

And the youth who do have access to higher education receive such dismal quality of education that 70-90% of the college graduates in India are considered unemployable by the industry (NASSCOM, 2009). As a result, industry is spending 6-12 months in training these recent graduates for productive work (Kumar, 2015).
There is such a severe shortage of excellent higher education institutions that families are voting with their wallets and their feet. Middle-class parents are spending one-third of their monthly income on private coaching. Lower-income parents are selling their assets or taking loans for the same cause. As a result, the private coaching has mushroomed and was estimated to become $40 Billion per year industry by 2015 (ASSOCHAM, 2013). Those who can afford send their children overseas for university. Of the Indian students who go overseas just over 50% study in the US and spend close to $6.5 Billion (Financial Express, 2017), putting the total amount spent on overseas education to over $10 Billion per year.

Thus, everyone is paying a hefty price for this crisis: students, parents, industry, society and the nation.

Five Big Ideas can Transform India’s Higher Education System

*Building Golden India: How to unleash India’s vast potential and transform its higher education system. Now.* (published 2015, author: Shail Kumar) outlines a comprehensive case and a plan for transforming India’s higher education system. In summary, there are five big ideas that can collectively address the key challenges and opportunities facing India and its higher education system.

- **Establish 50-100 world-class multidisciplinary research universities.** These universities teach, conduct research, and enable the start-up and innovation ecosystem. For India, this would be a combination of existing institutions that are transformed into world-class multidisciplinary research universities and new universities started and sustained as world-class multidisciplinary research universities.

- **Develop a master plan at the state level so that each state has a complementary set of research universities, masters and undergraduate colleges and universities, and community colleges.** California’s master plan is an excellent role model for such a plan.

- **Remove British Raj (colonial) rules and regulations that are coming in the way of the transformation.**

- **Leverage Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), technology, and innovations to provide an excellent education to all, now.**

- **Attract the best and the brightest talent to be faculty members in colleges and universities by instituting market-based compensation, and merit-based incentives and accountability system.**

Great nations, states, and cities are powered by a world-class education system, especially its higher education system. The United States has 135 universities in the Top 500 of global rankings, China has 45, South Korea: 12, Singapore: 2. The state of California has 12 and Silicon Valley: 3. In the same rankings India has just one university in the Top 500. (ARWU, 2017)
India needs to build several world-class multidisciplinary research universities. The scale, scope and level of excellence must match that of Nalanda University of ancient India and Stanford University of the 21st century. There is much that India can learn from both.

Lessons from Nalanda of Ancient India

Nalanda University, of 1400+ years ago, epitomized the excellence and vibrancy in India's higher education system.

“Nalanda University was the center of higher learning in the country and the world when Xuánzàng, a renowned scholar from China, arrived in India between 629 and 645 CE. The University of Bologna, one of the earliest universities in the western world, would be established in 1088, over four hundred and fifty years after Xuánzàng's visit to India. The University of Oxford was established in 1096.”

There are many lessons that we can draw from Nalanda University's excellence, reputation, and impact. Some of these include:

1. **Scope and scale matters.** Nalanda had fifteen hundred teachers and three thousand to ten thousand students. The large number of teachers enabled the university to offer over a hundred lectures per day in several fields of study. The depth and breadth of fields attracted students of various interests and backgrounds to Nalanda. Thus, Nalanda became a hub of intellectual learning and growth for the best and the brightest teachers and students in India and around the world.

2. **Excellence matters.** Outstanding teachers, moral standards, intellectual rigor, and mental discipline were foundations for excellence. Reputation, financial support followed.

3. **Community engagement and impact matters.** Kings, merchants, and two hundred village communities supported Nalanda. The students and teachers were engaged with the villages. They also helped address disputes and build monasteries. Thus, their importance and impact was tangible and visible.

These lessons are as timely and relevant now as they were fourteen hundred years ago.

Lessons from Stanford University of the 21st Century

India can also learn from Stanford University, which transformed itself from a regional university in 1940s to an elite research university in a matter of decades.

Stanford University, based in Silicon Valley, California was ranked #2 in the Top 500 of global rankings (ARWU, 2017). Stanford has an enrollment of over 7,000 undergraduate students and over 9,000 graduate students for a total of over 16,000. It has over 2,100 faculty members in its seven schools and colleges: the Graduate School of Business, School of Earth Sciences, Graduate School of Education, School of Engineering, School of Humanities and Sciences, School of Law, and School of Medicine.

World-class multi disciplinary research universities, like Stanford, by scope, structure, scale and ambition attract the best and the brightest faculty members and students. The students benefit from learning from the best faculty from multiple disciplines, all on the same co-located campus. This also enables invaluable structured and spontaneous interactions with students and faculty members from various fields. Discussions in corridors, labs, and coffee shops often leads to new ideas, interdisciplinary collaborations, advancing of the frontiers of knowledge, and start-ups. This broad-based formal and informal learning and innovation environment is critical in the 21st century.

In addition, faculty and students are able to conduct research at the intersection of subject boundaries. As a result, these types of universities are ideally positioned to solve complex problems facing society and industry such as energy, health, urban migration, and climate change. The university-led innovations, fostered in these environments, are also creating new products and industries, and fueling economic growth and wealth creation.
According to a 2012 study, since the 1930s Stanford entrepreneurs (faculty and alumni) have started 39,900 companies, which in turn have created 5.4 million jobs and generate US$2.7 trillion in revenues annually.

In 2014, Stanford received US$1.33 billion in research funding. This includes funding for the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, originally called the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center. In 2013–14, the university received approximately US$108 million in gross royalty revenues from licensing 655 of its technologies.

Companies such as Google, Cisco, Yahoo, HP, Charles Schwab, eBay, Instagram, VMWare, and Tesla have Stanford roots. Its faculty member, Fred Terman, is considered to be the “Father of Silicon Valley” and “Academic architect of Silicon Valley.” It is a research and innovation powerhouse.

Thus, it is evident that the Stanford is making an impact on the students, industry, society and the humanity at a compelling scale.

Conclusion

There is a tsunami-wave of young men and women arriving at the doorsteps of their lives and careers. Thus, the time to transform India’s higher education system and make it world-class has never been more critical or urgent. It is also time to move beyond individual brilliance towards building institutional excellence. The lessons from Nalanda of ancient India and Stanford of modern era offer a compelling roadmap to create a better future for India’s youth, society, and its economy. Doing so will be a lasting legacy for the government, industry and academic leaders, and philanthropists and a win-win for all the stakeholders.

[The article includes excerpts from Building Golden India: How to unleash India’s vast potential and transform its higher education system. Now. The publisher grants NHRD permission to publish it in their journal.]

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Experiential Leadership: A Catalyst for Change

About the Authors

Mr. Shyaam Subramanian

Shyaam leads program design, research, strategy and learning at Teach For India. This includes supporting the heads of Fellowship recruitment, selection, training and Alumni impact teams in the organisation.

Prior to joining TFI in 2014, Shyaam spent 11 years in the private sector - as an IT services professional with Cognizant Technology Solutions and then as a management consultant with PricewaterhouseCoopers for close to six years where he advised clients on improving their financial and operational performances through rigorous goal setting and structured monitoring.

Shyaam believes in the power of collective action and movements as agents of social change.

Ms. Nikita Sehgal

Nikita has been with Teach For India for close to 5 years. She started her journey with TFI as a 2013 Pune Fellow, teaching fifty 2nd and 3rd graders in a PMC School. On the completion of her Fellowship, Nikita led TFI’s Fellowship recruitment efforts across colleges and companies in Pune, ensuring that the most promising individuals joined the program.

For the last 6 months, she has been working closely with Shyaam Subramanian (CPO at TFI) as his Executive Assistant as well as a Consultant on the Strategy and Learning Team in TFI.

Prior to joining Teach For India, Nikita graduated from Lady Shri Ram College For Women with a BA(H) degree in Psychology.
Introduction

The Teach For India (TFI) Fellowship is a two year leadership development program for people who are committed to the idea of educational equity in India. Since 2009, the program has grown from a cohort of 87 Fellows to an incoming group that is more than 600 members strong each year (since 2015).

The program admits people with diverse educational, professional, socioeconomic and personal backgrounds - reflecting the diversity of the country, and the complexity of India’s education system. The program is currently operational in seven cities - Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune.

With the objective of building a growing community of leaders, Teach For India has developed a two-part “theory of change”.

In the short-term, through the Fellowship program, the organisation strives to provide an opportunity to India’s brightest and most promising individuals, from the nation’s best universities and workplaces, to serve as full-time teachers to children from low-income communities in some of the nation’s most under-resourced schools. Through this experience of teaching in classrooms and working with key education stakeholders like students, principals, and parents, Fellows get exposed to the grassroots realities of India’s education system and begin to cultivate the knowledge, skills, and mindsets necessary to attain positions of leadership in the education system and identify their role in building a larger movement for equity in education.

In the long-term, the organisation engages its Alumni and support this growing community to advocate for change. Teach For India Alumni don diverse roles within the education sector - those of teachers, teacher-trainers, school principals, curriculum designers, community and social workers and education policy researchers, as well as in the ecosystem surrounding and supporting the education sector - as journalists, lawyers, health experts, entrepreneurs, and corporate leaders - all with a shared purpose to build a people’s movement for educational equity that will accelerate progress towards that day when all children in India attain an excellent education.

This note explores the design of the program, it’s linkage to leadership development - broadly defined as requisite knowledge, skills and mindsets, the evolution of the program design over the years, impact and lessons learnt.

Our growth over the years

One day all children will attain an excellent education

Exhibit 1 - Growth of the Teach For India Fellowship program and the organisation between 2009 and 2017
The Design

The program is launched as a five week residential learning experience where Fellows learn the theory and the practice of teaching and specific leadership qualities. Post the residential bootcamp, Fellows are placed in classrooms across the seven cities where TFI currently operates.

The journey can be summarised as illustrated in exhibit 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer Institute</td>
<td>Five week rigorous, residential training program to equip Fellows with the basics of pedagogy and introduce them to the culture at TFI and the leadership model of the program.</td>
<td>Develop knowledge, skills and mindsets required to begin making a transformational impact on students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship Year 1</td>
<td>Focus is on strengthening the basics of pedagogy in the classroom as well as building strong relationships with the students and their parents in the community.</td>
<td>To ensure that Fellows deliver strong content to start bridging the learning gaps in the classrooms. The strong relationships will enable Fellows to set and work towards a vision for their classrooms that is grounded in their students’ contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Internship</td>
<td>Fellows can choose to do an internship in the summer break. Teach For India provides access to portal with internship postings that the Fellows can apply to.</td>
<td>To provide an opportunity for Fellows to explore potential pathways of their choice that they can consider taking up post the Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship Year 2</td>
<td>There is an equal focus on integrating values and exposure along with driving rigorous academics in the classrooms. The Fellows are encouraged to think of their impact beyond the classroom by taking up a school level/community project titled Be The Change Project or BTCP.</td>
<td>To widen a Fellow’s impact and get them to start thinking about their role in the larger movement for educational equity. The BTCP is also a leadership development opportunity for Fellows to develop essential skills like project management, investing stakeholders, effective communication etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Induction</td>
<td>On completion of the Fellowship, Fellows join the alumni network. Teach For India alumni work in diverse sectors with the vision of attaining educational equity in India. They are provided opportunities to such as career fairs, mentorship programs etc.</td>
<td>The broader, long term vision of the program is to create a movement of leaders who will work in different areas in the field of education and beyond (e.g. policy, curriculum design, teacher training, corporate support etc.) while contributing to the cause of educational equity.</td>
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The Leadership Development Journey Framework

At the heart of the program design is Teach For India’s Leadership Development Journey (the LDJ) framework. The LDJ weaves all aspects of practices that Fellows engage with into a set of cause and effect relationships leading to dual impact - on the students, and on the Fellows themselves.

The LDJ is built on Teach For India’s evolving understanding of how adults learn. Many of these principles have been adopted from research and practice, and some are a result of learning from what we have done and what has worked. The six core principles of the LDJ are

1. **Being Purpose Driven**
   By holding purpose and vision students at the centre of all that Fellows do

2. **Focus on Holistic Learning**
   By connecting knowledge, skills and mindsets together and seeing the whole picture

3. **Challenge grows leadership**
   By experiencing and pursuing challenges through the Fellowship. Eg. Experiencing the challenge of working with the school headmaster / headmistress and teachers, and learning how to listen actively, influence and motivate.

4. **Collective Learning**
   By working with stakeholders to solve challenges and pursue outcomes. Eg. Working with the school team to establish shared routines and plans to better manage student behaviour.

5. **Reflective Practice**
   By continuously learning, practicing and reflecting to improve impact. Eg. Learning how to plan a lesson that meets varying learning needs, applying it and reflecting daily on its effectiveness to improve the next lesson

6. **Ownership**
   By identifying, taking up and creating opportunities to learn on their own. Eg. Attending an optional workshop about differentiation, taking an online differentiation course, finding ways to increase learning time for children
The LDJ has four interconnected components that reinforce a virtuous cycle of Fellow leadership fueling student learning and vice versa. Each of them is explained below.

The Student Vision Scale

The Student Vision Scale is Teach For India’s evolving framework of a vision for excellent education for children. It moves from a “no learning” to a “path-changing learning.” Path-changing learning means putting students on a different life-path - one that defies the statistics and enables them to have expanded choices at each stage of their lives.

The framework emphasizes on three distinct but interconnected aspects of education - with the goal of bringing all of those to life in every classroom for every child. An excellent education that gives children the choice to be whatever and whoever they wish to be in pursuit of realizing their potential. We understand that the components of that are:

- Strong academic achievement that equips them with the knowledge and skills required to be on a path of expanded opportunity.
- The exposure and access to experiences and opportunities that will lead our children to discover their strengths and attain the aspirations of their choice and
- Values and mindsets that will shape how they choose to operate in the world and how they choose to contribute to making the world better.

The Three Commitments

Teach For India’s Fellows and Alumni are learning to be leaders who know that the problem of inequity is a complex, adaptive challenge. In doing this, they need to be aware of their purpose, beliefs, values and strengths.

The Commitments Scale is a tool used to define the commitments that the program considers as essential to build in leaders working for educational equity, enabling Fellows and Alumni to know where they are on each commitment and where they can go. It frames the evaluation of a Fellow’s commitments as a leader in a way that is aligned to the organization’s evolving vision of leadership.

Commitment to Personal Transformation

*I explore who I am, what my purpose is and strive to be a better person.*

Self-Awareness is at the core of this commitment. The commitment to Personal Transformation helps us own our growth and development, reflect on our progress, learn from our mistakes and challenges and develop the respect and humility to ask for support.

Commitment to Collective Action

*I build relationships and organize partners to multiply and deepen my impact.*

In working towards an enduring contextual, collective vision, the support of multiple stakeholders becomes essential. On the scale, Fellows grow from working independently to collaborating with a wide group of stakeholders within and outside Teach For India to multiply our impact.

Commitment to Educational Equity

*I deepen my understanding of educational equity, and commit to attaining it.*

A deep understanding of the context, the complexity of the problem and the continuous exploration of solutions drives one’s motivation to act consistently and expand one’s locus of control. On the scale, Fellows grow from operating inconsistently in the classroom to taking consistent action towards equity for all children.
Leadership Competencies

The competencies are designed to empower Fellows with the knowledge, skills and mindsets they need. Using these competencies, Fellows practice the 3 commitments as habits of leadership. The competencies are a list of:

Pedagogical principles
- Setting a vision and goal
- Building relationships and investing stakeholders
- Planning
- Execution
- Problem Solving
- Continuously Improving Effectiveness

Values and mindsets
- Reflection
- Integrity
- Sense of Possibility
- Pursuit of excellence
- Love

In addition to these competencies, successful Fellows will need to exhibit a consistent focus on building their content and curriculum knowledge.

The Opportunities

Different opportunities are created for Fellows to build these competencies. Some of these are pan city / region and every Fellow who goes through the program taps into these. Others are nuanced to accommodate regional context, and the current reality of the students and the Fellows in every city. To foster choice and ownership, the program creates opportunities of four types:

- **Essential** - These are opportunities that every Fellow must participate in and includes City Conferences (getting all the Fellows together and having sessions that foster personal and professional development as well as culture building), Program Manager Support (for continuous pedagogical and technical support to Fellows) among others.

- **Available** - These are opportunities that must exist in a city, but which Fellows may or may not use e.g. the BTCP (as mentioned above), Leadership Forums (talks for Fellows by leaders and entrepreneurs), etc.

- **Possible** - These are opportunities that may exist in a city and which Fellows may or may not use e.g. Mentorship Programs (Fellows being mentored by leaders in their chosen pathway), Grade Level Circles (Fellows teaching the same grade across the city to come together and collaborate) etc.

- **Self-created** - These are opportunities that Fellows create themselves. E.g. Internships (outside of those posted on the TFI portal), Mentors (other than those connected by TFI) etc.
The Impact
The program’s impact is measured on two key dimensions - on Students, and on Fellows (as Alumni)

Fellow Impact

A Study by Educational Initiatives
Teach For India, in partnership with Educational Initiatives (EI), conducted an ‘End of Year’ assessment (2016-17) for classes 3, 5 and 7 in English and Mathematics, with a representative sample across all TFI sites.

Highlights from the study are:
- In higher standards, Teach For India students perform significantly better than their counterparts in Government and Affordable Private Schools (APS)
- TFI students’ performance is significantly higher than their counterparts in Government and APS in Class 7 both in English and Mathematics and, specifically Mathematics for Class 5.
- While TFI students do have a gap with the performance of High Fee Private Schools (HFP), the gap reduces with time.

Exhibits 5 and 6 - Student Impact summary in a representative sample study of TFI classrooms by EI

10th Standard Results
The first cohort of 871 10th standard students across Pune and Mumbai graduated in 2017 with a pass percentage of 94%. Mumbai had a pass percentage of 93% and Pune had a pass percentage of 95%. 183 students achieved a distinction.

Alumni Impact
With a total strength of ~2000 members, the Alumni network comprises a diverse group of individuals engaged in a range of professions and pursuing a variety of academic courses. While the recent surveys show that more than 60% of the Alumni are working in the education sector (as opposed to <10% when they join the Fellowship) as professionals and entrepreneurs in India, about 15%* are enrolled in academic programs (these numbers change depending on the point in time alumni surveys are done). Typical academic programs that the alumni are enrolled in include:
• Education (Harvard GSE, Stanford, Columbia (Teachers College), Azim Premji University amongst others)
• Public policy and public administration (Harvard Kennedy School, Woodrow Wilson - Princeton, Fletcher School - Tufts University, John Hopkins, London School of Economics amongst others) and
• Business administration (University of Pennsylvania, Northwestern University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Indian School of Business amongst others).

While many stay in/return to India to specifically work on the education sector as researchers, teacher trainers, experts in specific domains (such as assessments, curriculum, EdTech), consultants, general managers in education organisations, several work in CSR, venture philanthropy, and incubation of start-ups. There are also quite a few who work in the corporate sector and continue to advocate for more people and resources in the sector.

Examples in Real-Life

Jai Mishra

Jai Mishra is a 2013 Teach For India Alumnus who did his Fellowship in Pune. He taught 32 6th grade kids in a PMC (Pune Municipal Corporation) School.

During the course of the Fellowship, Jai started the ‘Parivartan - Be the Change’ project to improve the learning experience and quality of education imparted. His vision was to engage and empower all key players that influence a student’s education - teachers, school administration, the community and the students themselves.
Taking the action plan of ‘Parivartan’ to the next level, he started organising a monthly conference called ‘Samvaad,’ which was designed to engage, educate and empower parents, and also to involve parents as partners. In the final year of his Fellowship, he organised five ‘Samvaad’ events and got an average attendance of a 280/350. He conducted sessions around various topics - Right to Education (RTE), child development, School Management Committee (SMC), importance of educating the girl child, cleanliness etc. Jai was conferred with the ‘Teacher of The Year’ award by the PMC. He was also approached by a group of students from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) to explore the potential to chart out a plan to extend his initiative to the state of Maharashtra.

Madhukar Banuri

Madhukar, an engineer from BITS Pilani, left his job at L&T and joined the very first cohort of Fellows at Teach For India (TFI) in 2009 and taught 35 Grade 3 students in a government school in Pune.

After he graduated from the Fellowship program he stayed back with TFI managing the relationships with schools, communities and local government.

In 2015 he moved out of TFI to set up Pune City Connect (PCC) Education team as an experiment to drive collective action to improve the quality of a network of 250 regional medium public schools. He started the first flagship project (Sahyogi Dal) working with 1500 public school teachers serving 60,000 students. During his time with PCC he started liaising with the State Government to strengthen the education apex bodies of the State of Maharashtra. Two systemic projects took shape. In 2016, he started the fourth project: School Improvement in Pune, directly serving 5300 students with 12 partners driving collective action.

Last year, he founded ‘Leadership For Equity LFE’ with a mission to practice and build leadership rooted in radically changing the education system in India, working at multiple levels within the government machinery. The existing four projects transitioned into LFE.

What Motivates Fellows

Fellows choose to join Teach For India for a number of reasons. A recent survey that was conducted with 74 candidates who were made the 2017 Fellowship offer revealed that most of them (~65%) joined out of a desire to work for a larger purpose - whether it is educational change, general societal change, or just getting a personal sense of meaning. Interestingly, only 15% had teaching as their primary reason to do the Fellowship.

In another survey conducted with Fellows who joined the 2017 Institute (training program), the top 3 reasons cited to join the Fellowship were*:

- To address the problem of educational equity in India (69.50%)
- Improving leadership and performance skills (52.60%)
- Wanting to work with children (33%)

*Respondents were allowed to select more than one option for this question.

In addition, data from the last 4 years says that 40+% of the incoming Fellowship cohort every year has engaged with someone from their trusted circle who has advocated strongly for the Fellowship. Interestingly, if someone has heard about Teach For India from within the TFI community (Fellow/Staff/Alumnus), their likelihood of being selected is almost double as compared to a regular candidate.
A case study on one of our 2014 Fellows Subodh Jain serves to illustrate the point around the power of the Fellowship experience fueling smaller movements of change.

At any given point in time, he had **35-40 volunteers** working in his classroom, community center as well as other related projects. His volunteers showed deep commitment to the classroom and he had very few discipline cases or cases of volunteers absconding. He mentioned that he took great care to make sure that he was investing his volunteers deeply in his work and classroom.

Five of Subodh’s volunteers joined the Fellowship across different cohort years - 2015, 2016 and 2017. Additionally, 2 are working for his current project in rural Maharashtra, 1 volunteer has joined Aditya, an educational start up and 3 are working in Make A Difference.

**Conclusion**

The Teach For India Fellowship is a program that taps into the power of experiential and immersive leadership journey. It is based on the premise that complex problems such as education require a form of leadership that is built by immersing aspirants in relevant contexts to create lasting impact and reflecting on what those experiences teach them. Such experiences anchored in current reality but with a strong vision and purpose as the driving force build a level of understanding and commitment that is hard to replicate otherwise. In addition, because the experience is rooted in teaching children, human lives are affected every day. This in turn fosters commitment to sustaining the energy and focus to solve the educational inequity problem.

The other aspect of such leadership is building a sense of community and collectivism. Solving challenges such as educational inequity require buy-in and action from all stakeholders starting with the children being educated. Consultative and collaborative problem solving, and shared visioning are hard to practise. Therefore experiences that promote these capabilities and attitudes will build the kind of leadership that organisations and societies of the future will need.
Education and Employability for the era of Automation

About the Author

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Abstract

As automation threatens as well as promises to change the landscape of employment and employability in a relatively short period of time, traditional ways of talking about employment and employability are losing their relevance. This article looks at the topic of building broad capabilities in students and skill building that would transfer across existing and new job opportunities. This approach may prove to be beneficial to young people as they enter the workforce.

Introduction

We are in the midst of a transition period in our society. Automation, robotics and big data are increasingly threatening to disrupt entire industries and wipe out jobs. Most jobs that are repetitive in nature and require low skills are already being lost to AI and machines. It’s only a matter of time before machines will be able to handle even the jobs that require more complex knowledge and cognitive skills.

This pace of change is putting tremendous pressure on our education system and questioning its role in equipping our graduates for employment. Even without these pressures, studies have shown for a while now that our graduates are ill equipped for employment and lack job ready skills. The poor quality of education in all except the top tier schools and colleges results in addition of a large number of unemployable graduates every year to the workforce. But now that it’s increasingly being realized that the fundamental skill sets required for future jobs will be different, the specter of widening talent and skills gaps is beginning to haunt the entire system even more acutely.

In the midst of these dire expectations one sees “unexpected flowers blooming”. Young people just out in the job market are following unconventional careers and carving their own paths like never before. There’s a burst of entrepreneurship, experimentation and energy from the new generation. For e.g. lucrative new jobs unheard of earlier, like a meme expert, a restaurant feel consultant, a social media engineer, are making their presence felt. This is a significant change in a career landscape that earlier offered very limited choices to youngsters. And more importantly provides clues to how education needs to align to the new realities that we face today.

Our education system is a two-hundred-year old system based on the principle of imparting knowledge. But as machines get smarter it will be pointless to continue competing on the basis of knowledge. We are in this old paradigm of asking what they want to grow up to become, what majors will they take up in a college. However, in the not too distant future when anything routine will be replaced by an algorithm, where half the jobs haven’t been created yet, we have to reorient the entire system to develop skills that are unique to being human. There is currently only anecdotal understanding of what this means. It’s not very clear which are the areas where, even in the long run, we will largely need human abilities and skills for the job. Nevertheless, we can take a shot at identifying some of the possible areas and skills where the demand for people is likely to remain strong or increase in the future. These then can be the foundation for building a reoriented and renewed education system that enables employability.

We are already starting to see multiple ideas and attempts around education reforms, spurred by these concerns. Education is expected to be transformative in so many ways – some are more obvious like its link to employment and some are less obvious like its role in developing self-confidence, life skills, networks and friendships and developing new mindsets. This article suggests a few themes that can accelerate such education reform attempts and increase the possibility of its fit to future employment and learning a livelihood. Specifically, we can look at this from two different lenses – Skill Building and Pedagogy.
Encouraging Independent Thinking

In a world characterized by remote and flexible working, an ability to think independently without supervision will be prized. Human thinking is colored by a large number of cognitive biases. Recognizing and neutralizing them is important. In today's age these biases are further exacerbated by unverified information and “fake news” inundating us. What will increasingly become important is the ability to independently gather and assess information which is then used for informed opinion and decision making. Being able to manage information overload, overcome cognitive biases, consider multiple verified data sources and balancing them with the right heuristics—these are qualities that will take someone far in the employability quotient. However, our education system has been driven by rote learning and a largely irrelevant focus on scoring marks rather than building such thinking capabilities. Incorporating methods like Socratic Dialogue in the pedagogy can help students develop such capabilities.

Building Lateral Thinking Skills

While machines would soon supersede our rational thinking abilities we don’t see our creative and lateral thinking abilities being overshadowed anywhere in the near future. Increasingly, perhaps only the messy problems will be left for humans to solve and these would require the ability to think creatively, redefine problems. Future graduates would do well to develop their right brain abilities. Not just problem solving but music, arts and the humanities are likely to aid in this. Moving away from a “one right answer” approach in education and encouraging students to come up with alternatives for messy problems would increase their chances of success in an uncertain world. Another way to encourage this is to encourage multi disciplinary careers. Innovation happens at the cusp of disciplines. We are too used to thinking in terms of programs and university majors but in a world where half of existing work can be replaced by automation and half of the future jobs have not yet been created, this is increasingly becoming an antiquated way to look at things!

Teaching Entrepreneurship

Often education institutes are criticized for not equipping students with real life skills. Teaching Entrepreneurship is really about recognizing opportunities and acting upon it. Entrepreneurship can teach skills such as autonomy, initiative, perseverance and self-confidence. We live in a world in which the future is uncertain. We can’t predict the job market and economy our students will enter. We know without a doubt, though, that our students need skills that will allow them to navigate uncertain waters and chart their own paths. Entrepreneurship education teaches these skills. Entrepreneurship education equips students to seek out problem-solving opportunities, take risks and accept failure as part of the growth process. It instills confidence within students early on. They are thus able to see that they can accomplish whatever they set out to do. When a young person realizes that they hold the key to their future, this equals to limitless possibilities.

Teaching Students how to Learn

The younger generation is warming up to the notion of lifelong learning. We are beginning to realize that the notion of a single career borne out of a single college degree is becoming archaic. And the realization that building the capability of continuous learning itself has to take precedence over teaching of specific subjects. Improving the speed and effectiveness of learning needs is becoming an important part in preparing students for employability.

Given the rate at which our skills will become obsolete and the half-life of skills, the speed of acquiring a new skill is important. For instance, Josh Kaufman has posited that while it may take ten thousand hours to achieve mastery in a field, it takes really only 20 hours to learn enough to get started in a new skill. He has outlined a specific process for this. While we may be far from the kind of instant learning capabilities that Hollywood movies have shown, the fascinating multi-disciplinary focus on human learning capabilities is likely to yield insights which will prove very useful to people at all career levels and not just students.
Specific methodologies may prove to be more suitable for deeper stickier learning and education institutes and programs would do well to heed them. Project based learning involves working on an extended period of time on a challenge or a problem. Working on a real world complex problem would require students to look at intertwined disciplines and effectively teach 21st century skills – by using role-playing and team-building activities. Students may for e.g. practice oral presentation skills and learn to produce videos and podcasts. Or in writing journals, students would reflect on their thinking and problem-solving processes, which they know they would need to explain in their oral presentation.

The use of Virtual Reality, Simulations and Serious Learning games can bring a marked change in student engagement and learning effectiveness levels. In the process they help students internalize important skills. Games have proven to be immensely popular because they offer the player more control of the storyline, of what happens to them. In serious games and simulations your involvement levels go higher because you don’t just watch another character go on the journey to self-discovery; you practically travel the path yourself as the central character and explore the concepts. There are even schools which base their entire pedagogy on game design. One such school seeks to have children assume the roles of biologists, historians, writers, and mathematicians and engage them in problem-solving. There are no grades. Students are rated “novice,” “apprentice,” up to “Master.” A class might be devoted to engaging in a multi player game and working in teams to defeat hostile aliens or becoming immersed in a “sim” game and running an entire city. The kids even code their own games, which involve Math, English, Computer Science, and Art!

**Conclusion**

As we reorient our education system towards preparing our young for the dramatically new challenges they are likely to face, preparing for traditional careers is likely to yield less results. While every discipline has its own body of knowledge, there is an urgent need for the realization that not only this knowledge will become quickly outdated but also from an employment point of view, all its routine aspects will get automated sooner rather than later. In this context enabling young people to face this scenario with resilience and confidence will need a push towards fundamental capability and skill building, some of which are outlined here in the article.

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Since your journal has become online from January, 2016, you need to make sure that your email id is updated with NHRDN national secretariat. Without your correct email ID we will be not in a position to send you the Issues at regular interval. In case you or your fellow professionals and members have any problem in receiving the journal online do write to Pranay Ranjan (pranay.ranjan@nationalhrd.org) at national secretariat.

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Network HRD Network

The National HRD Network, established in 1986, is an association of professionals committed to promoting the HRD movement in India and enhancing the capability of human resource professionals, enabling them to make an impactful contribution in enhancing competitiveness and creating value for society. Towards this end, the National HRD Network is committed to the development of human resources through education, training, research and experience sharing. The network is managed by HR professionals in an honorary capacity, stemming from their interest in contributing to the HR profession. The underlying philosophy of the NHRDN is that every human being has the potential for remarkable achievement. HRD is a process by which employees in organizations are enabled to:

• acquire capabilities to perform various tasks associated with their present and future roles;
• develop their inner potential for self and organizational growth;
• develop an organizational culture where networking relationships, teamwork and collaboration among different units is strong, contributing to organizational growth and individual well-being.