



LEARN, WORK, THRIVE: UNDERSTANDING RELATION BETWEEN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN INDIA FOR MENTAL WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

Whenever we talk about education in Indian context, it is always correlated to welfare of human and society, gaining knowledge and being a self reliant individual. Linking of “work of knowledge” with the “world of work” is always given priority. The key to success is investment in education as education means overall development of an individual. As we all know that Teaching-learning process is a complicated process which not only helps in gaining knowledge but also plays pivotal role in overall development of a learner. Indian education system had evolved a lot but the crux remained same of self realisation, skill development and gaining of knowledge. In this paper, relationship between Education and Employment in Indian context is being briefly discussed. Many commissions on Education came before and after Independence, which shaped the education in India which we experience right now. The various commissions on education have a common factor, that the purpose of education is overall development and gave emphasis on vocational education, skill development etc. This paper presents a systematic view on how education in India had evolved from time to time but the essence was always to make an individual self reliant by developing their respective skills and be financial independent which leads to mental boost. Mental well-being is an essential component of individual, social, and community development. In today’s rapidly changing world, learners and working populations face increasing pressures related to academic competition, unemployment, financial insecurity, social expectations, changing lifestyles, and uncertainty about the future. Education and employment, when supported by healthy and inclusive environments, can play a significant role in managing stress and promoting mental well-being. Education provides individuals with knowledge, skills, confidence, social connections, and opportunities for personal development, while meaningful employment can provide financial security, purpose, identity, social participation, and a sense of accomplishment. However, education and employment can also become sources of stress when accompanied by excessive competition, job insecurity, discrimination, poor working conditions, or unrealistic expectations. This article explores how education and employment can contribute to stress management and mental well-being among learners and communities.

The circumstances that helped the various educational policies and commissions that gave repetitive emphasis on skill development and vocational education are also discussed. It emphasizes the need to create supportive educational institutions, mentally healthy workplaces, employability opportunities, life-skills education, counselling services, and community-based interventions. The article argues that the goal should not merely be to educate individuals and prepare them for employment, but to create conditions in which people can learn, work, and thrive.

Keywords: Education, Employment, Mental Well-being, Stress Management, Learners, Communities, Resilience, Life Skills, Mental Health

INTRODUCTION

Education means to nurture. Education is imparted in order to give overall development or harmonious development. Overall development or Harmonious growth means development of an individual in accordance to his/her physical, mental, emotional, spiritual growth. Sole purpose of education is to help an individual realize its self worth and be self reliant. Education should not be restricted to the attainment of information and development of beliefs but should have a more holistic approach towards not just knowledge but life. It should involve learning by experience and passing on the light of knowledge from the teacher to the student (Madhekar, 2020). Mental well-being is more than the absence of mental illness. It involves the ability to cope with everyday challenges, develop meaningful relationships, make decisions, participate in society, and experience a sense of purpose and fulfilment. For individuals and communities, mental well-being is closely connected with social, educational and economical circumstances. Education is crucial for every person in order to allow him or her to live a better life. Getting good quality education will help to secure a job, make individuals aware of various aspects, and validly help to develop their personalities. Also, it plays a major role in the development of India. For economic development, education is a requirement for any nation as it brings social change acknowledged by every nation.

(Manisha & Goyal, 2022). India is experiencing significant changes in its education system, labour market, technology, family structures, and patterns of work. Young people in particular are navigating increasing academic expectations and intense competition for higher education and employment opportunities. At the same time, workers may experience concerns related to job security, income, workplace relationships, workload, career progression, and work-life balance.

EDUCATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH EMPLOYMENT

Education and employment therefore occupy an important position in the mental well-being of individuals. A supportive educational environment can develop confidence, resilience, problem-solving abilities, and social skills. Similarly, decent and meaningful work can provide financial independence, social identity, purpose, and a sense of contribution. Conversely, educational failure, prolonged unemployment, precarious work, discrimination, or unhealthy working environments can contribute to stress, anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and social isolation. Education can improve self-confidence by enabling individuals to understand their environment, solve problems, communicate effectively, and make informed decisions. When learners develop a sense of competence, they are more likely to approach challenges with resilience rather than helplessness. However, education should not be reduced to examination performance. Excessive emphasis on marks, rankings, entrance examinations, and competition can create pressure, particularly when learners and families perceive academic achievement as the only route to social and economic success. In Indian culture, Education has always been given a place of honour. Since the advent of civilization, educational institutions have existed in India (Keay, 1972). 'Gurukul' was the Indian indigenous education system which once existed in our country. The approach which the teacher took towards the development of a student honed the child and the output were children with extensive knowledge of the world and a vast plethora of skills with them. (Madhekar, 2020). The ultimate aim of

education in ancient India was not knowledge, as preparation for life in this world or for life beyond, but for complete realization of self. (Kumar,2016).

Gurukul System and universities like Nalanda, Takshila, Vikramshila etc. teaches learners to be self reliant. Students in Gurukul system used to reside at guru's place and learn everything which can be later implemented to find solutions to real life problems. (Joshi,2021) Earlier in Gurukul system, students were trained to collect their own wood for cooking, cook their own food and other chores according to their capacities as some were good at cooking, some were good at cleaning while some were good at hunting. Our education system was never job oriented or placement based, its main purpose was to make a self aware, self reliant and self conscious individual. Emphasis on the learner's mental, cognitive, spiritual and physical wellness was given. The system functions on the well-rounded holistic development of a child, enshrining values such as discipline, self-reliance, right attitude, empathy, creativity, and strong moral beliefs. (Joshi,2021) The education system did not guarantee any campus placement at that time but we still have Sushruta- the father of plastic surgery, Aryabhatta-the father of astronomy, Kapil-the father of cosmology, etc. Determination of the relationships between education and employment is not done only by the function of education to prepare learning for subsequent work tasks and other life spheres, but individuals' level of educational attainment, the monetary resources and the social recognitions and their competencies fostered during the course of learning are also some factors that determine that. (Teichler,2015) Gurukul system also gave due emphasis on skill development and being self reliant by preaching the learners various approach towards life and other valuable lessons more than anything.

From Education to Employment: The Transition Challenge

One of the most important stages in a person's life is the transition from education to employment. This transition is not always straightforward. Qualifications do not automatically guarantee suitable employment, and individuals may

experience a gap between what they learn and what employers require. For young people, uncertainty about employment can create considerable psychological pressure. Career guidance and counselling can play an important role during this transition. Learners need realistic information about career pathways, vocational opportunities, emerging occupations, entrepreneurship, further education, and the skills required by different sectors. Educational institutions can strengthen this transition through internships, apprenticeships, career counselling, industry exposure, skill-development programmes, placement support, entrepreneurship education.

Employment and Mental Well-Being

Employment is an important social and economic determinant of well-being. Meaningful work can provide more than an income. It can contribute to identity, purpose, social interaction, independence, routine, and a feeling of accomplishment. For many individuals, earning an income also provides greater control over personal and family decisions. Economic security can reduce some forms of financial stress and enable individuals to participate more fully in society. However, employment does not automatically guarantee mental well-being. The quality of employment is equally important.

Unemployment, Underemployment and Psychological Stress

Unemployment can have consequences beyond financial hardship. Work often provides people with routine, social contact, identity, purpose, and a sense of contribution. Losing these elements can affect self-esteem and social participation. Young people who remain unemployed for extended periods may experience frustration, uncertainty, social comparison, and loss of confidence. Underemployment—working in positions that do not adequately use a person's skills or provide sufficient income—can also create dissatisfaction and insecurity. The response should not be to place the entire responsibility on individuals. Employment opportunities depend on broader economic, social, and structural conditions. Effective responses therefore require collaboration among educational

institutions, employers, government agencies, communities, skill-development systems, and civil society.

Towards an Indian Model of Learn, Work and Thrive

The Indian context requires an integrated approach that recognizes the diversity of learners and workers. Rural and urban populations, women and men, persons with disabilities, economically disadvantaged groups, informal workers, first-generation learners, and young people entering the labour market may face different barriers and opportunities.

Learn–Work–Thrive framework can bring these dimensions together:

Learn

Provide inclusive, high-quality education that develops knowledge, employability, life skills, resilience, creativity, and confidence.

Work

Create opportunities for decent, meaningful, safe, and inclusive employment, while strengthening vocational education, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship, career guidance, and workplace support.

Thrive

Promote mental well-being through supportive relationships, financial security, social participation, healthy workplaces, counselling, community support, and opportunities for lifelong learning. The central principle is that education and employment should contribute to human development rather than being treated only as economic instruments. There is a constant demand for upgrading skills, knowledge, and competences of people to sustain their careers due to constant disruptive changes and challenges in the world of work (WoW). (Maria, 2022)

CONCLUSION

Education and employment are closely connected with mental well-being. Education can build knowledge, confidence, resilience, social connection, and employability, while meaningful employment can provide income, purpose, identity, dignity, social

participation, and a sense of achievement. Yet both can also generate stress when individuals encounter excessive competition, educational exclusion, unemployment, job insecurity, discrimination, financial uncertainty, or unhealthy working conditions. Therefore, the goal should extend beyond producing educated individuals and filling jobs. The broader objective should be to create environments in which people can develop their capabilities, obtain meaningful opportunities, maintain healthy relationships, cope with challenges, and participate fully in society. The concept of “Learn, Work, Thrive” provides a useful way of understanding this relationship. To learn is to develop knowledge and capabilities; to work is to participate meaningfully and productively in society; and to thrive is to experience well-being, purpose, dignity, resilience, and a sense of belonging. For India, investing in the connection between education, employment, and mental well-being is therefore not simply a mental health intervention. It is an investment in human development, social inclusion, productivity, and the well-being of communities. A society truly progresses when its people are given the opportunity not merely to learn and work, but to learn well, work with dignity, and thrive. Building the capacity for future-oriented action is a key task of education (UNESCO, 2003)

Typically, the educational functions of higher education in their relationship to employment are conceived as general, professional or academic. Higher education aims to serve the general enhancement of knowledge and possibly a cultivation of values, attitudes and the personality of the students in general. It is expected to provide a foundation of knowledge relevant for those occupations which are usually taken over by graduates or—in some areas—for direct professional training. (Teichler & Kehm, 1995) The major thrust on vocationalisation of education came with the recommendations of the Education Commission, also known as Kothari Commission (1964-66). The Commission recommended development of a comprehensive system of vocational education in relation to the developmental needs of the country. Vocationalisation of Higher

Secondary Education was a part of its recommendations. It suggested that a system should be designed, which promotes, through part time and full-time courses, knowledge and skills, which could be used for improving returns from various economic activities. An integrated plan for vocational education was suggested by the Commission. The Commission sought to reorient educational system to the masses to help people come into their own. It sought to end the dichotomy between work and education to make the products good workers as well as educated individuals. Understanding the importance of skill development is supreme when you discuss about contemporary education system. Entrepreneurship has been mentioned as an important component for the economic development (Baumol, 1986 and Volkmann, 2006). In principle, these three trends undoubtedly increase the pressure on higher education to be more responsive to the presumed demands of the employment system. In fact, some experts claim to observe an 'epistemological drift' in research towards application and a 'vocational drift' in the educative function of higher education. (Teichler & Kehm, 1995)

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