

## HIGHER EDUCATION IN RELATION TO SKILL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN INDIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

*The accelerated economic growth has increased the demand for skilled manpower that has highlighted the shortage of skilled manpower in the country. Employees worldwide state a variety of reasons for their inability to fill jobs, ranging from undesirable geographic locations to candidates looking for more pay than what the employers have been offering. India is among the top countries in which employers are facing difficulty in filling up the jobs. For India, the difficulty to fill up the jobs is 48%, which is above the global standard of 34% in 2012. The lack of available applicants, shortage of hard skills and shortage of suitable employability, including soft skills, are some of the key reasons in finding a suitable candidate for available jobs in the country. Strengthening India's education and skills system is essential to boost inclusive growth and take India to a higher phase of economic development. India's Five-Year Plan (2012-17) aims to raise the overall literacy rate to over 80% and reduce the gender gap to less than 10%. The 2013-14 budget focuses on the poor, with the goal of creating opportunities for young people to acquire the education and skills needed for decent employment. But expanding access to education needs to be matched by determined efforts to raise quality and relevance. Recent improvements in educational attainment and deeper integration into global value chains have often not been sufficient to ensure the competitiveness of the labour force, as shown by the lower quality of education.*

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Skill Development, Nation, Progress and Departments.

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### INTRODUCTION:

Education and Skill development becomes quite an imperative sector to appropriate this massive human resource. The supply of public education is inefficient and leaves a significant shortfall which is being filled by private education institutions. The working age group between 15 to 59 years is its largest bulk constituting of more than 65% of total population. In such a backdrop, 29% of children are enrolled in private schools. In higher education sector, private institutions, colleges and universities are playing a pivotal role in the education landscape.

The world, skills development has been addressed with considerable seriousness. Sample this, according to figures of 2008, the percentage of workforce receiving skills training is 96per cent in Korea, 80per cent in Japan, 75per cent in Germany, 68per cent in UK and 10per cent in India. Moreover, it is estimated that 75per cent of the new job opportunities to be created in India

will be skill-based. While the skills set has changed and employers look more and more for 21st century skills in the job seekers, it is required to take a close look at the academic nature of our curricula and their mode of transaction. It is not that we do not have enough degree holders in the country; we have a number of them but the world of business and industry thinks that they are not employable. Surveys and studies are conducted at regular intervals and it is reiterated in the surveys and studies that 80per cent workforce in rural and urban India does not possess any identifiable marketable skills.

India has one of the world's fastest growing economies, but a lack of skills among the working population is one of the main bottlenecks to higher and more inclusive growth. Strong growth in key sectors, including information and communication technology (ICT), raises the demand for skilled workers. But employer surveys indicate skills shortages in ICT, financial services, tourism, retail, and skill-intensive manufacturing: in 2013, 61% of India's employers reported recruitment difficulties. These shortages, aggravated by a shortage of qualified trainers and the low willingness of employers to pay skills premia, have forced graduates into jobs unrelated to their training. Only 2.5 million vocational training places at the postsecondary level are available, while 12.8 million people enter the labour market every year (see Table). The youth unemployment rate is five times that for adults, indicating challenges in the school-to-work transition. Participation rates are very low for prime-age women, youth and older workers. India's informal sector employs approximately 85% of all workers and provides limited access to training. Informally acquired skills are not easily recognised, hampering transit to the formal sector. Gross tertiary enrolment rates increased from 9% to 25% between 2000 and 2012. While India has dramatically expanded access to education since 2000, only 63% of 15 year olds are in secondary school and the participation of two Indian states in the PISA '2009+' round suggest that learning outcomes are low. With 28.5 million students enrolled in 2012, The first challenge is to improve the quality of primary and secondary education, including second chances for youth and adults with only basic skills. Increasing demand for skilled workers is not being met

by the Indian education and skills system. Increased and better quality vocational training and on-the-job training might help address this. India needs to improve the quality of its higher education system and expand access, while better using and disseminating the knowledge gained through innovative education models being developed in India and elsewhere. New technologies could be exploited further, including massive open online courses and virtual classrooms. The Indian tertiary education system is the world's second largest after China. But it is not clear whether the average quality of the teaching and learning is up to international standards. The 2009 National Policy on Skill Development marks a major change in Indian policy in this area. The initiative aims to improve the quality and relevance of skills and training, and make education and training more responsive to employer needs while also including under-represented groups. It seeks to expand apprenticeships, and to train 500 million people by 2020. Open and distance education, especially in the postsecondary sector, has always been a large and important part of the system but faces the universal problems of quality and recognition. Quality assurance procedures have been established and systems of oversight and accreditation implemented, but not all quality challenges have yet been adequately addressed. In a country where there is a large dropout rate of children quitting school at young age and a minimal percentage going into higher studies, do we have more choice than tapping into this small percentage by upskilling them in order to render them readily employable? In sync with this, S Ramadorai, Advisor to the Prime Minister in National Skill Development Council, says, "60per cent of India's 1.2 billion people are in the working age group. However, only 10per cent of the 300 million children in India between the age of 6 and 16 will pass school and go beyond. Only 5per cent of India's labor force in the age group 19-24 years is estimated to have acquired formal training. Despite this, our economy is clocking an 8.5per cent growth. Imagine what could be if we could leverage our demographic dividend fully."

Let's also understand that in a large country like India, only government agencies and system cannot accomplish this task of upskilling the youth. Private

companies with requisite experience in skills training may also be roped in to expedite the process of enhancing the skills development of youth in colleges and universities. In today's world, particularly in India, the future and relevance of Higher Education is inextricably linked with Skills Development; the earlier Higher Education accepts this and acts accordingly, the better it is for the country and its growth. Skills Development is not an additional course that can be added to a university curriculum but it requires to be integrated into the training and education of a youth who will have to be readily employable and competent enough to run the operations of a company or business in India. A youth seeking job in the market today is expected to have salient life and soft skills which he has no clue about till s/he faces an interview. Higher Education does little to address the skills requirement of a youth raring to go into the world and make a mark. To make it amply clear as to how Higher Education has got to address the issue of skills development and employability, no better evidence than what Planning Commission's Approach Paper to the Twelfth Five Year Plan says: "There is a need for a clear focus on improving the employability of graduates. Indian higher education is organized into 'General' and 'Professional' streams. General education which is an excellent foundation for successful knowledge based careers, often fails to equip graduates with necessary work skills due to its poor quality. Graduates now require the skills beyond the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic (the '3Rs'). Skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity (the '4Cs') are now important in more and more jobs. Accordingly, there is need to focus on the '4Cs'. Special emphasis on verbal and written communication skills, especially in English would go a long way in improving the employability of the large and growing mass of disempowered youth."

India lags far behind in imparting skill training as compared to other countries. Only 10% of the total workforce in the country receives skill training. Further, 80% of the entrants into the workforce do not have the opportunity for skill training. It is to understand that India reported to be the second largest consumer of MOOCs after the United States. Indian students enrol heavily in MOOCs produced by American providers, but increasingly Indian universities and platforms are also providing MOOCs. However, as with open and distance education, oversight and accreditation issues remain.

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