



RISE OF DEGREE HOLDERS IN INDIA AND DECLINE OF TRUE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how a country like India, with a population of over 1.47 billion and a literacy rate that keeps rising each year, still has unemployment at its peak: people with degrees, certifications, and diplomas are still sitting at home. This study provides a brief overview of how the gap between certification and learning takes place. Education works as an asset, but in India, it is taken as just a symbol that holding multiple degrees will make you a well-reputed person. On the other hand, if you are skilled in your work and able to perform your assigned task efficiently, even then, you are considered not much of a knowledgeable person. Some such people are educated as well as skilled, but the number is alarmingly low. This work is there to highlight the issue in detail so that we can find better solutions to it and create India as a country filled with knowledgeable and skilled minds.

Keywords: Degree, Education, Unemployment, Literacy, Learning, Skill, Knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

‘A piece of paper cannot decide your future’ was just a mere statement, but now it is the harsh truth of society, and it is now clearly visible like a wound that is affecting and infecting the entire education system. Education is defined by Plato as ‘Education may be understood as the process of developing character, mind, and skills, particularly intellectual and moral capacities. ‘Education aims to help in the development of our mental, physical, emotional and spiritual faculties. It is a process that is lifelong, continuous and not temporary.¹ It is a building block for any student; therefore, the very first source of education starts from the home of a child, and the mother becomes the primary person to teach a child about the basics. It is not the

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¹ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (Macmillan, 1916).

learning that is rote or based on just theories, ideas & concepts; rather, education is a learning where the clarity of the concept is the very aspect that must be taken as the most essential.

In the Constitution of India, education is our fundamental right under Part III.² Article 21A 'Right to education' is guaranteed to children from 6 to 14 years of age, which came under the 86th Amendment Act in 2002.³ A degree, on the other hand, is a certificate or document that is formal, specifying our achievement in that particular course or program. The degree was made to use as proof of the education if the person has achieved that much knowledge or has an understanding of that topic, but is it really the case today? Are we having people who are well-versed in knowledge after getting a degree? The answer is clearly no because when we study in India, the education system becomes a total business idea; it doesn't support real education, it supports the mafia that has the power to control the system that benefits the rich, and the poor people suffer badly.⁴ Due to these fake degrees being created, people with zero knowledge and a high level of education need to understand this problem; we first need to find the root cause.

DEGREE AS A REAL ASSET OR A MYTH IN INDIAN EDUCATION

A degree can be understood as a piece of paper that a person receives after completing the courses he/she applied for and did the learning in it by regularly attending. A degree does have benefits to it; it is not useless, it is important, acts as proof that any person who wants to work needs to be specialised and must have training and provides clarity of the basics and the major crust. In some fields, it might not be important to gain clear experience. If we take an example of a chartered accountant, if he is well versed in concepts and clear with the work, he/she doing, it might work if an error occurs or the person doesn't work according, he might be replaced or he might learn the basics, but some jobs are way more crucial and even a slight error of skill or knowledge can turn into a life or death situation.

In that scenario, having a degree cannot help; they need experience in real time, and that experience comes from the practical knowledge and skill set. If we introduce both types of learning from the school level, it would be so beneficial, as it will eventually make a change in society where the new generation is skilled and knows beforehand how to deal with upcoming hurdles. Certification is important, but it does not provide any justification for its authenticity.

² Constitution of India 1950, art 19.

³ The Constitution of India, art 21A, inserted by The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002.

⁴ Pawan Agarwal, *Indian Higher Education: Envisioning the Future* (Sage Publications, 2009).

Without the authentication of a degree, we cannot trust the degree holder's knowledge. The degree that was once a 'golden ticket' is now like an old newspaper. The degrees are sold at very low prices, making their value cheaper. The bachelor's degree has zero market value today. The loss is happening mostly to the students; their time period for earning a degree has become longer and more exhausting.

REASONS FOR THE DECLINE OF TRUE EDUCATION

True education is an underlying issue in India, where the people with rich shoes have all the luxury, and those lying on the streets are puppets of society. Rich people's children can afford all types of education. They can even buy those degrees for themselves after paying money, without having basic knowledge in the field, and they start practising that degree in real time, causing a high amount of damage to society and its people.⁵ It is clearly a misuse of power and authority, and no one looks into this issue. Also, India is a society where education feels just like a routine process forced on students. There is no sense of curiosity for learning; children are told to follow the rules without questioning a thing. This eventually leads to a habit of rote learning, and the interest in understanding the concepts and applying them in real time becomes less.⁶ This changes the basic meaning of education, where the pressure is on performing and scoring. Academics then become your personality, and your marks are your identity that will showcase your overall performance. To make a change in this attitude towards education, we need practical knowledge.

WHAT IS THE NEED FOR SKILL-BASED TRAINING?

Education in India starts from the school, where academic excellence is a priority, and no skill-based training programs are taken seriously. Skill-based training provides a better mindset and approach in society. Skill is like a tool that can truly help in enhancing our practical knowledge.⁷ This is when the question truly arises: why do we need to work on practical and realistic learning? Is it really essential to do so? If we look at today's generation, which includes Gen-Z and Gen-alpha, that is the youth, as well as the upcoming generation. They don't believe in working late nights or doing more work for less income, they do not wish to work overtime,

⁵ University Grants Commission, 'Higher Education in India: Issues and Concerns' (UGC Report 2022).

⁶ National Council of Educational Research and Training, *National Curriculum Framework 2005* (NCERT 2005).

⁷ UNESCO, *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives* (UNESCO 2017).

that is a total wave of change in the work centre. They enculturate their time in seeking knowledge, learning real-time skills that will actually be helpful.

Today, education has also become so expensive that not everyone is able to afford it. Thus, this changes the mindset of students to not just go after the degrees or certification without understanding the concepts in depth. Teachers also need to be skilled in providing practical knowledge; they also need to unlearn the old preaching and learn it again from the very basics. We need to work on both the education givers and the degree holders. Also, getting a degree must not be a simple and easy-going process; it must pass through some checks that it is valid and authentic, to maintain transparency and fairness in the education system.

KNOWLEDGE BEYOND TEXTBOOKS FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT IN THE REAL WORLD

Books are a hub of knowledge, but they can never replace real-time experiences that prepare us for all kinds of situations. In the field of law, education, and medical science, needs real-time experience is what you need. A person pursuing law must not only know the sections and articles, but also know how to address the court and represent the case before judges. Similarly, a doctor must know how to treat patients in emergencies. In these types of critical situations, a person wants someone who has an authentic degree and not a fake degree holder, operating him or a person who just has bookish knowledge.

This is also a major reason that leads to unemployment in the youth, where people do have a degree, but when asked to apply it, they stumble and fall, leading to a disaster.⁸ The major cause of unemployment is rote learning, where the skill set is zero. Unemployment is a concern seen in youth that can be resolved if we start to take experience-based learning more seriously by teaching students with real-time examples and providing them with exposure to real-life problems in their courses.⁹ We need to add particular subjects and include activities and events in the curriculum to resolve this issue and promote skills-based learning. Books can be your friend, but to fight through the real world, you need to be on your own, and that confidence comes from the skills we learn with time.

⁸ National Skill Development Corporation, *India Skill Report 2023* (NSDC 2023).

⁹ John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (Kappa Delta Pi 1938).

CONCLUSION

People still have very different opinions related to education; some do agree with the idea of experience-based learning, but most of them are not well-versed in this idea. India is a huge country, and not only in India, but across most Asian countries, education is everything. Though practical skills are also not the only part that must be focused on entirely, both practical and conceptual skills must go hand in hand with each other. Both must collide to form a structure where skill and knowledge become the primary goals to teach students. Artificial learning is also so prominent these days, and we must teach the use of AI as well as the pros and cons that come with it.¹⁰ We are here to develop the minds for the upcoming time; they will be creating history today. AI can be used as a good tool if the application of it is applied correctly.

We can also include the children in competitions that are totally skill-based and will give them such exposure. In law schools, students participate in client counselling, moot courts, debate, mediation, arbitration, and judgment writing. These are not taught in the classroom; they are skill-based training for the betterment of students. These minor changes can help in the gradual transformation. India does not need people with high-end degrees and few jobs; they need people who can bring change in society, and those who don't work like a machine 24/7 like a robot. We do not need to have paid labourers who need to be taught everything from scratch, and that came as an empty mind.

Thus, we live in a rapidly changing society that destroys and restructures itself on a daily basis. We need to be adaptable in this condition. The degree must be as transparent as water; it must also include a particular column mentioning the practical skills. Students must also know that not every career path you choose requires a degree sometimes; let your skills do the talking for themselves. Degrees are a myth and a propaganda we keep falling for, and to avoid it, we need to take a step back and open our eyes to finally see how the education system truly works. Students do know the actual ground reality of education in India; they try to challenge it, but fall hard each time. It is not a step taken by individuals or groups. We all must come together to bring change to the education of India. Just like Abdul Kalam, our former president, says, be the change you want to see in society.¹¹ The youth have the power to bring about change, and eventually it will surely occur.

¹⁰ OECD, *Artificial Intelligence in Education: Challenges and Opportunities* (OECD Publishing 2021).

¹¹ A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, *Wings of Fire* (Universities Press 1999).