Skill Development: A Necessary Aspect for Indian Higher Education

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Abstract: Higher education institutions are starting to adapt and respond to professionals already in employment, mature learners and the demand and great need from enrolled students for skills for employability has now became vast. This is leading universities into the skills market. Many have recently started to offer short courses and flexible modes of study. It is possible that in coming decades many more higher education institutions across the country are beginning to engage in the skills sector.

Key Words: Higher Education, Mature Learners, Skills Education.

INTRODUCTION: STUDENTS AND EARLY STAGE RESEARCHERS

Without exception, all interviewees are seriously understand the value of skill development in the institution that's why they stressed the importance of transforming their institutions better to provide the basic needs towards research for the next generation of students and early stage researchers.

The main three areas emerged are:

a. The provision of basic research facilities and a keen environment towards research to the students and early stage researchers for the development of research skills at primitive stage of their career.

b. Enable students to have international experiences during their studies at undergraduate and postgraduate levels to provide them with a globally relevant education, develop an open, wider world-view and ensure they are able to compete in an international market with their knowledge.

c. Provide all students with skills related to employability and job creation, including English, entrepreneurship and enterprise skills [5].

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AT PRIMITIVE STAGE IN STUDENT LIFE:

It is a matter of extreme concern and serious thought that graduates, undergraduates, PhD students and post-doctoral researchers are not being exposed to research experience at early enough in their careers and this can be considered one of the key reasons for the general low quality of research in Indian institutions with a drastic scarcity of students having interest to move ahead in this area at undergraduates and postgraduates choosing to pursue academic careers in these fields.

Most academics interviewed saw a bleak future ahead for Indian higher education unless this was reversed; on the other hand India's academia is drastically understaffed with 30-40% of teaching posts vacant. Moreover, PhD output in India is seriously lagging behind all the other BRICS countries, that India produces less than half the number of PhDs as China was frequently cited by interviewees. There was concern that without the best minds of the next generation entering the academy, India would not be able to increase the quality of its research, nor successfully compete in research and innovation in the global marketplace [8].

RESEARCHER SKILLS:

Most institutions wanted the UK to support capacity building in researcher skills at undergraduate through to post-doctoral researcher levels. Skill areas mentioned included:

- Researchers should have fine knowledge of English
- Proposal/bid writing creatively
- Take initiative towards solving any problem by creative approaches.
- have a view to analysis matters critically
- Collaborative and intercultural global working, including in virtual teams
- Good learner training and fine information sourcing and management

MUTUAL STUDENTS EXCHANGE PROGRAMS:

Almost all institutions interviewed requested bilateral student exchanges with the UK. There was little interest in one-way exchanges (from India to foreign countries), but there was for a mechanism to allow foreign students to come to India [4]. The UK and the US were perceived to be lagging behind other countries; Germany and France were viewed as much more active. Interviewees cautioned that the UK was seen as less receptive to student exchange. If this trend continued, future collaboration opportunities may be hampered. Although most of the initiatives cited by interviewees were small-scale, they were held in high regard.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS:

There was interest in the idea of international student research conferences. The US was reported to have been running an annual event for the last five years (mainly for US academics and Indian early stage researchers), but there is interest in a UK or European style initiative [7]. Several institutions saw future university classrooms linked internationally through learning partnerships with universities in other countries facilitated by technology, not as one-off activities, but as a fully integrated and regular feature of the student experience. Several interviewees articulated a need for workshops and seminars to be delivered in India by foreign academics skilled in communicating science issues, challenges and theories in ways which motivate and excite young researchers; it was felt the UK and Germany were strong in this area.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN SCIENCE EDUCATION:

Indian institutes of science and researches, with their unique mission to integrate state-of-the-art research with teaching and learning, are branching out into public science education, where there may be opportunities for UK engagement. Strong interest was shown in British educational resources for science, particularly digital and video. The public engagement may help the researcher and learners some new and exciting ideas in this regards.

SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY:

The majority of those interviewed felt that many Indian universities and colleges were performing poorly in preparing students for employment [7]. Skills needed for the future, outlined by the interviewees, include analytical thinking, problem-solving, critical reasoning, collaborative working, innovation, creativity and ICT skills. English was considered essential. The Indian institutions should introduce vocational courses with high techniques, in their academies so that they can produce skilled learners for country.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ENTERPRISE EDUCATION:

Interviews revealed a growing awareness among leaders and senior managers of the importance of entrepreneurship and enterprise education for future employability and job creation. Not a single institution visited appeared to be offering these subjects, either as stand-alone modules or embedded across the curriculum, but most identified this as a critical gap [1]. There were indications that States may be interested in funding initiatives which develop the entrepreneurial skills of students as an integral part of their studies. Although it seems that many Indian institutions have not yet incorporated enterprise education or entrepreneurship in their programmers, there are small signs that the employment market is driving a more entrepreneurial mind-set in students. IIM Ahmadabad has started to see a tangible shift in attitude and an increase in entrepreneurialism in their graduates. Five years ago, only five out of 500 graduates would take up ‘non-conventional’ careers; now, at least 100 (20%) do so, by starting their own businesses, or entering radically different forms of employment, despite being offered well-paid jobs in the management sector. This shift may also be a consequence, as previously mentioned, of the greater financial stability, and therefore more appetite for risk-taking, of the upper middle classes. The same trend may not be seen in the emerging lower middle classes.

CONCLUSION:

Several interviewees indicate that the future importance of integrating vocational education and higher education through a national qualifications framework which would enable easier mobility and access to study for students in both directions. Communities colleges were identified as key institutions for linkages with higher education and will provide positive outputs if manage properly. Interviewees are keen interested toward working with UK

higher education, colleges and bodies with experience in bridging higher education and skills education and post placement support to assist the student can be became beneficial in this direction.

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