

Model For Making Skills Aspirational

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Abstract:

The current, Education, Skilling and Hiring Model is not working. University/Colleges are producing a large number of unemployable degree holders across disciplines. Skill Certification is not in demand as skilling is seen to be relevant for blue collar jobs. Employers do not get trained and skilled candidates against their requirements, leading to gap in demand and supply. Employers end up making huge investments of time, effort, money, in selection and induction training to get work ready employees. There is need to change education and skilling policy to make skilling aspirational for students. There is need for integration of Education, skills, jobs and Entrepreneurship. All stake holders need to play crucial role in making the Education- Skills- Apprenticeship Mode successful. The model envisages skills to be part and way of life. Students would get exposed to Business Sense, Soft Skills, Psychomotor skills, Moral education as part of school education to inculcate love for skills in children. This would also help students to choose higher education courses matching their aptitude and interest. Universities / Colleges would need to develop courses with knowledge and skills getting equal exposure. Apprenticeship with employers for hands on experience to real life expectations at work place would be critical to success of the model.

Implementation of Education-Skills-Apprenticeship model would lead to a happy and economically stronger Society with youth becoming employable, professionally competent to take up professional careers and Entrepreneurship and industry jobs saving hugely on cost of hiring and training. The model implementation would have a huge impact on Economy.

Key Words : Education Policy and Implementation, Skills, Apprenticeship, Entrepreneurship, Employment .

Introduction:

Education vs Skills debate is never ending. Most Countries across the Globe have their education policies focused on education and qualifications as against skill development. Those nations eg. Germany , South Korea , that have included skill development as part of school education and life have done better in skilling their workforce.

Societies across nations respect education more than skills. Whether it is jobs, compensation, status, respect, value, or recognition , education qualifications get priority over skill certifications. Qualifications become the criteria for eligibility for jobs rather than skills or ability to do the job. Skills are meant for so called blue collar or lower level jobs and workers. Degrees/ Educational Qualifications lead you to white collar or superior positions in organisations.

This anomaly has lead to poor quality education , race for mass production of qualified youth with many university degrees who are unemployed and unemployable . There is a huge gap in demand and supply. Those having degrees and educational qualifications do not have the requisite skills to perform the task for which they are to be hired. Consequently , employers end up spending huge time, effort and money in training these qualified youth with university degrees to make them productive to perform on the job. This a great dent on company profits and national resources , opportunity loss and economy. .

While lot of initiatives have been taken globally by UN organisations (ILO, UNDP, WB) National Governments to bring focus to skills, there is a confusion as to what is more important, Educational Qualifications or Skills Certifications. Even though Governments have created Ministries for Skills , Education and Entrepreneurship to give

give boost to each one of them , it is not giving the desired results. Employers continue to give preference to Educational Qualifications in employment. Entrepreneurship is considered to be for those who fail to get jobs as getting employed preferably in Government is first choice of youth.

The scenario needs to change if the National and World Productivity and Economy has to take a quantum jump. There is need for integration of Education (School and Higher Education) , Skills Development, Entrepreneurship and Employment. All of them are interrelated and need to be seen as a bunch together and not either or by all stakeholders namely Students, Parents, Teachers, Education Institutions, Governments, Employers, and Society at large. To make skills aspirational , there is need to correct the perception in the minds of all stake holders that skills are meant for blue collar jobs and educational qualifications for white collar jobs. This perception will change only when skills become way of life in Society. Young generation needs to appreciate that skills are necessary for every walk of life ,be it jobs, professional career, Entrepreneurship ,Social work etc. Skills make them self reliant, confident, versatile , independent and ready to take on all kinds of life challenges with focus on areas of their interest and aptitude. Many years back , I met a trainer from South Africa. He shared with me a training module that was being used to Teach / Train Primary school students. The title of the course was "Business Sense ".I was surprised , as I could not imagine Business skills to be taught to Primary students as in India, Business Skills was not even part of Graduate programs in early nineties. The course focused in Basic Maths, Communication , English and Negotiation skills , skills that would be useful to a person in every walk of life.

Integration of Education, Skills, Employment and Entrepreneurship :

Let us explore the possibilities for integration of School education, Higher education, Skills, Entrepreneurship, professional Career, Social work and Jobs. An Education-Skills-Apprenticeship Model is a possibility. The policies, processes and systems of various stake holders would need to change drastically.

Role of School : Schools need to develop course content for rounded development of the student from day one. Course content and pedagogy needs to change to make learning fun and engaging for the student. Schools to focus on Learning concepts as well as skills. The focus should be on Life skills (soft and Hard) that will help the child to be independent. As the child grows in higher classes in school , he / she be offered options to pick up courses/ skills of his/ her interest/ aptitude. School education to include regular courses , classes for Business Sense (Maths, Communication, Negotiation), Behavioral Skills (soft skills and Emotional Intelligence), Value / Moral Education, Psychomotor Skills (Gardening, Cooking , Carpentry, etc.) . This would help in imparting Life Skills and developing respect for Dignity of Labor/ Skills.

Role of Parents : Parents need to learn to let the children choose their career path and choose courses/ skills they love and enjoy. Role of Higher Education Institutes : Universities/ Colleges would need to make major shift the way they operate today. University/ Colleges would need to offer only courses that have linkage or relevance to a profession/ job role/ career. Generic qualifications will need to be dropped .Diploma/ Degree/ PG programs would have to have component of Knowledge/ Skills and Behavior relevant to the profession. Class room and laboratory based teaching and Training would not be enough to give students requisite exposure to real life issues and make them competent to perform on the job from day one of employment. Current practice of Summer Training, Industrial Training practiced by educational institutes is not working. Students end up getting certificate with very little real experience. Articleship for Chartered Accountants and Internship for Doctors is a model that is working well and prepare students for the real world. Universities / Colleges would need to introduce Diploma/ Degree Apprenticeship Model. Where students get both Knowledge on relevant concepts as well experience on the job to get real life situation and conditions. This model can have multiple combinations of class room and on the job learning. What is important is that student spends almost

same time on the job learning with an employer as conceptual learning in the class room. For implementation of the Education-Skills-Apprenticeship Model , universities/ colleges would need to focus on content (relevant to job) which would need to be developed in consultation with line managers and supervisors of job. There would be need to focus on outcome or competencies development. Consequently the examination/ Assessment and Certification process would need to be both Formative and Summative with focus on assessment of competencies acquired and demonstrated. There would be need for development of course content not only for class room teaching, but also for On the Job training/ Apprenticeship. Involvement of faculty during Apprenticeship is critical to ensure correlation between class room learning and on the job learning. there would be need to develop processes for delivery and assessment in line with content. One of the critical component of this model is the role of Employer Managers/ Supervisors during Apprenticeship/ On the job Training. They would need to be trained about their role, expectations and responsibilities. There would have to be Training of Faculty and Mentors(Industry Managers) for effective implementation of the model. At the end of the Education-Skills- Apprenticeship Model completion, the student would be fully equipped with knowledge, skills and behavior. The student would be job ready. There would be no need for employer to train him/ her through Induction Training. The student would also be ready to be an entrepreneur if he/ she so desires. Global experience demonstrates that Internship/ Apprenticeship has resulted in employment of students in the same organization where he/ she had undergone Internship/ Apprenticeship. This would address the issue of gap between employer needs vs availability of right candidates. Would also save employers huge hiring and training cost besides advantage of having productive work force from day one. Role of Employers : Employers (Govts, Corporates ,Industry, MSME , Service Providers) will need to change their mind set and so called Rules and Regulations/ Policies to move away from Educational qualifications based hiring to competency based hiring. The Job Specifications/ Job descriptions/ Eligibility Criteria for various jobs/ positions will have to be modified to make it competency and skill based . This alone will make a visible change in perception of students and parents towards skills. This would also need to change for promotions and career growth to motivate employees to upskill and upgrade themselves for movement to higher level positions as against current practice of seniority (no. of years of service/ experience) with no relevance to skills and competencies for the new role. Role of Government : Government has a major role to play. Implementation of Education- Skills-Apprenticeship Model would need Govt to make major changes towards integration of Ministries of Education, Skills , Entrepreneurship , DPIIP and Employment and Labour. There is need to make consistent policies and eliminate overlaps. Govt. would need to ensure quick transformation of Universities and Colleges from traditional to Education-Skills Apprenticeship Model.

Govt. would need to introduce policies to enforce active participation of Employers. Skills Cess Model of Uk is an interesting model where employers pay upfront Levy to Govt. which is refunded to employers against expenditure on skilling including Apprenticeship. One will have to think of a model which not a burden on employers but an incentive. Current scheme of Stipend and reimbursement of Training cost under NAPS is not enough motivator for employers, resulting in poor outcome.

While the Education-Skills- Apprenticeship Model may look good on paper, the success of the model will depend a lot on role of all stake holders and quality assurance of the entire ecosystem. A mass communication/ education campaign would be needed to bring all stake holders on board for the success of Education-Skills- Apprenticeship Model. This is the only hope if Unemployment challenges have to be addressed. This will save citizens huge wasteful expenditure on acquiring educational qualifications leading to unemployed youth , make students employable, students would earn while learning, save industry cost of hiring and training and give them opportunity benefit of using employees from day one, contribute to national productivity and economy leading to benefit to Global Economy.