Attaining a degree is a sign of formal education but it no more guarantees individual growth, social stability or financial security. Skill education is the need of the hour for outcome-based learning that respond to global reality and learner’s aspiration, says Nisha Nair.

Education for the sake of attaining a degree is not desirable considering the increase in educated unemployment in the country which calls for a greater reflection at what guides the aims and objectives of education at individual and national level. Attaining a degree is surely a sign of formal education but merely attaining a degree no more guarantees individual growth, social stability or financial security.

While the need for skill inculcation has always found space in various educational policy documents churned out in the country since independence, current discourses in the arena of both school education and higher education has increasingly emphasised on outcome based learning leading to skill development.

There is no doubt that skill education has acquired a greater importance in the current socio-economic context of the country.

As per a report published by Ernst and Young, by 2026 demographically, India would be at an advantageous position with approximately 64 per cent of our population laying in the age bracket of 15-59 years, with only 13 per cent of population aged about 60. Skilled education therefore is imperative for us to be able to reap the demographic dividend which a young population would offer. If education does not respond to the need of skilled manpower in a growing economy like ours, then it would fail its youth in attaining both basic and higher aspirations of life.

Moving beyond merely focusing on learning objectives, in the recently held Visitor’s Conference 2016 at Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Human Resource Development Minister, Prakash Javadekar spoke about Government’s measure to broadly define expected outcomes of education at different levels of learning. An outcome based learning ensures that entire education process is geared toward inculcation of learning objective thus is at the heart of skill based education.

President Pranab Mukherjee, himself on various occasions, has stressed on the importance and role of education in putting India on ‘a fast track to the first world’.

In this context, skill development has been quite rightly stressed as an important aspect of educational output both at the level of secondary and tertiary education. Skill development responds to the ability of the learner to secure an employment leading to their personal and professional growth; enabling them to contribute effectively in nation building at both economic and social level.

This calls for a greater collaboration between schools and institutes of higher learning on one hand and educational institutions and industry partners on the other. Such collaborations would help in identifying the required skill sets, reducing the gap in curriculum at school and college education and inculcation of skills required by the industry and economy.
The need of the hour is to ensure that the stakeholders from different levels of education work in consonance with each other and with experts from industry in enhancing the skilled manpower of the nation. This most definitely requires a greater public-private partnership both at the level of educational institutions and industry.

Developing specialised courses at school level which can also be further pursued at undergraduate and postgraduate level, summer schools offered by higher education institution and industry experts, skill oriented short-term and long term workshops or courses offered by professional bodies could be some effective measures in this direction.

Education and particularly higher education must respond to a broader set of goals, and must necessarily help learners in attaining larger ideals of life. Its role in nation building and human progress can and must not be overlooked. Though skill education is important, higher education must be the site of knowledge acquisition, generation, creativity and innovation.

Education for the sake of knowledge and its creation leading to self-actualisation of learners must be at the heart of larger goals of learnings, which must also reflect in its finer objectives. It must not only correspond to the individual, communal, domestic or national needs but effectively respond to global reality and aspirations of the learner.

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