ISSN No. 0974-035X

An indexed refereed & peer-reviewed journal of higher education

Towards Excellence

UGC-HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
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DRIVING RURAL YOUNG FORCE TOWARDS HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The present research paper is based on the study of higher education and rural youth of India. A survey conducted in the villages in Haveli and Velha Tahasils of Pune district. 200 responses through questionnaire were collected. The objectives of the study are to examine the academic qualification of the respondents, to investigate the problems in getting higher education and to suggest some remedies to direct rural youth towards higher education. It has been observed in this study that there is a need to create awareness about the importance of higher education among the rural youth to increase their engagement in it. It is essential to take some measures such as conducting awareness programs, providing easy access to higher education, redesigning the curriculum of higher education with major focus on employability skill development.

Key words: Higher education, rural youth, employability skill development.

Acknowledgement: This research paper is the part of the study conducted for the ICSSR-IMPRESS- Research Project sanctioned.

Introduction:

Education is one of the tools to achieve social welfare and prosperity. It performs crucial role in developing the living standards of every individual. Hence, education has been concerned as the prime responsibility of every state and nation. It becomes easy to develop sustainable environment by creating awareness about how to use inner potentials to avail external opportunities in well manner for personal and ultimately national development. Education helps in building character, and competencies. It is the way to lead society towards progress by eradicating the problems like poverty, unawareness of hygiene, intolerable social practices etc. and by developing logical and rational thinking. Hence, providing quality education to every

individual must be considered the most urgent requirement for the positive growth of the nation.

Education: Meaning

The term Education has been explained by various educationists, thinkers and philosophers. Swami Vivekananda describes education as the manifestation of the perfection already in man. He was of view that all education and training should end with aim to make the man grow. For him, the education which enables one to stand on one's own legs is real education. According to Mahatma Gandhiji, education means all-round drawing out of the best in child's and man's body, mind and spirit. His concept of Basic Education explores the task of education. The education should strive for moral development of the young learners. Education should make every individual independent, socially constructive, economically productive and responsible future citizen. Gandhiji emphasized on skilled training. Basic Education emphasizes on the development of hidden potentials of every individual. It directs to establish useful correlation with industry so that a learner can gain practical work experience. It leads towards productive work which will help to economic independence and self-reliance for livelihood. Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan while describing education gave equal importance to learning knowledge, skills and living with others. For him, the end product of education should be a free and creative man who can fight against historical circumstances and adversities of nature. According to him, education should play a significant role in the value development so as to have spiritual development. Simultaneously he focused on the vocational education which will help a learner to attain certain skills to become economically self-reliant and self-sufficient. The trio Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhiji and Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan strongly recommend the overall development of a learner. Education should be used as a mean to inculcate moral values, ethics, to acquire and apply knowledge and to develop financial independency which will in turn result into strong development of a nation.

Education Commissions in India after Independence:

Hence, various commissions have been formed after independence to strengthen the education system in India. The first education commission after an independence was University Education Commission (1948-49). The commission emphasized the role of higher education in the development of citizens. It clearly defined the tasks of higher education. It is the vital task of higher education to produce competent citizens to take up national responsibilities successfully in various fields. The higher education should pay attention to develop able

administrators and competent workers who can suit to the various occupations and industries. It should produce leaders who can give their best in various walk of life for the nation. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) reviewed all aspects of education. It was comprehensive in nature. It emphasized the reconstruction of Indian education system. It recommended blueprint of national system of education. It considered education as a powerful tool to increase productivity, to develop social and national unity, to modernize the country and inculcate social, moral and spiritual values. While describing the purpose of higher education, it gave focus on fulfilling the industrial and other sectors' need of skilled man power. It also assigned higher education the responsibility to promote social transformation. The aim of this commission was to produce good workers and educated individuals. National Knowledge Commission (2009) was appointed to improve the quality of education, access and equity in higher education to meet the challenges of the 21st century. It recommended easy access of Information and Communication Technology to the teachers, students and the administration, reforms in the curriculum and examination systems, improvement in infrastructure and transparency in school inspection. One of the objectives of National Education Policy 2020 to revamp the higher education system, create world class multidisciplinary higher education institutions across the country. (2019:201pg). This policy viewed that the role of higher education is of great importance in improving human well-being and developing India as envisioned in the constitution. It recommends that higher education should become a center of innovative and creative ideas. The higher education should significantly contribute to sustainable livelihoods and to drive the nation socially, culturally, artistically, scientifically, technologically, and economically forward.

Research Study:

Higher education is considered as an important factor by all these commissions as it plays a crucial role in the development of the nation. Considering this importance, the survey was conducted in the villages to investigate how many rural youths are either admitted to higher education (Under Graduate or Post-Graduate) or have completed it. 200 responses collected from the villages in Haveli and Velha Tahasils of Pune Districts of Maharashtra. The current highest qualification of the respondents has been considered. The respondents belong to 18 to 30 years of age group.

The objectives of the study are to examine the academic qualification of the respondents, to investigate the problems in getting higher education and to suggest some remedies to direct rural youth towards higher education.

Interpretation:

Age Group 18 to 20 years:

Interpretation: Graph No. 1

- It can be seen from the Graph 1 that only 54.39% have admitted to Under Graduate (UG) program.
- The Graph indicates that 35.09% of rural youths have just completed 12th standard education and not enrolled for UG or any other program.
- The graph shows that 3.51% youth have completed only 9th standard education and the percentage is observed with respondents who have completed only 11th standard education.

Age Group 21 to 23 years:

Interpretation: Graph No. 2

- Graph No.2 shows that 45.61% rural youths have reached to Under Graduate (UG) programs and 7.02% to Post Graduate (PG) programs.
- The graph shows that 24.56% rural youths educational qualification is 12th standard.
- Around 48% needs to uplift towards higher education.

Age Group 24 to 26 years:

Interpretation: Graph No. 3

- Above graph indicates that 36.84% respondents have reached to Under Graduate Programs and 7.89% have reached to Post Graduate Programs.
- 26.32% respondents' education qualification is 12th standard.
- From the above graph, it can be stated that only 44.73% respondents have taken advantage of higher education the remaining 55.26% respondents have not availed the facility of higher education.

Age Group 27 to 30 years:

Interpretation: Graph No. 3

- The graph shows that 25.00% respondents of age group 27 to 30 years completed under graduation where as 12.50% respondents completed post-graduation.
- The graph states that 29.17% respondents have taken up-to 9th standard education which is the largest number in the graph. Only 16.67% respondents reached up-to 12th standard.
- The graph shows that 2.08% respondents are illiterate.
- Altogether 60.42% respondents have not availed the facility of higher education.

Findings:

The findings of the above data analysis are as follows:

- Around 50% of the respondents on an average have not availed the facility of higher education.
- There is a need to make the rural youth aware about the importance of higher education.

- Higher education plays a crucial role in the development of an individual and in turn nation's development. Hence, there is a need to study the difficulties of the learners in availing higher education facility.
- While interacting the respondents about unavailing the facility of higher education, the major reasons identified are poverty, transport facility, lack of awareness about distance learning and less interest.

Recommendations:

- **Awareness Program:** There are various support facilities for the learners to complete their education. The need is to create awareness about these facilities among the students. Some of the facilities are given below:
 - **Earn and Learn Scheme:** The college runs this scheme for economically weaker section students. The students can take advantage of this scheme.
 - **Scholarships:** There are various scholarship schemes by the government and non-government organization.
 - **Distance learning:** Various universities provide the facility of distance learning such as Indira Gandhi National Open University, Distance Learning Programs by Savitribai Phule Pune University etc.

Awareness programs should be conducted to make the learners aware about such facilities and importance of higher education in personal development. It will help to increase the learner's engagement in higher education. Some of the ways are suggested below:

- **Effective communication:** Social media has become a very effective tool of communication. It can be used smartly and effectively to inform the role of higher education in the personal development and various facilities available to continue higher education. Likewise, various other sources such as advertisements, radio, newspapers etc. should be used effectively.
- **Community Engagement Activities:** Community engagement activities should be conducted in the villages by the colleges or universities which will help to make the villagers aware about the contribution of higher education in the nation's development.
- **The role of secondary and higher secondary schools:** These schools can play a very significant role in creating awareness about higher education.

Under career development guidance schools can organize programs or sessions to make the students aware about various platforms available at higher education level and its importance in personal development.

- **Adoption of the villages:** Villages should be adopted by the nearby higher education institutions or colleges or any social organizations or industries or the one who wants to contribute to higher educational development of the rural youth.
- **Rural Higher Education Committee:** In each village Higher Education Committee should be formed. This committee will study the problems in getting higher education and will also provide the guidance about higher education.
- **Employability skill development-based curriculum:** The curriculum of higher education should be based on employability skill development. The general objective behind taking education of every individual is to get employment. The rural youth will get attracted toward higher education if it enables them to get employed. Many times, a common comment received on education is that it does not get us employment. It is commonly observed belief that after higher education a student will get an employment. Practically many of the students who complete their higher education remain unemployed. This is one of the reasons that youth are reluctant to continue with higher education. Hence it is essential to redesign the curriculum of higher education. Employability skill development should be considered as the most important factor while designing the curriculum. Farming is the major source of income in rural area. The rural youth should get the advanced knowledge and skills to develop their farming and other related work. If higher education succeeds to provide need-based education which lead to financial independence, the rural youth will definitely take benefit of this. Higher education with proper blending of knowledge and skills that leads to social, moral, cultural, financial development will help in driving rural young force towards it.

Importance of higher education:

Higher education plays a vital role in the overall development of the human and awareness of sense of dignity. The importance can be stated as below:

- Higher education helps to develop individual's abilities to think and express in systematically, logically and maturely.

- It supports to widen the levels of knowledge and skills. It provides opportunities to acquire special skills.
- It increases the understanding of the world and their community.
- Knowledgeable, skilled, specialist can serve the society in a better away. They can contribute to economic growth of the nation as well.
- It leads to quality life, moral development, better man-kind, sensitization towards issues such as gender equality, poverty, inclusiveness, sustainability etc.
- Higher education is the source to produce researchers, competent professional, thinkers, noble citizens.
- It contributes in the development of various skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking, thinking out of box etc.

The importance of higher education has reflected into Sustainable Development Goals also. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are adopted by all members of United Nations. 17 SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. Among these goals, SDG4 is about quality education. One of its targets is: 'By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university'. (SDG4 Quality Education: Targets)

Conclusion

Higher education is a step in every individual's life which can lead him/her to the certain level of maturity, specialty, understanding, grasping capacity. A nation needs knowledgeable, learned, good human beings to achieve prosperity and peace. Hence it is the responsibility of every individual to get advantage of higher education to serve the society and nation in a better way. It is also equally important to bring rural youth into this flow of higher education so altogether we can contribute to the growth of the nation as well as the growth of every individual.

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