

Inclusivity in Education: Case Study of Industry-Academia Efforts in Skill Based Education

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Abstract:

The issues of skill gaps, skill shortages, and unemployable graduates are omnipresent in India today. Though India has the distinct advantage of having one of the youngest populations in the world, ironically, most industries in India are currently struggling with scarcity of skilled labor. The country has a very large pool of young English-speaking people and has the potential to meet the skill needs of other countries and also cater to its demand for skilled manpower. Although more than 40 million people are registered in employment exchange, only 0.2 million get jobs. With current and expected economic growth, this challenge is going to only increase further, since more than 75% of new job opportunities are expected to be “skill-based.”

But, even as it struggles with many issues, India has shown impressive economic growth and has moved many of its citizens out of poverty thereby growing the middle class. India is thought of very favorably by the United States and other industrialized countries as an outsourcing center in part due to its large educated population and the perception that English is widely spoken.

By 2040, the global population, aged 65 and above is expected to reach 1.3 billion. This would result in a shortage of skilled workers in the US, France, Japan, and Germany and human-intensive economic activities would shift from these nations to developing countries like India. The demographics, the adaptability of Indian youth to language, logic, mathematics, and favorable time zones ensure that India leads the outsourced services industry, even as it struggles

with poverty. The Indian situation of youth unemployment and global opportunity comprises a rare instance.

“Developing countries, not affected by aging populations (the workforces of India and Brazil will grow by more than 200 million people over the next two decades) will also face huge skill gaps in some job categories due to low employability”.(Global talent Risk Report 2011, World Economic Forum)

In this context, this paper discusses citizen’s initiatives: one for the youth in the rural context and how business communication enables them to be gainfully employed in rural areas and the other for the urban youth and how business communication equips them for the global placements. Both contexts exemplify the prime role of business communication in livelihood and how the Indian experience could be replicated in developing nations and LDCs across Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

English and Business The spread of English as a global tool for business communication have several reasons.

1. **Numerical Argument:** spoken by nearly 337 million (David Crystal, 1997, p.60) as the national or official language in North America, Australia, Commonwealth, and other small countries. About 1350 million speak English as 2nd language in countries like India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Kenya, Philippines
2. **Physical Distribution:** Spoken across continents in the day to day life. Urbanization in developing countries combined with international migrations to major English speaking countries is changing the world demographics. It is creating new constituencies of English users who look up to English as the gateway to success and better quality of life.
3. **Vehicular load:** Preferred for scholarly, commercial, technological, diplomacy, tourism, and entertainment purposes.
4. **Monetary and Political Power of English** It is facilitating capitalism, economic opulence, and the effects of globalization.

India in 2011: India has a population of 1.2 billion and 40% earn just about a dollar a day. 50% are dependent on agriculture, which contributes less than a sixth to GDP. There is a need to shift under-employed people from agriculture. And the sector where these low skilled, undereducated people could easily move to its services sector.

“60% of India’s 1.2 billion people are in the working-age group. However, only 10% of the 300 million children in India between the age of 6 and 16 will pass school and go beyond. Only 5% of India’s labor force in the age group 19-24 years is estimated to have acquired formal training. Despite this, the economy is clocking an 8.5% growth. Imagine what could be if we could leverage our demographic dividend fully.”

(S Ramadorai, Advisor to the Prime Minister in National Skill development council)

Some observations on the basis on ‘Knowledge paper on Strategic and Implementation Framework for Skill Development in India September 2011(FICCI in association with Ernst and Young):

Total population (in millions)	1225
Young population 15 to 24 years (as % of the total population)	19.2%
Literacy rate %	74 %
Unemployment rate	10.8 %

- Only 2% of Indian receive formal Vocational Training while 8% get informal on the job training, compared to 93% in Korea and 72% in Germany
- Approximately 80% of the workforce in rural and urban India does not possess any identifiable marketable skills.
- The youth population has the highest potential to meet the skill gap and the ability to contribute to the growth of the economy.
- India’s education system is also characterized by a high “school dropout rate -- 56.8% by the time students complete secondary schooling.

- India has 4th largest English speaking population in the world, after the US, the UK, and Nigeria.
- India's challenge is not just unemployment but also of un-employability. The majority of the 400 million unskilled, unemployable youth live in slums or villages under socio-economic constraints that limit their thinking. Cast-out from the social fabric they feel disempowered and can fall prey to undesirable elements. The need is to engage them in easy to use and easy to learn skill-building programs which can help them gain confidence and livelihood.

Sector	2008	2022
Textile and Clothing	35.4	61.6
Building and Construction	25.0	58.0
Auto and Auto Components	13.0	48.0
Real Estate	11.0	25.0
Organized Retail	0.3	17.6
Banking, Financial Services, and insurance	4.3	8.5
IT-ITes	2.2	7.5
Electronic- IT Hardware	0.9	4.2

- India's service industry accounts for 57.2% of the GDP. The services sector employs 23% of the workforce and is growing. Information technology and BPO are among the fastest-growing sectors.
- Organized retail supermarkets account for 24% of the market as of 2008.
- English as the business communication medium is the preferred language for jobs in retail, hospitality, healthcare, BPO, and other sectors.

Paradoxically India's poor remain in poverty simply for lack of skills that could provide access to well-paid jobs which employers have difficulty recruiting for. Joining the

organized sector provides access to better salaries and a better quality of life. Percentage of employers facing difficulty in filling jobs:

UK	15
France	20
China	24
Germany	40
Australia	54
Brazil	57
US	57
India	67
Japan	80

It is an important goal to make sure that all students have equal access to resources. Especially in a country like India which has a very strong history of Socialism, all students should have the resources necessary for high-quality education. But the truth remains that some students need more to get there.

India's problems on the route to achieving employability in the services sector through Business Communication are threefold:

1. Students are not confident, as they do not have a background or support system.
2. Teachers are not adequately trained to teach English and lack requisite infrastructure.
3. Lack of good quality, Indianize, curriculum-linked, content that enables learning

Changing scenario:

A silent revolution is taking place in the field of education in India bringing about educational reforms and trying to level the playing field. Nonprofits, Non-Government Organizations are playing a major role in the development of underprivileged by utilizing the Government's social welfare schemes leading to the transformation of the society.

A path-breaking research ⁽²⁾ study by a team of developmental economists has established that English-language proficiency among Indian workers leads to higher hourly wage earnings. Through a wide array of vocational training programs emphasizing business communication and human skills (Retailing, Hospitality, Beautician, Tailoring, etc), these NGOs address the issues of employability and income generation abilities. This not only provides employment but also consequent improvement in the quality of life of the deprived youth.

Here we are analyzing case studies of four non-profit NGOs involved in the skills development program, especially Business Communication and Soft Skills. They present unique strategies and implementation models and can be replicated across the globe.

1. Kotak Education Foundation: (www.kotakeducationfoundation.org)

It is based on **Livelihood Advancement Business School (LABS)**, a unique training program, pioneered by Dr. Reddy's Foundation (DRF), Hyderabad. They have trained and placed 125,000 youth in jobs in the last 10 years. *One of their projects 'Kotak Unnati'* provides vocational training to *underprivileged* school/college dropouts between 18 to 25 years from vernacular medium school *to make them employable*.

2. Teach India Program (www.teachindia.com):

An initiative of Times of India, a leading Indian newspaper to teach spoken English to the poor urban youth. Launched in 2008, Teach India grew into a national movement, British council helped in designing the curriculum and for training the volunteers and teachers they target poor youth in the age group 18 to 32 years with a basic introduction to English and who seek to improve employability

3. Yuva Parivartan (YP)

(www.yuvaparivartan.org): Based in Mumbai, offers different vocational training programs for the underprivileged youth. KSWA's Founder Mr. B.G.Kher was an active Gandhian and started to help the unmotivated school dropouts become economically independent by imparting livelihood skills to them. Yuva Parivartan" which started in 1998 is spread over 70 Centers in 4 States. Their target learner is anyone aged 15 years or more, can read and write from

communities/ backgrounds where parents are illiterate, steeped in a traditional mindset, and whose family income is meager.

4. Etasha Society

(www.etashasociety.org) : Providing placement as well as employability skill training and career guidance to young people from disadvantaged communities in India. Founded in 2006, ETASHA was borne out of the belief that by helping young people to develop new skills, by giving them access to relevant vocational training and connecting them with employers, we enable them to take control of their careers and lives. They target school dropouts, or those who want to work to support their families, rural agricultural families, small vendors, and service providers in the unorganized sector. Their program SPEC (Speaking English with Confidence) focuses on the ones who never had practiced the language, but have theoretical exposure to the language in schools. Microsoft Unlimited Potential with Spoken English (MUPSE) program is for young people who have yet to complete basic schooling

Pedagogy:

TEACH INDIA PROGRAM

- British Council has designed a spoken English curriculum which includes Life-skills, capacity building, personality development, and grooming & job preparedness.
- The curriculum has a learner-focused approach, with the teacher as a facilitator
- Collaborative learning methodologies have been extensively used.
- The learners are trained on the use of language in IT and customer service scenarios
- The assignments are based on examples from relevant industries like retail, financial services, hospitality, etc.
- An additional 2-week module 'Face the World' taught at the end of 10 weeks. This module focuses on soft skills and interview skills

YUVA PARIVARTAN

- Livelihood Training(Electrical Wireman, Multi skill Technician, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration, Motor Mechanic, Tailoring & Fashion Designing, Beautician, Nursing, English Speaking & Life Skills, Basic Computers)

- Community Engagement (Leadership development, Community work, Sports, Culture, Recreation & Lifeskills).
- Placement Support (employment in the organized sector and SMEs or guided to become self-employed by the staff of each center.).

Industry partnership: Industry Partner / Professional Expert who assists in updating the curriculum

ETASHA SOCIETY

- Use the direct approach.
- Speaking Only in English for the entire duration of the course.
- Use of an innovative mix of cues, visual aids, role-play visits, etc.
- Focus on building each student's vocabulary and confidence so that they can present in public in the language at the end-of-program certificate ceremony.

Learning is context-based, using scenarios

- And settings that are relevant to them and will assist them in moving into the world of work in the future.

KOTAK UNNATI

- Segregation by domain v/s learning level:
- Some classes are segregated by initial competence and aptitude. However, generally, the classes are segregated as per domain (e.g. Sales, Hospitality, and Customer Relations, etc).
- Syntax through Listening, Speaking, and Thinking.
- Assembly and Attendance, Chorus, Individual evaluation, Pair, and Share
- Grouping, Scripts and Role Plays

Impact and Employability Quotient:

All the above-mentioned initiatives show a substantial impact in terms of employment generated for the trained candidates. Speaking skills have put the target learners into the job race where the absorption in the job market is more than 70%.

- **Kotak Unnati** started in January 2007 has trained over 5000 learners to date. More than 85% of them are employed in the fields of Hospitality, retail, and Information

Technology. Learner's starting salary is between 6000/- to 9000/- (USD 120-180 per month).

- **Yuva Parivartan** (YP) started in 1998 and has trained over 10,000 learners. Post completion of the course, the students are assisted in seeking employment in the organized sector and Small and Micro Enterprises or guided to become self-employed by the staff of each center.
- **Teach India**, since 2008, has grown into a national movement, reaching out to thousands of volunteers and hundreds of NGOs. So far Teach India has completed 8 cycles in NCR and Mumbai, reaching out to more than 6000 learners. The learners have performed excellently in job fairs - with almost 65% of candidates getting job offers through the fairs.
- **Etasha Society**, until 2012 has reached a 71% placement rate for students and expanded the database of employers to include design and architect's practices, financial services, manufacturing, and travel. Trainees' starting salaries range from Rs. 5000 to Rs. 15000 (US \$ 100 to 300) per month and some organizations offer free travel, subsidized food, life, and health insurance.
- In the present day globalized world, India is a country which is redefining the world equation in terms of population, political power, economy and volume of consumption of natural resources. So it is obvious that the development and progress of the citizens of India are defined by the knowledge society and skilled manpower, as education is the key factor in shaping today's India. This is the need of the hour today to try and reinvent the higher education with the changing times and changing needs

Sustainability Challenges:

- Trained professionals and socially inclined staff
- The continuous process of community engagement & development by providing Free Education and training
- Networking amid the corporate and academic fraternity.
- Designing Customized Modules & Delivering Quality in Training Programs
- Theoretical & Practical Orientation as per Industry Requirements
- Focus on Value Creation, Adaptation, Continuous Learning & Innovation.

Value proposition and Global Implications of this study: A study into the economic impact of learning English in developing countries has concluded that the language can increase the earning power of individuals by around 25% and that developing economies need access to English if they are to grow and position themselves in the global economy. These success models of India can be replicated worldwide. A comparison of the situation in Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Kenya and common Challenges in these diverse economies which can be solved by the similar approach and success models used in India:

Bangladesh is a developing nation with 142.3 Million Population has an unemployment rate of 4.8 % per capita in 2010 was US\$641 compared to a global average of \$8,985. But 60% of the total population is under 25. English is used as a second language among the middle and upper classes. Also widely used in higher education and the legal system.

Cambodia is one of the poorest nations on earth. One-third of people live on less than US\$1 per day. With population of 14.7 million and unemployment- 3.5 %, GDP is \$30.181 billion (2010) where agriculture: 33.4%, industry: 21.4%, services: 45.2% (2011 est.) 25.8% population lives below poverty line. English is the most preferred foreign language.

It is used in international business and education, the 'key to prosperity.' Cambodians can see themselves having a better lifestyle if they have an English education

Kenya is the 17th poorest nation. The population is 41 million with the unemployment rate of 40 % and per capita income US\$ 250. 55% population is age 15 to 64. English serves as the lingua-franca between various ethnic groups. A large pool of English speaking professional workers can create wonders for the Kenyan economy.

The Indian model of Employability through skill training in Business Communication can be effectively used in these countries because of the following reasons:

- Bangladeshi migrant workers are harassed, cheated, and they don't know how to protect themselves or their livelihood without exploitation for lack of English skills.

- Cambodia has the youngest population in South East Asia, with just over six million people under 18 years-old. The single most important issue is employment - a complex mix of issues, including early school leaving, poor quality education, and insufficient waged work that drive young people into informal sector jobs - often meaning poor working conditions and low salaries. On the rare occasions that formal sector jobs become available, employers find that Cambodian graduates are not equipped with the mix of soft and technical skills needed.
- 60% of the Kenyan population is under the age of 35 - The Kenyan unemployment rate is approximately 40% - An estimated 64% of unemployed are youth. Business literacy helps young people to envision ways of getting out of poverty; to help themselves and their communities; and eventually ensure sustainability.

Successful Indian models like the four above can be replicated through following model/ methodology in any of LDCs/developing countries which lack the infrastructure and resources:

Community channel: Can be administered on an “Interest Inventory” which will in turn put the target in “Work Readiness Module”.

- Can be conducted with industry partnership.
- Direct Channel: The objective is to acquaint the participants with the requisite know-how about the sector/industry, desired by them to venture into.
- Franchise Channel: Training programs can be customized for companies and emphasis would be given on developing skills, knowledge, and understanding required to achieve their key result areas
- **Self Help Group Channel:** Identifying & mobilizing Self Help Groups (SHGs) & assisting them in marketing their products effectively, to give them requisite skills training in entrepreneurship, retailing, packaging & branding, customer management, life skills, computer basics, and Communicative English.

Replication/adaption of the Indian models would ensure that there would be no need to reinvent the wheel and the local resources can be productively used without the cost of experimentation. It would also ensure the provision of the low-cost option of employment generation in the growing services sector.

Endnote:

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- (2) Dr. Nishith Prakash, a post-doctoral research associate at the Charles H Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University and research fellow at the Institute for the Study of Labour in Bonn; Dr. Mehtabul Azam at the World Bank; and Dr. Aimee Chin at the University of Houston.

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