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- Garg, Bhavet (2011): Towards a New Gas Policy, Political Weekly, Viewed on January 01, 2012 <http://epw.in/user/viewabstract.jsp>

BRIDGING INDUSTRY ACADEMIA GAP THROUGH SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

In the current scenario where business complexities are changing at a fast pace, it is necessary that the industry and the academia to develop close links to build the alliance. It is observed that the changing complexity of the business environment has necessitated the industry and the academia to develop close links to create the synergy. The interface between these two has led to increasing mutual dependence to ensure their better survival in their domains. It is estimated that the average age of the population in India by 2020 will be 29 years as against 40 years in USA, 46 years in Europe and 47 years in Japan. To reap this demographic dividend which is expected to last for next 25 years, India needs to equip its workforce with employable skills and knowledge so that they can contribute substantially to the economic growth of the country. The basic objective of the study is to analyze the skill requirements of the industry and to examine the mechanisms for bridging the gap between academia and industry. This paper studies that India must focus on scaling up skill training efforts to meet the demands of employers and drive economic growth. Secondary sources are used for the study.

KEYWORDS

bridging gap, demographic dividend, employability, industry academia interface, skill development.

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INTRODUCTION

Human resources are considered to be the most precious asset for all countries in the world. The socio-economic development of any country depends on the size, quality, competencies and capabilities of human resources. Human resources are significant in realization of nation's goals like removal of poverty, rapid economic growth.

There has been an increasing awareness about the role and responsibility of education during the last few years. It is becoming a matter of concern in many countries as to how educational systems were organized and administered. Indian higher education system contributes about 350,000 engineers and 2.5 million university graduates annually to our workforce. But rate of unemployment is very high. About 75% of technical graduates and 80-90% of university graduates remain unemployed. India currently faces a severe shortage of well-trained, skilled workers. It is estimated that only 2.3% of the workforce in India has undergone formal skill training as compared to 68% in the UK, 75% in Germany, 52% in USA, 80% in Japan and 96% in South Korea.

Industrial world is becoming dynamic and innovative day by day. A rapid developing knowledge based service economy with management oriented professionals is required in today's era. In India, prior to 60's, courses related to management education were not offered as a separate area of specialization. Employees in the businesses were mostly graduates or postgraduates. Importance of business education was realized with the establishment of two Indian Institutes of Management; IIM Calcutta in association with Sloan School of Management and IIM Ahmedabad with Harvard Business School.

There has been a relatively slow but steady growth in number of schools and popularity of business education in India. With liberalization in 1991, players in the global world were allowed to invest in India. This led to opening of large number of business schools in India. Many multi-nationals entered India bringing increased demand for professionals with them. Business education now moved beyond the domains of government control with establishment of many private institutions.

Since India is a growing economy, large business houses and industrial players throughout the world are looking forward for investment and expansion here. This arouses a need for people who are ready-for-the-job. But contrary to this, there is a strong need to enhance skills in large number of employees in changing scenario. If industry play active role in sharing the know-how, expertise and academia developing programmes, then only employees can be skilled, re-skilled or up-skilled.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Today all economies need skilled workforce so as to meet global standards of quality, to increase their foreign trade, to bring advanced technologies to their domestic industries and to boost their industrial and economic development. Thus, skills and knowledge becomes the major driving force of socio-economic growth and development for any country. As it has been observed that countries with highly skilled human capital tend to have higher GDP and per capita income levels and they adjust more effectively to the challenges and opportunities of the world of work.

Knowledge and skills development is important for growth of organizations as organizations are valued not only on their physical but on their intellectual capital. Untrained or poorly trained employees add more to cost whereas well-trained employees prove to be a valuable commodity that can be viewed as an investment rather than as an expense as they can produce high returns. Training and development enhances the company's ability to adopt advanced technology because of highly knowledgeable staff. Organizations can build efficient, effective and highly motivated team, which enhances the company's competitive position and improves employee morale. India currently faces a severe shortage of well-trained, skilled workers. Large sections of the educated workforce have little or no job skills, making them largely unemployable.

Academia- Industry Interface could be defined as interactive and collaborative arrangement between academic institutions and business corporations for the achievement of certain mutually inclusive goals and objectives. Industry interface is indeed the most critical differentiator for educational institutions worldwide. Today corporations are strongly emphasizing on finding the "right person" which compel academia to think more carefully on whom they hire. So the academic institutions should have made students to undertake industry projects, presentations, case studies, research work and work as trainees to get practical experience of industrial working environment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- 1) Lokesh Mehra (2015) in the article "Bridging the skills gap with industry: Academia partnerships" focused on shortage of skilled labour in various organizations in the country. The reason behind it is high dropout ratio of students after school education. Multinationals are establishing alliance with academic institutions on specific initiatives covering faculty upgradation, internships, curriculum revision etc. to cope up the problem of skill shortage.
- 2) Tammy de Boer (December, 2014) in her study "Bridging the gap between academia and industry- a collaborative partnership" concluded that industry and academia must work together which lead to innovation thereby enhancing economic development. There should be open communication and collaboration between industry and academia to understand and address the qualities and skills required.
- 3) Neeti Sharma (June, 2014) stressed on unemployability of graduates and postgraduates on one hand and vacant positions in the industries on other hand in the article " Bridging the industry - academia gap". Few ways were suggested for developing skills through education system like increasing enrolment ratio in higher education, matching curriculum to industry requirements, internships to give workplace exposure, shared job model with recurring participation etc.
- 4) Marilynn Larkin (April, 2014) illustrated some companies that have collaborated with educational institutions in the article "Building successful partnerships between academia and industry". The components for successful strategic partnerships were discussed. Innovation and incubation in academic field was given importance.
- 5) Prachi Kapil (August,2013) in the study "Bridging the Industry-Academia Skill Gap A Conceptual Investigation with special emphasis on the Management Education in India" highlighted some initiatives required to accelerate independence between academic and industrial prospects in India. He suggested some efforts in bringing higher educational institutions and industry together ensuring quality on both sides.
- 6) Pankaj Jalote (2013) in the article "Challenges in industry -academia collaboration" suggested different types of possible collaborations in Indian scenario like producer- consumer interaction, collaboration in continuing education, collaboration in research etc. Both industries and institutions must spend time together to understand each others' context and develop a common language.
- 7) Ryan Raver (September, 2012) have evaluated reasons for industry academia gap and given suggestions to overcome the problem in the article "One step at a time: Bridging gap between Academia and Industry". It was suggested that students pursuing doctoral programs should be provided internship in multinationals. Academia- industry interaction should be considered as part of education.
- 8) Arolkar and Patil (2003) studied several economic reform measures that have posed many challenges to business enterprises in their paper "Entrepreneurship Education and Employment: A Missing Link". He stated the economic reform measures that have been aimed at transforming the economy from controlled to decontrolled, investment to disinvestment, regulation to management, nationalization to privatization, domestic trade to foreign trade, permanent to contract, etc. have bring out many challenges to industry.
- 9) Bruce Prideaux (2001) in the article "Bridging the gap between academic research and industry research needs" examined how research is produced and used by government, industry and academia. Comparison of business and academia research has been made in the study. Some strategies were suggested to bridge the gap between academic and industry needs

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the various skill development programmes launched by government.
2. To study the skill requirements of the Industry.
3. To examine the mechanisms for bridging the gap between academia and industry.
4. To understand the student's perception towards the Industry- Academia interface and to analyze the benefits from its mode.
5. To evaluate the various skills development programmes being run in academia.

NEED FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The need of skill development was realized after liberalization. Prior to liberalization the demand for goods and services was higher than their supply as there was scarcity of raw materials, capital and technology. The growth and expansion of industrial activities could hardly be seen. Quantity was given more importance than quality. Now, the scenario has changed and quality is considered more important than quantity. To meet rising expectations of people, skill development is required along with its continuous upgradation.

Framework of international business is becoming more integrated and independent due to falling barriers to international trade and investment. To retain global competitiveness in current scenario, demand for new and constantly developing skills is increasing.

Deficiency of human intellectual capital which is necessary to manage and sustain rapidly transforming economic enterprises and capital markets is faced by India and other developing countries. In spite of increased investment in education and training by the government, efforts are inadequate to address the demand of corporate sector. This raises the need for collaboration of employers and higher educational institutions to create modalities so that need for long term skills and business could be met out.

After completing higher studies, students fantasize of lucrative job but it turns into plethora of rejections at the placement sessions. The employers are giving more emphasis on competency skills rather than academic knowledge in recruiting employees. They are looking for skills like problem solving, decision making and multi-tasking. Industry oriented environment should be provided during academic tenure so that the students get adaptive to that and the skills and competencies come naturally to them.

FICCI carried out a survey with World Bank in 2009 to check the employer's satisfaction quotient for new engineering students and found that more than 60 % of employers were not satisfied by the skills of graduates. A similar survey was carried out with Synovate in 2010 to check the employability of graduates and it also reported dissatisfaction from employers towards quality of general students.

SKILLS BUSINESS ENTERPRISES LOOKING FOR FOLLOWING

- **Marketing Skills:** Earlier, marketing was seen as selling activity. Goods and services produced by the enterprises were made available to the people. But with changing scenario, the concept of 'Buyer Beware' has changed to 'Seller Beware'. Now, it's not the producers but the customers who decide what, when and how much to produce. Marketing team of business organizations has to focus on their prospective customers, their needs and expectations, likes and dislikes, purchasing habits, sentiments, attitude etc. Accordingly, they have to ensure the right product at the right price, at the right place, at the right time for the right prospects. Consumer expects a wide range of variety with multiple features at a competitive price, consumer care and satisfaction, excellent after sales service and quick complaint redressal. This transformation has affected marketing function of every industry posing tough challenges for survival, success and future progress of enterprises. To achieve outstanding performance in marketing of goods and services, enterprises expect marketing team to be hard-working, ambitious, travelling lovers, working overtime; prompt enough to provide adequate and reliable information. They require skills like understanding customers, impressing upon them, respecting and caring them, smiling at them, keeping long lasting continued relation with customers and foreseeing for prospective customers.
- **Communication Skills:** In today's world, where science and technology are getting advanced day by day, communication plays an important role in every walk of life. Communication plays an important role in meeting challenges like customer satisfaction, customer delight, customer retention, rising crisis etc. which is necessary for survival and growth in competitive world. For effectiveness in organization, there should be effective and healthy communication skills among the workers, among the employees, among the managers and between the superiors and subordinates across all the levels. The enterprises expect skills like clarity in company's vision, mission and objectives, vocabulary, basics of knowledge, knowledge of body language, knowledge of daily events, clarity

in message, presence of listening rather than hearing, holding receiver's attention, initiating few informal and friendly conversation prior to real communication, politeness in communication, recognizing the importance of the receiver and communicating negative things in positive way.

- **Leadership Skills:** Leadership is a process wherein managers influence employees to work for achieving organizational goals and objectives. In today's competitive world it is very difficult to manage human resources and project their individual interest towards organizational objectives. The future and success of any organization depends upon how leaders understand, guide, help, lead, motivate and direct employees. Organizations expect leaders to have certain skills like appreciating workers; listening patiently to aggrieved workers; telling good things of employees in public and weaknesses in person; making workers easily accessible to managers; clearing doubts of workers in difficulty; helping and assisting workers when they are multitasking.
- **Transferable Skills:** Transferable skills are the skills and abilities that are relevant and helpful across different departments of organization. Employers usually look for portable skills like communicating effectively in variety of situations, showing initiative, creativity and integrity and having a good work attitude which are valuable across all industries. A person with multifaceted skills will have better prospects of employability.
- **Analytical Skills:** Analytical skills refer to an ability to make a critical and in-depth inquiry into the different problems. Organizations require the employees with ability to visualize articulate and solve both complex and uncomplicated problems and concepts and make decisions that are sensible and based on available information. These skills are accountable for results, competitive environment, complexity of business environment, increase in customer data and risk management. Thus, analytical skills assume importance in arriving sound and healthy decisions.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** Interpersonal skills refer to ability of individuals to communicate with other people properly and effectively. In an organization, all employees have to interact with their colleagues, subordinates, superiors and stakeholders. The overall success of any organization depends on the working relationship with each other and on how good, how decent and how polite individuals interact with others. Employers often seek to hire staff with '*strong interpersonal skills*'. They want people who will work well in a team and are able to communicate effectively with colleagues, customers and clients.
- **Presentation Skills:** The success of any organization depends not only on internal forces like employees, capital, managers, systems and procedures but external forces like customers, creditors, rating agencies, bankers etc. also affect it. To make corporate world aware about organization's qualities, strengths, standards, achievements and capabilities; presentation and projections in most impressive, convincing and effective manner is to be prepared. For an effective and impressive presentation; the traits like confidence, involvement, proficiency of language, word power, positive approach, thorough studies and meticulous planning are required in personnel.
- **Technical Skills:** A thorough knowledge and repairing abilities pertaining to machines in the employees is required by the managers. The people with thorough knowledge and repairing abilities will have better scope of employability than those with either of these.
- **Conceptual Skills:** It is the ability to think creatively about, analyze and understand complicated and abstract ideas. Using a well-developed conceptual skill set, top level business managers need to be able to look at their company as a holistic entity, to see the interrelationships between its divisions, and to understand how the firm fits into and affects its overall environment.
- **Writing Skills:** Good writing skills allow employees to communicate their message with clarity and ease to customers than through face-to-face or telephone conversations. Employees with good writing skills can write a report, plan or strategy at work with more efficiency and effectiveness.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. Introduction of skill development in higher education will increase employment opportunities leaving high impact on growth of the economy.
2. Bridging industry academia gap through skill development would enhance quality on both sides.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research involves data collection through both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources mainly include semi-structured interviews, questionnaire and notes from archival documents like files, letters and memos. The empirical part of the study involved investigation through structured questionnaire consisting questions related to faculty, industry and students; exploring hypotheses through quantitative and qualitative data and information gathered; analysis of primary and secondary data; information from industry, government, and different websites of government departments, academic institutions and industry associations. The other sources of data used in the study are the various documents and reports of the Government published by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Planning Commission, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the University Grants Commission (UGC). In addition, relevant published books, research papers and articles have been looked into.

STATUS OF SKILL UNIVERSITIES

A. IN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

There are no Universities in the name of Skill University in foreign countries. However, developed countries have a massive system of manpower development for various sectors of economy. Technical and vocational education and training programmes in these countries can be grouped in the following 4 categories of models:

1. The liberal market economy model (in England)
2. The state regulated bureaucratic model (in France)
3. The dual- corporatist model (in Germany)
4. Apprenticeship model in many developed countries

In addition to the above, in countries like USA and Canada, there are Community Colleges, which offer a variety of vocational courses at Associate Degree level.

B. IN INDIA

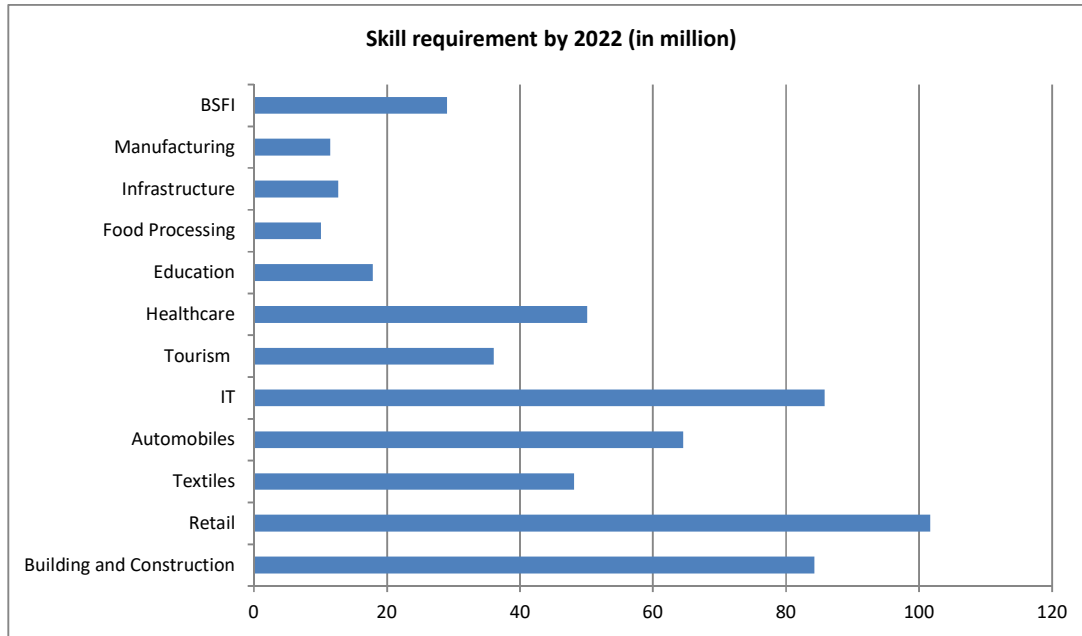
Gujarat, Karnataka and now Rajasthan have announced establishment of skill/ vocational university in the country. In addition, integrated furniture maker "Timbor Home Ltd.", Ahmedabad, Gujarat has announced setting up of a Skill Varsity to offer courses to meet manpower needs of Indian furniture industry.

- **GUJARAT:** Gujarat was the first state to recognize the need of skill training and continuous up gradation of skills of existing workforce to face globalized competition and therefore decided to set up a skill university. Team Lease Skills University is the first vocational university of India. It offers skill based programs like Certificate, diploma and degree courses in mechatronics and allied multi skill manufacturing disciplines, IT infrastructure and hardware, finance, accounting services and operations, hospitality and tourism. The programs will enhance employability of these students and provide human resource to the fast growing manufacturing and services sectors in Gujarat. TLSU programs will provide vertical link to the pass- outs of Vocational Secondary Higher Schools as well as ITI candidates, which can synergize enrolment in these institutions.
- **KARNATAKA:** Apex Vocational University was established at Ramnagar to fulfil skill gap in India's work force. The university will focus on vocational education and skill development/ training and offer quality education through four classrooms- physical, satellite, e-learning and on- the- job.
- **RAJASTHAN:** The state government has announced establishment of Skill University in its budget announcement 2014-15. The proposed university may take into consideration the work done by Sector Skill Councils; need to align qualifications to National Skill Qualification Framework and skill gap studies and their findings.
- **WEST BENGAL:** Seacom Skill University was established at Birbhum which offers Engineering and Technical Education with maximum industry orientation and more stress is being given on practical skills, aiming at building greater confidence in students. The university emphasizes on achieving international distinction for research intensive education, excellence and values.
- **OTHER STATES:** There are no proposals in public domain for setting up of skill universities in remaining states and UTs. But, many states have set up institutes of Vocational Studies or established Vocational Colleges. To meet manpower needs of different sectors, each state has number of ITIs, Polytechnic, Engineering, Nursing, Dental, Pharmacy, Hotel Management institutions in the country. In addition to these sector based institutions, there are many diploma and degree programmes awarding institutions which are sort of vocational in nature.

PROJECTED SKILL REQUIREMENT BY 2022

Skill requirement in some major sectors by 2022 is estimated as below:

CHART 1

**CHALLENGES**

The existing curriculum of universities and educational institutions is obsolete and irrelevant that does not fit in the changing technological and competitive environment. Due to wide disconnection between skills provided and skills required by the industry, skill demands of the service as well as the organized sector remains largely unmet. Students do not get practical exposure to industrial environment during their academic period. Because of this, companies have to spend extra money and time to orient and train fresher's. To equip new students with high information and industry acquainted knowledge, competency is to be increased in transformational leadership, business ethics and values.

INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO BRIDGE INDUSTRY ACADEMIA GAP

- Some government organizations such as Defence fund a range of pure and applied research.
- Departments such as health, education and environment are major research users and often engage academic researchers.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ **National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship:** The primary objective of this policy is to meet the challenge of skilling at scale with speed, standard (quality) and sustainability. It aims to provide an umbrella framework to all skilling activities being carried out within the country, to align them to common standards and link skilling with demand centres. In addition to laying down the objectives and expected outcomes, the policy also identifies the overall institutional framework which will act as a vehicle to reach the expected outcomes. The policy links skills development to improved employability and productivity in paving the way forward for inclusive growth in the country. The skill strategy is complemented by specific efforts to promote entrepreneurship in order to create ample opportunities for the skilled workforce.
- ❖ **Craftsmen Training Schemes:** The scheme includes imparting skills in various vocational trades to meet the skilled manpower requirements for technology and industrial growth of the country. Several new private ITIs were established in 1980's in southern states mostly in Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, etc. from where trained craftsmen found placement mainly in Gulf countries. At present, there are over 10,750 ITIs (2275 in Govt. & 8475 in Private Sector) having a total seating capacity of 15.22 lakhs.
- ❖ **Apprenticeship Training Schemes:** The objective of this scheme is to regulate the programme of training of apprentices in the industry so as to conform to the syllabi, period of training etc. as laid down by the Central Apprenticeship Council and to utilise fully the facilities available in industry for imparting practical training with a view to meeting the requirements of skilled manpower for industry.
- ❖ **Skill Development Initiative Scheme:** The objectives of the scheme are to provide vocational training to school leavers, existing workers, ITI graduates, etc. to improve their employability by optimally utilizing the infrastructure available in Govt., private institutions and the Industry. Existing skills of the persons can also be tested and certified under this scheme. It also focuses on building capacity in the area of development of competency standards, course curricula, learning material and assessment standards in the country.
- ❖ **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana:** The objective of this skill certification and reward scheme is to enable and mobilize a large number of Indian youth to take up outcome based skill training and become employable and earn their livelihood. Under the scheme, monetary reward would be provided to trainees who are successfully trained, assessed and certified in skill courses run by affiliated training providers. Skill training under PMKVY would essentially target drop out students after class 10 and class 12.
- ❖ **UDAAN:** The programme aims to provide skills training and enhance the employability of unemployed youth of J&K. The Scheme covers graduates, post graduates and three-year engineering diploma holders. Its objectives are to provide an exposure to the unemployed graduates to the best of Corporate India and to provide Corporate India, an exposure to the rich talent pool available in the State. Up to July 10, 2015 10,555 have joined this training program out of which 4984 have got placement.
- ❖ **Standard Training Assessment and Reward Scheme:** The objective of this scheme is to encourage skill development for youth by providing monetary rewards for successful completion of approved training programs.

EXPECTATIONS FROM EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- Dual specialization should be introduced for marketing and finance as both are interdependent.
- Students should be encouraged to attend national seminars and association membership should be given for their personal and holistic development.
- Students having different academic background and work experience should be given different learning and training methods.

- Practical knowledge should be imparted through better industry interface along with theoretical knowledge so that leadership skills are imbibed in the students.
- The curriculum should be framed in consultation with industry experts.
- Live research should be conducted in educational institutions to enhance understanding and applicability among students.
- Motivation, leadership and competency traits should be deeply rooted in the personality of students along with practical know how of laws, labour, legislations, and compensation management.
- Teaching should not be considered just a job; rather it should be viewed as a source of contentment.
- Teachers should have periodic interaction with industry.
- Selection of teachers should be on basis of their ability to transmit new learning and quality of industry exposure rather than degrees and doctorates.
- There should be 50:50 ratio of core to visiting/ industry faculty.
- Use of live case studies with pre-defined standardization of level/ quality/ relevance should be enforced.
- Research and development activities should be frequently carried on which will lead to innovative learning experience thereby enhancing personality growth of both students and faculty.

FINDINGS

On the basis of primary data gathered through structured questionnaire, some conclusion in the form of findings has been drawn:

- ❖ Academicians and industrialists have different perspectives and expectations.
- ❖ Academics seldom attend industrial conferences.
- ❖ Academics are not aware of the problems and constraints of industry.
- ❖ High speed changes are taking place in the world of technology but universities and educational institutions are unable to update their syllabi accordingly.
- ❖ Industry seeks the minimum solution to minimize their risk, whereas Academia strives for a maximum solution to maximize their recognition.
- ❖ International tie-ups with reputed foreign universities should be done to provide opportunities to our students for international internship, summer school programs, semester exchange etc.
- ❖ Skilling should be integrated with formal education at secondary education level by introducing vocational training classes.
- ❖ Generation of knowledge will take place rather than distribution of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

It is essential to have industry-academia interactions which will help to impart relevant knowledge and will be sustainable in the changing conditions. In order to bridge the industry academia gap, identification of different sectors and job roles should be done. Implementation model should be developed and should be integrated into curriculum as per university norms.

Sector skill councils should provide training to trainers. Various capacity building seminars and workshops should be organized timely. Students should be provided with orientation sessions so that they can select their job roles as per their career aspirations. Internships and on-the-job training should be provided to the students and their assessment and certification should be done by Sector Skill Councils. It would thereby help in building employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. The industry-academia gap could also be bridged by increasing the enrolment ratios in higher education.

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