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Empowering the Youth: Investing in Higher Education, Skills, and Technology for a Prosperous Future

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ABSTRACT

Youth is a time when individuals should focus on developing themselves, in order to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives. The emphasis on confidence, determination, and resolution suggests that these qualities are essential for personal growth and success**.** This paper highlights the importance of investing in education, skills, and technology to empower the youth for a prosperous future. The key to achieving success in society and the economy lies in the development of a skilled and inspired generation of young people. The paper stresses the need to prioritize effective and inclusive education, training, and lifelong learning for young people while ramping up youth skills development through Technical Education and Training, broadband connectivity, and digital skills. The article emphasizes the urgency of investing in cost-effective, proven solutions to fast-track learning and skills development for today's and future generations to address the crisis effectively. By empowering the youth through education, skills, and technology, we can pave the way for a brighter, more prosperous future for all.

Keywords: Skill Development, Higher Education, Technology, Youth Empowerment, Technical Education, Digital Skills. Investment in Education.

INTRODUCTION

Education can be defined as the stock of skills, competencies and other productivity-enhancing characteristics. In general, education as a critical component of a country's human capital -increases the efficiency of each individual worker and helps economies to move up the value chain beyond manual task or simple production process (WEF, 2016).

Human capital has long been considered the most distinctive feature of the economic system. Education is a leading determinant of economic growth, employment and earnings. Ignoring the economic dimension of education would endanger the prosperity of future generations, with widespread repercussions for poverty, social exclusion and sustainability of social security system (Woessman, 2015).

India has a very lumbering population of youth, demarcated as individuals aged between 15 and 29 years. According to the United Nations Population Fund, as of 2021, India has an estimated 356 million young people, accounting for over a quarter of the country's total population. The youth population in India is estimated to be 356 million, which is larger than the entire population of the United States.

According to the 2011 Census of India, the literacy rate among youth aged 15-24 years is 86.1%. However, there are significant disparities between rural and urban areas, with the urban literacy rate being much higher at 91.3% compared to the rural rate of 77.5%. Youth unemployment is a major issue in India. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) conducted by the National Statistical Office, the unemployment rate among youth aged 15-29 years was 23.7% in 2017-18.

Gender disparities continue to exist among Indian youth, with females facing greater challenges in accessing education and employment opportunities. According to the PLFS, the unemployment rate for female youth is

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significantly higher than that for males. While India's youth population presents a significant demographic dividend, there is a need for greater investment in education and employment opportunities, as well as efforts to address gender disparities and support the mental health and well-being of young people.

Technology is changing traditional method of enhancing wisdom like online learning platforms have gained significant popularity among students who want to enhance their skills and knowledge. Online learning equipped youth to have affordable and accessible education, which is particularly beneficial for those living in remote or underprivileged areas.

Technology has also enabled youth to connect and engage with people from different parts of the world. Social media platforms to communicate with their peers, share their ideas and experiences, and build social networks. Education and social networking, technology has also enabled youth to explore new career opportunities. With the rise of the gig economy and online marketplaces, young people can now work as freelancers, sell their products online, and earn a livelihood from anywhere in the world.

However, there are also some negative aspects of technology on Indian youth. The overuse of technology, particularly social media, can lead to addiction, isolation, and mental health issues. Additionally, the digital divide in India remains a challenge, with many rural and low-income areas lacking access to basic internet connectivity and technology.

The year 2020 presented unprecedented challenges for every human being but students and young generation entrepreneurs highly impacted worldwide. The global economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic impacted businesses of all kinds, but micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises bore the brunt of the crisis.

History:

India had a flourishing education system before it became a British colony. However, the British undermined and destroyed the traditional Indian methods of education, including the Guru-Shishya Parampara (in which student lives with their teachers and imbibed an entire way of thinking) system, and failed to replace the communal schools managed by village communities. As Will Durant points out, "when the British came, there was throughout India, a system of communal schools managed by the village communities. The agent of East India Company destroyed these village communities, and took no steps to replace the schools; even today (1930)… they stand at only 66% of their number an hundred years ago". At the eve of independence, the level of education and literacy was very low in India. In 1951, only 18.3% of people were literate out of which male literacy was 27.2% and female literacy rate was 8.9%. This resulted in a drastic decline in the level of education and literacy in India. Even after 70 years of independence, the majority of Indian children do not have access to quality education that can help them reach their full potential.

Education is a merit good, as pointed out by the economist Richard Musgrave, where the benefits are not fully realized at the time of consumption. Individuals may, therefore, underinvest in education due to the present sacrifices required. However, education confers benefits not only to the individual but also to society at large by raising productivity levels in the economy. As a result, most countries have made a minimum level of education mandatory and provide basic education either free or at a subsidized cost.

Literature Review:

Youth, education and technology are interconnected topics that have gained considerable attention in recent years. As technology continues to advance at a rapid pace, it has become an integral part of the educational system, especially for the youth.

The impact of technology on education has been studied extensively in recent years. Many researchers have found that technology can have a positive impact on education, especially for the youth. For example, a study by Anwar and Javed (2021) found that the use of technology in education can improve student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes.

The use of technology in the classroom has also been a popular research topic. Researchers have found that the use of technology in the classroom can enhance student learning, increase student engagement, and improve teacher-student interaction (Niemiec *et al.*, 2021). However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of technology in the classroom depends on how it is used.

Digital literacy is an important skill for the youth in the digital age. Researchers have found that digital literacy is positively correlated with academic achievement (Buczkowski and Zalewska, 2021). Moreover, the use of technology can enhance digital literacy skills. However,

it is important to ensure that all students have access to technology and the necessary digital literacy skills to use it effectively.

Online learning has become increasingly popular in recent years, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Research has found that online learning can be effective when implemented correctly (Wang and Zhu, 2021). However, online learning can also have negative effects, such as increased screen time and reduced social interaction.

The integration of technology in youth education has numerous benefits. One of the significant benefits is that it improves engagement and motivation among students. According to Al-Azawei, Alhowaish, and Alsuhibany (2018), technology provides a personalized learning experience that enables students to learn at their pace, leading to better engagement and motivation. Moreover, technology enhances the accessibility and flexibility of education, allowing students to learn from any location and at any time.

Technology in education provides opportunities for students to develop digital skills that are essential in the current job market. Digital skills such as coding, computer programming, and digital literacy are crucial in the 21st-century job market (Buckingham and Willett, 2013). Technology integration in youth education prepares students for the future by equipping them with these skills.

Despite the numerous benefits of technology in youth education, its integration has also presented various challenges. One of the significant challenges is the digital divide, which refers to the gap between individuals with access to technology and those without (Warschauer and Matuchniak, 2010). The digital divide is a significant issue, particularly for low-income families and those living in rural areas, as they may lack access to technology and internet connectivity.

Another challenge associated with technology in youth education is the potential for distractions. The use of technology in the classroom has been found to lead to distractions, such as social media use, gaming, and other non-educational activities (Kirschner and De Bruyckere, 2017). These distractions can hinder students' learning and affect their academic performance.

Furthermore, the use of technology in education has raised concerns about privacy and security. The collection of personal data by educational technology companies has led to concerns about the privacy and security of students' information (Davies and Eynon, 2018).

Investment in Education:

According to data from the Indian government, the budget allocation for education in India has increased over the years. However, India's spending on education, as a percentage of GDP, still falls short of the global average.

In the Union Budget 2021-22, the total allocation for education was INR 93,224 crores (approximately USD 12.5 billion), an increase of 6.1% from the previous year. The share of education in the total budget has increased from 3.8% in 2019-20 to 4.6% in 2021-22.The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to increase public investment in education to 6% of GDP. However, the current investment in education as a percentage of GDP stands at around 3.5%.

In 2020, the government launched the PM eVidyaprogramme, which aims to provide digital education to students across the country. The programme has an outlay of INR 5,555 crores (approximately USD 750 million). The government has also launched various other initiatives such as the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), SamagraShikshaAbhiyan, and Mid-Day Meal Scheme, among others, to improve the quality and access to education in India. Despite these efforts, the education sector in India still faces several challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, shortage of teachers, and high dropout rates. Therefore, continued investment in education is essential to ensure that all young people in India have access to quality education and can realize their full potential.

If we look at total allocation for education in the India's largest populated state budget 2021-22 was INR 59,369 crores (approximately USD 7.9 billion), which is around 17% of the total budget. This marks an increase of 20% from the previous year's allocation. The UP government has launched various schemes and programs to improve the quality and access to education in the state. Some of these schemes include the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, the Prernaprogramme, and the Kanya Sumangla Yojana.

The government has also allocated funds for setting up new schools and colleges, improving the infrastructure of existing educational institutions, and providing scholarships and incentives to students. The state government has set up the Uttar Pradesh State Higher Education Council to oversee the development of higher education in the state. The council aims to promote academic excellence, research, and innovation in higher

education.In recent years, the UP government has also invested in technology-based education, with the launch of initiatives such as the e-pathshalaprogramme and the e-Uttar Pradesh Shiksha portal.

Despite these efforts, the education sector in Uttar Pradesh still faces several challenges such as a shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructure, and low literacy rates. Therefore, continued investment in education is essential to ensure that all young people in Uttar Pradesh have access to quality education and can realize their full potential.

Challenges of Technology in Youth Education:

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Role of Technology to Enhance Skills for a Prosperous Future:

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in empowering youth in Uttar Pradesh. Here are some ways in which technology is empowering youth in Uttar Pradesh:

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital education in Uttar Pradesh. The state government has launched various initiatives to provide online education to students across the state, such as the e-Pathshala program and the e-Uttar Pradesh Shiksha portal. These initiatives provide access to digital learning materials and online courses, which can help bridge the gap in education access and improve the quality of education.

Technology is critical to enhancing digital skills to youth in Uttar Pradesh. The Yogi government has launched several initiatives such as the UP Skill Development Mission and the MukhyaMantri Kaushal SamvardhanYojana to provide digital skills training to youth in the state. These programs offer training in areas such as data analytics, digital marketing, and computer programming, which can improve the employability of youth and help them pursue high-paying careers. Technology is also empowering youth in Uttar Pradesh to start their own businesses. UP Startup Policy and the UP Digital Employment Exchange are encouraging entrepreneurship and job creation in the state. Such programs provide mentorship, funding, and other support to young entrepreneurs, which can help them launch and grow their businesses. Technology is authorizing youth in Uttar Pradesh with greater access to information and opportunities. The internet and social media platforms are helping youth in Uttar Pradesh to connect with others, learn about new opportunities, and access information about jobs, education, and other resources. This increased connectivity and access to information can help youth in Uttar Pradesh to make more informed decisions about their future and pursue their goals.

Huge Population have two coincide, if we equipour youth with proper education and enhance skill according to market requirement then it can leverage us huge dividend otherwise a large amount of resources will have to expend on basic requirement of our people.

Technology can help to enhance skills in Uttar Pradesh and contribute to a prosperous future. Here are some ways in which technology can help:

Technology has made education and training more accessible than ever before. Uttar Pradesh can leverage online platforms and e-learning tools to provide quality education and training to its citizens. This will not only help in improving the skills of the workforce but also provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling.

To fully utilize technology, it is important to have a digitally literate workforce. The government can run digital literacy programs to train people in using digital tools, software, and applications. This will help in creating a pool of skilled professionals who are ready to take on jobs in the digital economy.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning

(ML) are transforming the way businesses operate. Uttar Pradesh can invest in AI and ML technologies to develop new products, services, and business models. This will not only create new job opportunities but also enhance the skills of the workforce.

Technology can help in mapping the skills of the workforce and providing career counselling to individuals. By doing this, people can identify their strengths and weaknesses and plan their careers accordingly. This will help in creating a more skilled and productive workforce.

The government can invest in digital infrastructure such as high-speed internet, data centers, and cloud computing services. This will provide businesses with the infrastructure needed to operate in the digital economy. This will also help in creating new job opportunities and attracting investments in the state.

In conclusion, technology can play a crucial role in enhancing the skills of the workforce in Uttar Pradesh, India. The government and businesses should invest in technology to create a more prosperous future for the state.

Enhancing role of Technology in Higher Education:

At last we can look at some very important ways in which technology can help us to transform higher education-

The use of online education has increased dramatically in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this trend as universities and colleges switched to online classes. Online education has made it possible for students in remote areas to access quality education from anywhere. It has also made education more flexible, allowing students to study at their own pace.

Blended learning combines traditional classroom teaching with online education. It allows students to interact with their teachers and peers in a physical classroom and also access online resources. This approach enhances student engagement and improves learning outcomes.

Digital libraries provide students with access to a vast collection of online resources. These resources include e-books, journals, and research papers. This allows students to access up-to-date information from anywhere, which is particularly useful for research and writing projects.

Virtual laboratories allow students to conduct experiments and simulations online. This provides students with a safe environment to learn and experiment without the need for expensive laboratory equipment. Technology enables personalized learning by adapting to the learning style and pace of individual students. This approach improves learning outcomes and reduces drop-out rates.Technology allows students to collaborate with their peers and teachers from anywhere. This approach enhances student engagement and promotes teamwork, which is an essential skill in today's workforce.

In conclusion, technology is transforming higher education in India by making it more accessible, flexible, and engaging. The use of technology in higher education has the potential to improve learning outcomes and enhance the skills of students, thereby contributing to India's economic growth and development.

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