Impact of Current Higher Education System on Human Resource Development in the State of Uttarakhand

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Abstract

Higher education provides people an opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills, and attributes, thus equipping them with employability skills. It helps in gaining employer desirable skillsets that are essential for any human resource asset of an organization. Employability, is undoubtedly, relies on subjectknowledge but skills and attributes play an equally important role. They help an individual in surviving and sustaining any kind of employment.

Employability skills make an individual 'employable'. Employers seek a specific skill-set in an employee that is a 'must have'. These transferable skills supplement technical understanding and academic knowledge that enhance the productivity of the employees as well as the organization as a whole. Some of these common skills are team work, problem solving, critical thinking, decision making, time & stress management, domain knowledge, basic computerskills, communication skills, and others.

This paper attempts to study the quality of higher education that is as important as its accessibility and delivery. Of late, there has been growing awareness and attention towards quality in higher education. Students, in India, when they pass out of the college complain that there is not enough scope in the fields they have studied whereas the employers complain that there are not enough skilled employees. This problem is acute in the developing countries, including India. There is a mismatch of skills between the human resource needed at the corporate level and produced by our education system. The gap between the educated human resource the higher education yields and the requirement of the industry is increasing.There is the much needed debate on the mandatory inclusion of employability skills in higher education. Skill development in students is the need of the hour and exerts pressure on the higher education authorities to modify and structure the current system of education to bring in line with the corporate demand.

The paper presents an overview on higher education in India and the existing gap between employment and employability skills. It examines the impact and role in building skills needed for employment, as accessed by the students and uses research based on primary data collected from undergraduate and post-graduate students enrolled in B.Com and M.Com courses in Dehradun region, Uttarakhand. Exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression tools are applied using SPSS software to study the impact of present higher

education system on development of skills and employment for students. The independent variables found out through factor analysis came out to be 'Team skills', 'Domain knowledge', 'Computer Knowledge', 'Personality development', and 'Soft skills', whereas the dependent variable was conventional higher education system helps in grooming the livelihood skills. The research found out that there is a significant impact of higher education on the skill development of students required for employment. . It also tries to bring out the challenges in developing a skilled workforce for the employers through higher education and suggests ways to improve its quality. The study also reveals students perception of education, the institutions and the system.

Keywords: Employability skills, higher education, quality, graduates, job market, soft skills

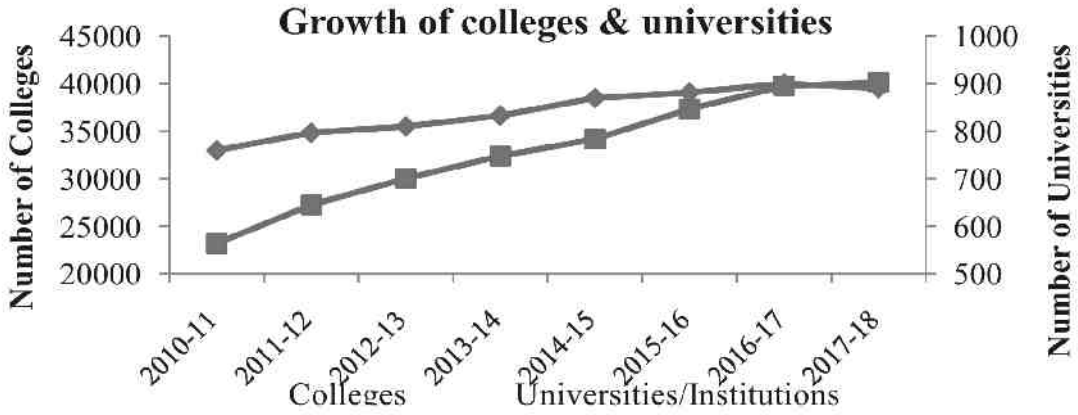
Introduction

Education has always been the backbone and strength of a developed nation. Both primary and higher education play an equally important role by contributing to the systemized body of knowledge and skills. It is the dominating force behind building the quality of human capital that helps in the progress and growth of a country. Its purpose is to prepare the individual for work and life.

Education helps in employment, it does not guarantee it, – and this can be reasonably said with the current job-market situation. International Labor Organization (ILO) stated "…more than one in five young people are not in employment, education, or training (NEET)" – (World Employment Social Outlook Report 2019).The reason is the individuals are not able to acquire skills that are in demand in the labor market, which reduces their future chances of employment. It is very difficult for a developing economy, with a high NEET rate, to continue expansion and growth in the coming future.

India's education system has witnessed growth in colleges and universities over many years. It comprises of universities that have increased from 20 in 1950-51 to 564 in 2010-11 and 903 in 2017-18 as can be seen in Graph-1.

Graph-1



Source: UGC Annual Report 2017-18

Even the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education has increased from 19.4% in 2010-11 to 25.8% in 2017-18.

The more pressing problem, at the moment, is the quality of education - an equally significant and more important part of education. The lack of quality is evident from the fact that the unemployment rate in India was 6.10 % in 2018 as compared to 3.52% in 2017. Also over 30% of Indian youth aged 15-29 years, is not in employment, education or training (NEET). These figures prove that there is a mismatch between quantity and quality. In India, according to the India Skill Report 2019 survey, even though 22% of the hiring intent of employers in India remains with graduates comprising of B.Com, B.Sc, BBA, BCA but around 63% of the respondents of the say that hardly a few of the job seekers possess the necessary skills and fit their requirements.

Literature Review

Sheikh (2017) emphasized the need to transform the higher education system approach in order to make the system more competitive and globally relevant. Collaboration with international institutes and national research centers would promote better quality research.

Reddy (2016) made a comparative analysis of the Indian and Chinese universities on educational performance. He gave several reasons due to which the Indian higher education system has lacked as opposed to the world including US and China. He examined and enumerated many weaknesses like quality ofcurriculum,insufficient funds, lack of quality research and research interest,shortage of skilled teachers, improper infrastructure facilities, mismatch between industryskills and education, poor international exchange programmes and exposure, lack of globally competitive universities, among others. Indian universities were very far behind the Chinese universities in terms of university rankings and research metrics.

India is recognizing the need to improve the employability of graduates by collaborating in enterprise education and entrepreneurship. This has given an opportunity to link the industry, research and education.There is a shift from traditional education towards vocational training, thus opening up the market for international players. Increasing support, participation and exchange of ideas on international platforms in the form of conferences, workshops, seminars via debate and dialogue has enabled in developing a better understanding and long term relationshipin higher education sector amongst various countries of the world.(British Council, 2014).

Eisner (2010), states that higher education makes a graduate marketable. Higher education can provide a direction for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that employers cherish. It addresses today's growing needfor graduates to possesscommunication skills, conceptual clarity, and informational processing ability, along with zeal and adaptability in changing business environment.

Das (2017) stated that commerce education in India starts as a formal education in standard 10th. Commerce being an applied subject has scope for skill development in many areas – both general (B.com, M. Com, M. Phil and Ph. D) and professional (CA, CS, MBA, PGDMM, PGDCA, PGDFM, PGDHRM etc.). Commerce is required in tax planning & management skills, investment management skills, research skills, administrative, teaching, banking, auditing, and many others so focused efforts on developing employability skills in commerce graduates would go a long way in making the workforce relevant and job-ready.

Mansour & Dean (2016) says that one of the main objectives of the education system in the era of globalization is employability. The employers believe that non-technical skills are equally important as are technical skills. He goes onto elucidate what skills are required to secure a job. Skills like attitude, ability to learn and adapt, interpersonal skills, creativity, problem solving, decision making, leadership, team player are necessary.

Ntsizwane et al. (2013) carried a research to investigate desirable graduate workplace skills for commerce graduates. The research identified the most important graduate skills as professionalism, time management, ability/willingness to learn, communication and independence.

Rahmat et al. (2011) mentions four employability skills that every graduate should possess- academic, interpersonal skills, personality management, and exploration skills.

Eisner (2010) indicates the importance of today's college graduates in the US to possess key workplace skills including communication, work ethic, teamwork, initiative, and leadership. He discussed the ability to think and analyse, communicate, and interpersonal interaction as skills that affect hiring decisions.

Hillage& Pollard (1998), in the context of UK, explained employability as an individual's potential to secure a job, maintain it, and geta new one if required. He concluded that employability is not just about vocational and academic skills but on 'softer' skills and attitudes, deployment of knowledge, skills and attitudes. He maintained that career education and counselling especially for adults is necessary,focus should be more on the individual and the supply side, rather than on employers and the demand side.

Pandya (2016) discusses the various problems in higher education including lack of employability of UG and PG students, absence of interdisciplinary courses required by the present higher education system, lack of timely updation in curriculum.Reduction in quality of skilled teachers, lack of interest and aptitude in teachers for the profession.

Sreenivas&Babu (2015) enumerated three main key factors on which quality in higher education depends include adequate availability of skilled faculty, adequate infrastructure facilities and a third party quality assurance system for unbiased and independent evaluation. The five core issues in higher education include quantity/quality, regulation, privatization, staffing, and studying abroad.

Objectives

The general objective of this project is to measure students' perception (commerce students) of their capabilities in employability skills. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

To study the impact of present higher education system (non-professional) on the development of skills and employment for students

To suggest remedies to overcome the constraints in higher education.

Hypothesis

H0: Conventional higher education system does not have a significant impact on grooming the livelihood skills

H1: Conventional higher education system has a significant impact on grooming the livelihood skills

Research Methodology

1. Area of Study: This paper attempts to study the prevailing higher education system in India mainly in Dehradun, Uttarakhand region and the decline in quality and standards concerning employment. Dehradun was selected for the purpose of the study as it being the capital of the State and an educational hub provides us with appropriate respondents.The focus of my study is the undergraduate and post-graduate students enrolled in B.Com and M.Com courses in Dehradun.

2. Data Collection: A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 264 questionnaires were valid for further reference. The colleges which formed part of data collection, included D.A.V. (P.G.) College, M.K.P. College, G.R.D College and Raipur Degree College of Dehradun City. These colleges represent the entire realm of students that can be found in the city.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

To fulfil the above objective, identification of the factors was done with the application of exploratory factor analysis. A total of twenty variables were included in the pilot testing. The final questionnaire and the responses were punched into SPSS for the purpose of running EFA. Initial results showed a KMO less than 0.60. To improve the value of KMO, anti-image table was observed which resulted in taking out three more questions having value of less than 0.40. A final of fifteen variables were left for the analysis. The second run of EFA provided us with the final results, shown in table 1.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.600
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4078.351
	Df	105
	Sig.	.000

Table 1 shows KMO (representing data adequacy) having value of 0.600 and Bartlett's test of Sphericity came to be significant at 0.000. The results indicate that a factor analysis can be applied to a set of given data as the value of KMO statistics is greater than 0.5 and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity is significant.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %

1	5.271	35.139	35.139	5.271	35.139	35.139	3.049	20.330	20.330
2	2.991	19.940	55.079	2.991	19.940	55.079	2.771	18.474	38.804
3	1.962	13.080	68.159	1.962	13.080	68.159	2.745	18.302	57.106
4	1.757	11.712	79.872	1.757	11.712	79.872	2.552	17.012	74.119
5	1.023	6.819	86.691	1.023	6.819	86.691	1.886	12.572	86.691
6	.517	3.448	90.139						
7	.454	3.027	93.166						
8	.274	1.830	94.996						
9	.244	1.626	96.622						
10	.136	.908	97.530						
11	.109	.724	98.254						
12	.101	.677	98.931						
13	.090	.599	99.530						
14	.047	.315	99.845						
15	.023	.155	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 2 explains the total variance explained by EFA. The variables were compressed down to five factors having Eigen values more than one. The total variance explained from the above five factors came to be 86.691%. The percentage variance explained by the five factors were 20.330%, 18.474%, 18.302%, 17.012%, 12.572% respectively, showing almost similar variance by each factor. The factors were given the following names which explained the nature of variables included in each factor: 'Team skills', 'Domain knowledge', 'Computer Knowledge', 'Personality development', and 'Soft skills'.

Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
TS_1			.896		
TS_2			.911		
TS_3			.938		
CK_2					.857
CK_3					.932

DK_1	.743				
DK_2	.888				
DK_3	.895				
DK_4	.708				
PD_1		.936			
PD_2		.917			
PD_3		.894			
ss1				.867	
ss2				.890	
ss3				.848	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 3 shows the results of rotated component matrix which indicates grouping of the variables into five different factors. The variable coefficient loading showed values of more than 0.70, which are considered adequate. Further reliability test for each factor was run by applying Cronbach Alpha. Following values were obtained 0.925, 0.848, 0.910, 0.929, 0.875 indicating high reliability. Cronbach alpha values above 0.60 are considered good, which shows high reliability of factors.

Multiple Regression

Regression is used to test the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable and to measure how much variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable.

In the study the five constructs which are obtained through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) are taken as the independent variables and a variable i.e. "conventional higher education system helps in grooming the livelihood skills" is taken as the dependent variable.

The value of R2equals to .810 indicates that 81.0 per cent of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the five constructs (Table 4).

Table 4: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R^2Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.900[a]	.810	.807	.40022	.810	220.601	5	258	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), SUM_SS, SUM_CK, Sum_TS, SUM_PD, SUM_DK

b. Dependent Variable: dv

The value of R^2 is significant as indicated by the p value (0.000) of F statistic as given in ANOVA Table 5.

Table 5: ANOVA [a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	176.672	5	35.334	220.601	.000[b]
	Residual	41.325	258	.160		
	Total	217.996	263			

a. Dependent Variable: dv

b. Predictors: (Constant), SUM_SS, SUM_CK, Sum_TS, SUM_PD, SUM_DK

The relative importance of the independent variables is obtained by the absolute value of the standardized regression coefficients given in Table 6.From the table it is observed that all the factors are significant in explaining the dependent variable except the second factor i.e. computer knowledge.

Table 6: Coefficients [a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.160	.151		-1.063	.289
	Sum_TS	.033	.009	.118	3.814	.000
	SUM_CK	-.027	.014	-.057	-1.891	.060
	SUM_DK	-.029	.010	-.112	-2.964	.003
	SUM_PD	.018	.007	.076	2.548	.011
	SUM_SS	.348	.012	.918	29.866	.000

a. Dependent Variable: dv

Findings

The overall results of this research study indicate that there is a significant impact of higher education on the skill development of students required for employment i.e. we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis.

There is a huge gap between the traditional higher education system and the skillset requirement by the employers.

The research further finds that the students lack the awareness for skills and have joined the higher education programme for obtaining the degree.

Majority of students do not attend lectures, they just come to the institutions on the day of the exam, so it is very difficult to impart any skills to these students which in turn leads to unemployment.

Suggestions:

Attendance: It is suggested that attendance must be made compulsory for students as well, as obligation to attend classes would increase learning outcome.

Market participation: Currently, the curriculums set by majority of colleges are not in synchronization with what skills the industry is looking for. Local industry participation in designing training programmes and curriculum will better help in matching industry needs.

Vocational training: Vocational skills are difficult to

develop in a short span of time. Introducing vocational training earlier in the school curriculum would help in nurturing the habit of skill development that will go a long way in a successful career.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that there is lack of skills in the commerce students that restricts them from converting a viable job opportunity into an income generating one. The solution can be found in higher education itself. Higher education is the root for skill development in India. Indian workforce would be the talent hub for a skilled workforce in the coming years. Therefore, there is a need to exploit this opportunity by skill development. Students need to develop skills from the beginning in order to continue being useful to themselves as well as to the society at large. They need to understand the importance of skills in today's globalized world and keep themselves updated with regard to new developments. Indian higher education though has taken steps towards developing the employability skills but major thrust needs to be given towards implementation of the programmes. Even the mindset of people needs to change – they should think that acquiring a new skill is their own responsibility and not the sole responsibility of the institution.

As far as the colleges and institutions are concerned, they should not be restricted to the traditional education systems but they should become the epicenters for growth of talent and globally relevant workforce. This can only happen when their curriculum is developed in collaboration with the industry experts and reflect on the needs of the time. Proper infrastructure should be established to enable the students get hands-on experience of the corporate world. New ideas, opportunities, incubation centers in higher education institutions would help bridge this gap between education and skills.

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