Transforming Management Education in Line With Youth Expectation

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Introduction

Education is considered to be a powerful tool as it provides people the ability to take charge of their lives. Despite the persistent stress laid on education, there is still a dearth of skilled manpower to tackle the rising needs and demands of the economy. The economic slowdown is increasingly creating problems for the global job market. Joblessness remains high and youth unemployment is reaching crisis proportions. At the same time, employers are also facing the paucity of right kind of high-skilled employees to improve their bottom line and contribute to the GDP growth.

As per the report released by ILO "The Global Employment Trends 2014"[1] employment growth remains weak, unemployment continues to rise, especially among young people, and large numbers of disheartened potential workers are still outside the labour market. The report also focused on the need to add young people into the labour force. As per the report, approximately 74.5 million youth under the age of 25 are jobless, marking global youth unemployment rate of over 13% which is almost three times as high as the adult unemployment rate.

Today unemployment and underemployment are two of the serious problems with which India is grappling. Interestingly, in India unemployment rate amongst illiterate youth is lower than educated youth as per Labour Bureau's "Third Annual Employment & Unemployment Survey 2012-13 " released in November 2013. While unemployment rate among illiterate youth increased to a mere 3.7% for the age group 15-29 years in 2012-2013, from 1.2 % in 2011-2012, the unemployment amongst the graduate youth increased to 32 % during 2012-2013 from 19.4% in 2011-2012. India is facing a skill deficit on account of the huge demand-supply gap.

1 http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233931/lang—en/index.htm

This data points towards an extremely large pool of untapped talent. If young people who have worked sincerely to become qualified and skilled cannot secure decent jobs and loose interest in looking for an appropriate job, then it is a matter of concern for the society. The long-term effects of continuous high youth unemployment rate and likely outbreaks of violence are likely to become more serious if our education system continues to ignore the voices of youth/students.

These facts impel us to revisit our education system and find the existing gap between the expectations of youth enrolled in several academic courses to meet their career objective and the service providers (institutes and universities in this case).

In order to address youth unemployment, few elements that need to be scrutinized are:

i. Is the existing education system able to meet youth expectations
ii. What are the kind of skills developed by the students through academics
iii. Are these skills helpful enough to fulfil their career aspirations

This paper attempts to understand and come up with suggestions required for improving our education system. This research piece tries to connect education to employment, facilitate a student to become an employee and above all manage the youth expectation and help in development of a healthy society and economically progressive nation.

The following areas comprise the focus of the literature search and review:

a. Expectation of young people: how young people perceive their preparedness for the industry, how young people perceive the challenge of workplaces; their apprehensions, and what deters and stimulates them; and what is their expectation from the system
b. Young people's requirements (including skill needs) in entering the workplace; and
c. Steps to smoothen the transition to work; the role of educational institutes as well as employers to make workplaces amenable to young people

Literature review

A survey of the available research literature found that there is a relative abundance of survey research on employer expectations in case of young recruits generally termed as "employability skills". But in contrast, little research was found to examine youth expectation prior to obtaining employment, or employer strategies for making the journey from education to employment a smooth one.

Surveying the available research in 1999, Morris et al, concluded at the time that, "No good quality research literature has been discovered on young people's attitudes towards employers or the structure of work" (1999:64). Besen-

Cassino (2008) in his work pointed that youth employment has been studied extensively from the point of view of parents, educators, and policy-makers, but the main characters of the play – young people themselves – have been somewhat neglected and young people's objective behind work remain virtually unexplored. More recently, Price et al (2011) concluded that there are few studies available that focus primarily on young people. As per these researchers, this lack of focus on youth has led to a situation where we have little understanding of how young people cope with creating their identity as employees and how they relate to their first jobs.

On conducting a survey of the literature, we concluded that there is a scantiness of published work relating to young people's expectations of jobs and employment. There appears to be little recently-published research conducted in India relating to young people entering the job market against the background of the economic downturn and tightening job market since 2009. This study puts in place a potential research strategy to address this gap in research and prepare policies to overcome this situation the coming years.

We have chosen to organize the study into sections relating to:

i. Young people's views and expectations of job and employment
ii. Employer's expectations from the new recruits,
iii. And means of smoothing their transition to work so as to manage the youth expectations

Research and Analysis

To carry out this study, a survey was conducted among young people from the supply side and among employers from the demand side. Survey was conducted among young people studying in management colleges in Bhubaneswar to gauge the youth expectations, while data to measure demand side expectations was collected from employers across India. Much of the qualitative research profiled in this review is small-scale in nature.

The research participants were divided into two groups:

i. Young people who are coming to the end of management study and are intending to take up fulltime work.
ii. The employers who hire these students from campus

Survey of these two groups helped us understand the gap between the expectations of youth and expectations of the employers. Due to paucity of data a more quantitative analysis could not be carried out.

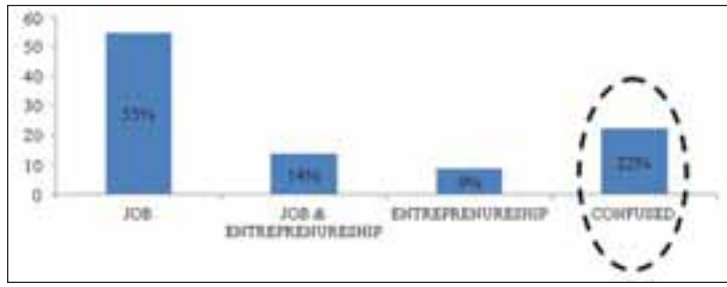
The research and analysis is presented in two sections:

Student's views on job and job market

This study indicates that youth expectations about work and the degree of prior knowledge of work are not same in case of young potential employees.

This survey revealed that 22% of the youth were undecided about their aim of life where as 10% of the students were still confused of choosing this course as a career perspective. This can be attributed to low information dissemination about higher studies/professional studies in India. Students said that they were not well informed when making decisions about postsecondary education, though they mentioned, internet being their most preferred medium of gathering information. As a result, youth are quick to detour from the education-to-employment journey.

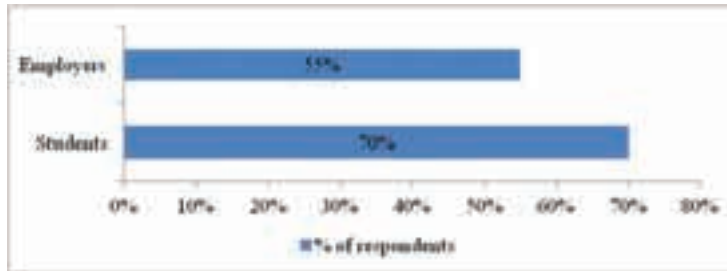
Fig-1 : Students Define their Aim of Life



This research found that most of the youth/students had a sense of the changing employment opportunities and knew that many jobs demanded skills and credentials that they did not have. However, they were confident of finding both exciting and reasonably well-paid job.

It was interestingly found that when students were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 1-5, they rated themselves as 3.5 on an average which is more than 70%. This statistics alarmed us, as this displayed their over confidence because the employers on the other hand mentioned that only 65% of all new recruits were aware about their Key Result Area (KRA). And, only 55% of all new recruits were able to achieve their KRA.

Fig 2 : Different views on Job preparedness



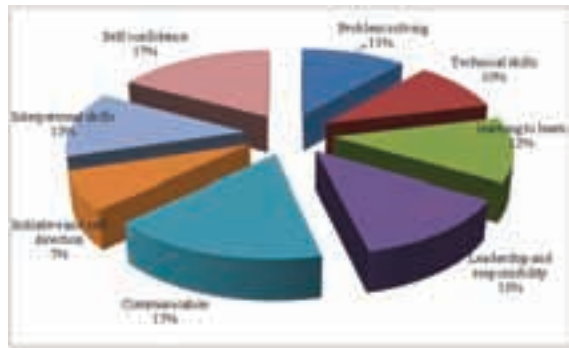
These findings highlighted an apparent disconnect between young people and employers, due to a mismatch in perceptions relating to their skills. All the employers surveyed, hired people from campus and they believed that young people lack critical self-awareness, and face difficulties understanding their strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in skills.

Thus, it will not be incorrect to say that young people are largely unaware of areas of weakness prior to employment, particularly in relation to their lack of desired skills.

To analyse their preparedness for jobs, young students were asked to rate the skills required for campus recruitment in order of priority as per their own understanding.

Students generally believed that to get an entry level job, **the top three skills** required were – Self-Confidence, Communication and Leadership & Responsibility skills. According to them, Problem Solving skill, Technical skills and Initiative and Self-direction, were the least important skills.

Fig 3 : Skills Required for Placement



This was in sharp contrast with the top three skills required for selection were employer findings, related to their order – Problem solving, Initiative & self of priority for selection of students for an direction and Self-confidence in terms of entry-level job. As per the employers, the priority.

Table 1 : Ranking of Skills for Campus Recruitment

Skill Set	Student	Employer
Problem solving	6	1
Initiative and self-direction	8	2
Self-confidence	1	3
Technical skills	7	4
Communication	2	5
Learning to learn	5	6
Interpersonal skills	4	7
Leadership and responsibility	3	8

Here, if we see methodically, it will not be difficult to understand the gap between expectations of youth and expectations of the corporate world. To put it another way, there has been fundamentally different understandings of the same situation (refer **Fig 4**) and thus leading to a bumpy ride for youngsters when they have to venture in the corporate.

Fig 4 : Skill Set Expectations

When these youngsters were asked to rank priority wise training area(s) to enter into their dream sector, most of them ranked Communication at the top. But, as per the employer survey, Communication was not the top most criteria for an entry-level job. Here, the reason for confusion is due to the choice of language used in communication. As per the students, if they are unable to express themselves in English, then for them the candidate is poor in communication. Whereas, this is not true! When employers ask for good communicators, they only mean that their employee should be able to speak to the stakeholders and customers of the company and put the point across clearly.

Table 2 : Priority wise training area(s) identified by the students

Skills Required	**Priority-based Ranking**
Communication	1
Self confidence	2
Problem solving	3
Technical skills	4
Initiative and self-direction	5

Most of the students in the survey expressed a couple of measures listed below to make them fit for the corporate more practical oriented. Students world: expected the education process to be

- Practical exposure to management problems
- Regular Corporate Interface
- Intra and inter college competitions
- Seminars, management events & webinars on topics related to management education

This was all about youth expectations before joining the corporate.

Employer's View about students

Our study also focused on how the organizations monitored the new recruits once they were inducted in the system.

Companies were asked about the training programs offered by them to the new recruits. It was found out that employers generally invested only in those specialized skills whose value could be captured; they were unwilling to spend money on employees who might take their expertise elsewhere. Some of the findings from employers regarding their training program were:

- More than 70% of the companies provide Skill Development Programs (apart from induction program)
- Approximately 67% of the new recruits were open and adaptable to the training programs.
- Training programs designed for new recruits from the campus included:
  - Functional Training
  - Team work and bonding
  - Communication skills
  - Company to corporate

Thus, we get to see that the students training expectations are not met as per their requirement. Most of the training modules are generic and cater to the mass instead of being customized for the new recruit. This leads to nervousness and many youngsters find it difficult to relate to their bosses, and in striking a balancing between pressures of work and life. Moreover, new recruits are not trained on socializing in the workplace. This can also be distressing for many new employees and cause anxiety in them.

Apart from training programs offered by the employers for new recruits, only 30% of the organizations surveyed, were involved with educational institution in designing, implementing and evaluating the course-curriculum. These companies try to ensure that the content of the curriculum is aligned with their needs.

Though, there are a few employers who are engaged with educational institutes but there needs to be intensive collaboration between the two and both sides need to define their requirements at every level.

In terms of feedback and mentoring system offered by the employers, the data was not very encouraging. Here are some of the findings:

- 70% of the organizations said, they have feedback mechanism especially designed for new recruits
- Most of the organizations have monthly or half yearly feedback evaluation mechanism

Employers are also struggling as they are faced with the dearth of quality manpower. As a part of this survey, employers are requested to provide their suggestions. Most of the employers suggested that:

- Instead of theory based lectures, institutes should consider real world issues and concerns to address the scope of learning Educational institutes should customize their course curriculum to address the day to day issues and concerns as there is always a large amount of customization happening everywhere

How to make a Smooth Transition?

This section is an attempt to explain how we can redefine the education to employment journey for the young minds. The discussion has been divided into two sections, explaining the role of each body for a smooth transition process:

1. Role of Educational institutions
2. Role of Employers

Role of Educational institutions

i. Information dissemination

Our education system is focused on designing course-curriculum and delivering them with high quality standards. But in the process, it fails to share all the information about the designed course. Approximately 25% of the students surveyed were absolutely confused in defining their career objective.

Therefore, we need a system which can be used to educate stakeholders, build transparency, and manage expectations. Young people need to be facilitated to make informed choices about their career and education. Educational institutes can work on the following for better results:

a. Collate data and prepare a database comprising current and projected job openings
b. Appraise them of skill set required for particular job openings
c. Discuss estimated salary as per their skill set

This kind of information exchange is expected to help students plan for a given occupation.

ii. Industry ready Course-curriculum

It is high-time that educational institutions accept that students do not want only class lectures or Guest lectures by industry personnel. Our survey pointed out that only 12% of student viewed class lectures to be the most preferred medium to know about their dream sector.

Educational institutes have to become more student friendly and industry ready. Some of the steps which educational institutes can adapt are:

a. Embed transferable, work-based skills into the curriculum
b. Initiate a form of accreditation for businesses that create partnerships with educational institutions
c. Develop a gradation system that values soft skills, decision making, problem solving and aptitude related to work-readiness

iii. Sector–wise Employer Collaboration

70 % of the employers surveyed said they did not work with educational Institutes on matters such as, designing, implementing and evaluating the coursecurriculum. Those who did, even for them, partnerships were limited. Very few employers were involved with the institutes, for just designing the course that too this involvement was once in a year. This is alarming, because students expect to learn the recent practices adapted in corporate house, to be well armed to face the challenges when they step out to work. But unfortunately, our current system does not provide this opportunity.

To meet the student expectation, it is important that educational institutes have:

- Sector based collaboration with the organizations based on student need
- Educational institutes can invite companies to run training programs for the students or at least oversee these training programs as per sector specific requirement.

This is sure to maintain a balance between demand and supply of quality manpower and create a win-win situation for both.

iv. Socializing students to the work culture

Students find it difficult to adapt to the new work environment with specific rules and regulations. They find it extremely challenging and anxiety generating.

Educational institutions are expected to play a role in preparing young people for the complex web of social relations within workplaces. If the educational institutes frequently arrange for on- the job training, students will get an opportunity to acclimatize themselves with day to day interactions at the workplace. They can interact with other employees, and supervisors within the context of the workplace which is most important in helping ease young people's transition to work.

Role of Employers

i. Active Employer - Student interface

The increase in youth unemployment and unrest forces us to see and analysis

the entire system with a new perspective. The existing education system is unable to meet student expectations in terms of practicality. Today, students have quick access to information at a click; they can read the best books available across on their high-end gadgets but the important question here is: are they able to validate and differentiate the plethora of information available to them. Is the readily available information making them corporate ready?

These doubts strongly advocate greater involvement of employers in the education system as a means of assisting the transition of young people into employment.

Employers can build closer links with students through educational institutes and provide high quality work experience placements; the various ways in which employers can create a result-oriented education system are:

a. Reinforcing messages from teachers about skills, qualifications and the work environment
b. Identifying employment opportunities in their company and encouraging young people to apply for jobs in their enterprises
c. Providing details of available jobs in the local area in their industry
d. Influencing and creating interest among young people regarding their choice of occupation

ii. Part-time work experience and Internship programs

Benefits of work experience and internship programs are increasingly becoming visible in corporate houses. Work experience while pursuing education, helps student in carrying out multiple tasks like an employee but with an emphasis on the learning aspects of the experience.

Internship programs and other short duration programs offered by the employers can help the student to make an informed decision in choosing a career path. The part-time job opportunities also is expected to help them learn and develop, in terms of — self-management, increased self-esteem, improved communication and interpersonal skills, organizational and decision-making skills, team-skills, learning and attaining skills and employability skills such as supervising/ training others, and dealing directly with customers. The more the student is expose to the workplace environment, broader is the job opportunities for him.

iii. Customized Preliminary Induction Program

After conducting this survey, about induction systems for young people starting jobs, the lack of employability skills, was not reflected during the program. This was contrary to the strongly held belief that young employees are deficient in employability skills.

Approximately 65% of employees felt that new recruits were aware of their Key

result area (KRAs) and 55% of employers said that the new recruits were able to achieve their KRAs most of the times.

This mismatch happens because the same induction process is implemented for all the new employees. Their past experience, educational background etc. is not considered while designing the induction program. The processes which employers described as inductions, tended to cover the first few days when new recruits were introduced to the organization. A general induction program comprise a wide variety of practices and content, such as company rules and regulations, pay and other facilities, hours of work, safety issues, some task specific instruction and workplace orientation. It was also found that the subject matter covered in employee induction program varied between industry and job type. But then the program was rarely customized for different types of new recruits.

In fact, the induction sessions should be designed with specific consideration of first-time employees. Rather, then being generic and applicable to any worker new to the organization, it should be tailored to the specific needs of the new recruits based on their past experience and educational background.

iv. Empathetic Hand-holding System

It is important that organizations should go beyond their induction process to help the novice employee. Employers may implement some formal processes listed below to assist new recruits adapt to the new workplaces, including:

a. Buddying and mentoring systems
b. Different types of training specific to the job requirement
c. Frequent Meetings, assessments and appraisals
d. Managing mistakes, performance and conflict
e. Explicit mechanism to award/ reward a new recruit's contribution

Apart from these formal processes, individual interactions with the new recruits, socialization strategies such as involving them in social events, providing clear instruction, praising good work and giving non-threatening feedback are expected to engage a new young recruit into the organization.

CONCLUSIONS

Today, the society is not able to support the youth in terms of their expectations and need. They are a generation with quick access to technology and high energy. We have to address them with great care to prevent formation of a disgruntled lot. We have to design altogether a new methodology to build a health society. This study involved students/youth as well as the employers to know their perspective and thereafter do a gap analysis. It was found that each of the parties involved in the education process had to work in col-

laboration with each other. Be it the educational institute or the corporate house or any third party service provider, no one can think of working in isolation anymore if we want our youth to develop.

We have to redefine the education to employment journey and in the way, involve all the stake holders who contribute to this process. As suggested by the students and employers we have to adapt a practical approach to teaching and gradually do away with the class lectures. Employers on the other hand, have to be proactive in course design and implementation, have a robust and customized induction processes, close managerial or supervisory support, buddying and mentoring schemes, and means of 'socialising' young workers to the workplace culture.

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