



6. SKILL DEVELOPMENT: HIGHER EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION:-

Rate of the economic development is the function of 4Ms, these are materials, machines, methods and manpower. Manpower happens to be the most dynamic and crucial input for effective utilization of remaining 3Ms, all other resources but manpower are static. How effectively these human resources are put to use and in what manner the requirements of manpower are met by industries, is a very important and critical input that decides growth rate of the economy. Economic development is the function of proper mix of static and dynamic resources. Just availability of human resources is no guarantee of economic development. It is the quality, competence, and ability of this manpower that decides how effectively resources can be put to use. Skills, caliber, core competence, confidence and commitments make the manpower use worthy. Of these qualities skills happens to be the most important input. Skills can be developed through appropriate training, mentoring and by acquiring suitable learning methods. Absence of skills results into reducing the quality of manpower and thus affecting the growth process. Therefore, it is important to understand why the country like India faces skill shortages and what measures can be taken up to minimize the skill shortages.

The present paper highlights the most important issue associated with non-availability of skilled manpower and implications of skills shortage. It should be rightly understood the economic development occurs only when all the inputs are rightly introduced for the process of economic development. Natural resources, technology and system are definitely very important inputs but more important than these is the human resource. Availability of qualified, competent, innovative and skilled manpower is the principal factor. Every sector of the economy whether agriculture, industry or services, requires skilled manpower. The type and nature of skills may differ but availability of skilled manpower is a principal requirement. When any sector of the economy faces scarcity of qualified manpower, its growth process is adversely hampered. It cannot stand to the competition and loses its competitive edge over others. Sometimes, the only factor responsible for decline and death of a particular industry is non-availability of adequate, qualified manpower and therefore it becomes necessary to address the problem of skill shortages. Developing competent manpower through appropriate measures thus becomes the principal tasks before the economic planners. This paper highlights what are the root causes of non-availability of skilled manpower, what are the implications of skill shortages on economic and industrial development and what measures be taken to address the problem of skill shortages.

Analysis of the Study :-

Skills

Skill for all practical purposes means ability to apply concepts and knowledge in practice to address a particular problem to develop a meaningful decision package and to lead a given situation or group for achievement of a particular objective

Skill Development

Skill development means planned and systematic approach to enrich knowledge, develop attitude and enhance abilities of a person through well-defined learning program.

Core Competence

A core competency is a concept in management theory introduced by, C.K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel. It can be defined as “a harmonized combination of multiple resources and skill that distinguish a firm in the marketplace”. Core competencies fulfill three criteria : Provides potential access to a wide variety of markets.

Skill Shortage



Skill shortage is a catch-all term used to describe a range of situations in which an employer finds it hard to find a worker with the right skills.

Economic Development

Economic development can be defined as efforts that seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community by creating and/or retaining jobs and supporting or growing incomes and the tax base.

The article written by M.A. Sudhir and M. Hilaria Soundari titled 'Skill Development Initiatives in India' identifies various challenges associated with skill development, skill gaps and its impact on Indian economy and initiatives taken by Govt. of India to minimize the skill gap. The article also emphasizes on various initiatives taken by NGOs to minimize the skill gap. E Mrudula in her article 'Talent Dearth- Causes and Solutions' highlighted implications of talent, non-availability of talent and its impact on economic development. The 'War Intensifies' published in *MBA review* has also highlighted major problems associated with right deployment of available workforce and its implications on poor productivity and low efficiency of industries; Tandan Vineet in the Article 'Talent Deficiency Syndrome : Who Moved My Talent' has rightly identified various issues associated with talent availability, absence of skilled manpower and talent deficiency. The author has rightly hinted at various challenges as a result posed due to want of suitable and requisite quantum of talent; and Catt Hilton and Patricia Scudamore in the book 'Solving Skill Shortages' has raised certain questions related with skill deficiency, non-availability of skilled manpower and what measures can be taken to enhance accessibility, availability and application of available talent. The author has recommended establishment of a talent pool to develop right system of talent deployment (Catt and Patricia, 1997).

Need of the Study :-

India has adopted a liberal economic approach in the year 1991, the pace of economic reforms has taken up the speed and direction resulting in continuous enhancement of growth rate of industrial development. However, industrial development is not the function of mere policy reforms; it also requires appropriate economic and industrial planning. Development of well-established infrastructure and adequate supply of materials, funds, and competent manpower. The proactive approach of the government has helped to attract investments from Foreign Institutional Investors, similarly the private entrepreneurs have come forward to start a variety of new units and industrial undertakings. However, without supply to competent manpower it is not possible to convert the policies into results. Barring human resources all other resources are static and hence no one can discount the importance of skilled and talented manpower. Major issues associated with shortage of skilled manpower.

Interpretation :-

Education needs to address not only human resource needs of the society, but also the developmental needs and aspirations of the individuals, their ability to think and reason, build up self respect as well as respect for others, think ahead and plan their future. It looks particular on recent trends emphasizing education concerning life skills, psychosocial abilities that help people to think, feel, act and interact as individuals and participating members of the society.

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable us to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life, in other words psychosocial competency. They are a set of human skills acquired via teaching or direct experience that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily human life. The subject varies greatly depending on social norms and community expectations but skills that functions for wellbeing and aid individuals to develop into active and productive members of their communities are considered as life skills.

The term 'Life Skills' refers to the skills we need to make the most out of life. Life skills are usually associated with managing and living a better quality of life. They help us to accomplish our ambitions and live to our full potential. Any skill that is useful in our life can be considered a life skill.

Life skills have been defined as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO). 'Adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. 'Positive



behavior' implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions.

Life skill education is the soul of education that can create the shield for human survival on this planet. Life skills education aims to provide students with strategies to make healthy choices that contribute a meaningful life. It facilitates a complete and integrated development of young people to function effectively as social beings and make them socially more sensitive.

Significances of the Study:-

Key Life skills include psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Essentially, there are two kinds of skills- those related to thinking termed as 'thinking skills': and skills related to dealing with others termed as 'social skills'. While thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behavior and negotiating effectively. 'Emotional' can be perceived as a skill not only in making rational decisions but also in being able to make others agree to one's point of view. To do that, coming to terms first with oneself is important. Thus, self management is an important skill including managing / coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure. Young people as advocates need both thinking and social skills for consensus building and advocacy on issues of concern.

There are many different understandings of life skills but no definition is universally accepted. Different organizations attach different meanings to the term. The International Bureau of Education (IBE) derives its understanding from the Delor's four pillars of learning – learning to know, learning to do.

Life skills defined in a general way mean a mix of knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and values and designate the possession of some skill and know-how to do something, or reach at the goal. They include competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, ability to organize, social and communication skills, adaptability, problem solving, ability to cooperate on a democratic basis that are needed for actively shaping a peaceful future. A number of such lists exist which show a high degree of correspondence, though few lists are in complete agreement.

The constituents of generally defined life skills can be described in the following way: a) they include the abilities necessary to apply the conceptual thinking and reflection in concrete situations; b) they imply capacities to be involved in effective interaction with the environment and provide an appropriate motivational attitude; c) they involve psychological prerequisites for successful performance, such as problem solving capacities, self-confidence and skills for critical thinking.

The Ten Core Life Skills as laid down by WHO are :

1. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure and the media.

2. Empathy

To have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large, we need to understand and care about other peoples' needs, desires and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without empathy, our communication with others will amount to one-way traffic. Worst, we will be acting and behaving according to our self-interest and are bound to run into problems. We grow up in relationships with many people – parents, brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles and aunts, classmates, friends and neighbours. When we understand ourselves as well as others, we are better prepared to communicate our needs and desires. We will be more equipped to say what we want people to know, present our thoughts and ideas and tackle delicate issues without offending other people. At the same time, we will be able to elicit support from others, and win their understanding.

Empathy can help us to accept others, who may be very different from ourselves. This can improve social interactions, especially, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. Empathy can also help



to encourage nurturing behaviour towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance, as is the case with AIDA sufferers, or people with mental disorders, who may be stigmatized and ostracized by the people they depend upon for support. *Components of empathy* : Sympathy, Sensitivity, Objectivity, Social inclination and responsibility and Social obligations. Empathy helps in maintaining interpersonal relations, maintaining stress, maintaining emotions, self awareness and also helps in effective communication.

3. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness includes recognition of 'self', our character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others. *Components of self-awareness* : Objectivity, Introspection ability, Ability to accept strengths and weaknesses, Reflectivity, Accepting self as it is.

4. Creative thinking

Creative thinking is a novel way of seeing or doing things that is characteristic of four components- fluency (generating new ideas), flexibility (shifting perspective easily), originality (conceiving of something new), and elaboration (building on other ideas). *Components of Creative Thinking*: Divergent thinking, Innovativeness, Novelty, Fluency, Flexibility, Unconventionality, Radicalism, Boldness, Originality, Independence and Elaboration. Creative thinking skill helps in problem solving, and decision making.

5. Interpersonal Relationship

Interpersonal relationship skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It may mean keeping, good relations with family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively. *Components of interpersonal relationship*: Empathy, Sympathy, Sensitivity, Tolerance, Positive attitude, Reciprocity, Etiquettes, Healthy distance and Lack of prejudices and stereotypes. Interpersonal relation skill helps in empathy, maintaining emotions and also helps in effective communication.

6. Problem Solving

Problem solving helps us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain. *Components of problem solving*: Self-knowledge, Positive attitude, Divergent thinking, Objectivity, Rationality, Intelligence, Emotional stability and Analytic and synthetic ability, Problem solving helps in maintaining interpersonal relations, maintaining stress, decision making and also helps in maintaining emotions.

7. Decision-making

Decision making helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health. It can teach people how to actively make decisions about their actions in relation to healthy assessment of different options and, what effects these different decisions are likely to have. *Components of decision making*: Analytic and synthetic abilities. Self-knowledge, Objectivity, Rationality, General intelligence, Knowledge of the situation, Emotional stability, Logical thinking and Creative thinking. Decision making skill helps in problem solving, maintaining interpersonal relations, and also helps in maintaining stress.

8 Effective Communication

Effective communication means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, and also needs and fears. And it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need. *Components of effective communication* : Analytic and synthetic abilities, Expressive skills, Non-verbal skills, Posture and gesture, Presentation, Objectivity, Quickness to react on the spur of the movement, Creativity, Sensitivity, Imaginability, Patient listening and Knowledge ability. Effective communication skill helps in maintaining interpersonal relations, maintaining stress, and also helps in maintaining emotions.



Importance of Life Skills Study :-

In a constantly changing environment, having life skills is an essential part of being able to meet the challenges of everyday life. The dramatic changes in global economies over the past five years have been matched with the transformation in technology and these are all impacting on education, the workplace and our home life. To cope with the increasing pace and change of modern life, students need new life skills such as the ability to deal with stress and frustration. Today's students will have many new jobs over the course of their lives, with associated pressures and the need for flexibility.

Benefits for the Individual :-

In everyday life, the development of life skills helps students to :

- find new way of thinking and problem solving;
- recognize the impact of their actions and teaches them to take responsibility for what they do rather than blame others;
- build confidence both in spoken skills and for group collaboration and cooperation;
- analyse options, make decisions and understand why they make certain choices outside the classroom; and
- develop a greater sense of self-awareness and appreciation for others.

Benefits for Employment :-

While students work hard to get good grades, many still struggle to gain employment. According to research by the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) in 2011 employers were looking not just for academic success but key employability skills including :

- the ability to self-manage, solve problems and understand the business environment;
- working well as part of a team;
- time and people management;
- agility and adaptability to different roles and flexible working environments; and
- the potential to lead by influence.

Benefits for Society :-

The more we develop life skills individually, the more these affect and benefit the world in which we live :

- Recognising cultural awareness and citizenship makes international cooperation easier.
- Respecting diversity allows creativity and imagination to flourish developing a more tolerant society.
- Developing negotiation skills, the ability to network and empathise can help to build resolutions rather than resentments.

Therefore, life skills are a large group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills, which can help people, to make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self management skills that may help an individual to lead a healthy and productive life. Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote mental well being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. Most development professionals agree that life skills are generally applied in the context of health and social events. Life skills empower young people to take positive action to protect them and promote health and positive social relationships. Self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence are essential tools for understanding one's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, the individual is able to discern available opportunities and prepare to face possible threats. This leads to the development of a social awareness of the concerns of one's family and society.

Challenges in Skill Development :-

It is again a fact that we are third largest education system in the world but we do not match with global standards in quality. Most of our colleges and institutions suffer from under investments in labs, workshops, libraries and consequently lag behind in providing quality inputs. Most of our institutions follow traditional methods of teaching without following best practices like experiential learning, activity based learning, problem solving techniques etc. In the absence of application and job oriented courses, the domain knowledge of our students remains only theoretical. In the highly skilled competitive global



scenario, our education system needs to shift from knowledge centric to skill centric. Traditionally, the country had advantage of caste based skill oriented society due to which from time immemorial, the society was producing artisans and craft men in different trades through traditional family linkage. Almost each and every skilling area had been traditionally assigned to a community and the knowledge and expertise was passed on to successive generations naturally with ease. However, we did not take advantage of traditional skilling knowledge of our community and initiated no special efforts to update and modernize those skills in the background of industrial revolution. This happened due to lack of good policy framework. In fact, educated youths generally look for white collar jobs and are not very much interested in vocational courses and, therefore, our skilling eco system did not improve as compared to other developing countries, especially in South East Asia region. In countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, skill development has been integrated into school education system right from the elementary education. The students while studying elementary core subjects are also given inputs pertaining to various skills depending upon their preferences and choices. This induces in them the spirit of learning a lot through hands on session and that is how it is inbuilt into their personalities and they never consider learning various skills as an inferior input as compared to core educational subjects. On the other hand, in our country skilling related vocational courses are looked down upon and our vocational courses do not attract good and sufficient number of students. A psychological barrier has been created and an impression has gone around that only students, who are average or who have dropped out from formal education, should opt for skill development courses. This is because in spite of very rich background of caste based skill oriented society, we have not modernized and further developed our traditional skill as per need of times due to defective policy framework.

Critical Issues Facing Skill Development :-

An important reason for lack of good policy framework has been that no effective equivalence policies were in vogue to mainstream students who went in exclusively for skilling of vocational courses. Normally, lot of bridge courses should have been adopted to make linkages between skilling achievements and standardized qualifications. Though the Government has of late realized this big lacuna and has come out with lot of different level courses, but it has to go a long way. To make it happen urgently and effectively, regular positive policy interventions and connect between industry and academia has to be ensured. This can be further given push through incentives to institutions and industries for taking up skill development initiatives through short term and long term certification courses. Both academia and industry would have to go in for sharing of resources and faculty / resource persons. There is further need of setting up of Entrepreneurship Parks, Industrial Parks, Innovation and Incubation Centres etc. to catalyze skilling atmosphere in the country. Public Private Partnership models for catalyzing, evolving and sustaining skill eco-system would help in a big way. There is further need for collaborating with reputed international players for skill upgradation, which will help in integrating skill development in core educational programmes right from the schools.

Conclusions :-

Education in general increases the efficiency of each individual worker and helps economies to move up the value chain beyond manual tasks or simple production processes. It increases the collective ability of workforce to carry out existing task more efficiently and effectively, facilitates the transfer of knowledge about new information, products, and technologies created by others and increases creativity.

As a growing body of empirical literature shows, differences in productivity are the main determinants of cross-country prosperity levels. Increasing productivity therefore needs to be at the core of the policy agendas of governments and international organizations. The Human Capital Index reveals several trends and challenges in the current education, skills and jobs agenda and the future outlook for major economies. Current education systems are also time-compressed in a way that may not be suited to current or future labour markets. There is a need to rethink how the India's human capital endowment is invested in and leveraged for social and economic prosperity and the well-being of all. Building good institutions and governance is as important as investing in human capital for wealth enhancement. The development of human capital and technology adoption shall be the great enablers in Indian transformation.



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