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Why Educated Youth in India Are Still Struggling to Find Jobs

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Abstract:

Education in India has long been regarded as a key pathway to personal progress and national development. Over the years, the country has witnessed a rapid expansion of higher education, resulting in a large population of degree holders entering the labour market annually. However, employment generation has not kept pace with this educational growth, leading to a rising problem of educated unemployment. A significant number of qualified youth remain jobless or are employed in positions that do not align with their educational qualifications. This situation highlights deep structural gaps between the education system and labour market requirements, rather than deficiencies at the individual level.

This article critically examines the multiple factors contributing to the employment challenges faced by educated youth in India. It explores issues such as the imbalance between educational expansion and job creation, skill mismatch, limited practical exposure, uneven quality of institutions, overreliance on government jobs, social attitudes towards vocational work, and gender-specific barriers.

Keywords: Educated Unemployment, Youth Employment in India, Higher Education System, Skill Mismatch, Employability Skills, Labour Market Challenges, Vocational Education, Job Creation, Government Employment, Gender and Employment

Introduction:

Education has traditionally been viewed as the most powerful instrument for personal advancement and national development. In India, education carries immense social and economic value. Families invest their savings, time, and emotional energy in the belief that higher education will ensure secure employment and social respect for their children. Over the last few decades, India has significantly expanded its higher education system, resulting in millions of graduates entering the labour market every year. However, this expansion has not translated into proportional employment opportunities.

A growing number of educated young people remain unemployed or are compelled to accept

jobs that do not match their qualifications. This condition, commonly referred to as educated unemployment, reflects deeper systemic failures rather than individual shortcomings. The struggle of educated youth to find suitable employment has serious economic, social, and psychological consequences. This article provides a detailed and point-wise analysis of the major reasons behind this issue and suggests practical solutions for the future.

1. Rapid expansion of education without employment planning:

India's focus over the years has largely been on increasing enrolment in higher education institutions. While this has improved access to education, it has also resulted in an oversupply of degree holders. Employment planning has not kept pace with educational expansion, leading to intense competition among graduates for a limited number of jobs. Without a strong link between education planning and labour market demand, degrees alone have lost their employment value.

2. Overemphasis on theoretical learning:

Most academic programs in India emphasize classroom teaching, examinations, and memorization. Practical training, fieldwork, and application-based learning receive limited attention. Students often complete their education without gaining exposure to real workplace conditions. As a result, graduates lack confidence and struggle to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations.

3. Skill mismatch between education and industry:

The modern workplace demands a combination of technical knowledge, digital skills, communication ability, and adaptability. Unfortunately, many graduates lack these employability skills. Educational curricula often fail to keep pace with technological advancements and changing industry requirements. This mismatch reduces the employability of educated youth.

4. Variations in the Standard of Higher Education institutions:

Higher education institutions in India differ greatly in terms of academic standards and learning environments. While a small number of universities provide strong academic support, modern facilities, and skilled teaching staff, many institutions struggle with inadequate infrastructure and limited teaching quality. In such environments, students often receive minimal academic guidance and little exposure to practical learning. Consequently, graduates from these institutions find it difficult to compete in recruitment processes, even if they possess motivation and ability.

5. Excessive Emphasis on Degrees Over Skills:

Indian society tends to measure educational success primarily through the possession of degrees rather than actual competence. Students are often guided towards widely accepted courses without assessing their interests, abilities, or job market relevance. As a result, skill development receives less attention during education. Vocational and skill-based learning paths are frequently ignored or undervalued, which narrows employment options and increases the risk of unemployment among degree holders.

6. Inadequate Exposure to Practical Training and Work Experience:

Hands-on experience is essential for helping students transition from academic learning to professional employment. Despite this, a large number of students complete their education without participating in well-designed internship or apprenticeship programs. Many training opportunities lack proper guidance, defined learning outcomes, or meaningful involvement in workplace activities. In some cases, internships exist only on paper, offering no real skill development and little or no financial support. As a result, graduates enter the job market unfamiliar with organizational culture, work responsibilities, and professional standards, which reduces their employability.

7. Limited Growth of Sectors Capable of Creating Large-Scale Employment:

Job creation in India has been uneven, with certain parts of the economy expanding faster than others. Fields that traditionally offer wide employment opportunities, such as manufacturing and small-scale production activities, have not developed at the required pace. Instead, economic progress has been concentrated in a few industries and urban regions. In addition, a significant number of available jobs lack stability, being temporary or informal in nature. This uncertainty discourages educated young people from considering such work as a sustainable long-term career option.

8. Experience as a Major Barrier for New Entrants:

Recruitment practices in many organizations favour candidates who already possess work experience. Fresh graduates are often viewed as lacking readiness for professional roles and requiring additional training. This preference creates a difficult situation for young job seekers, as they are unable to gain experience without being employed. As a result, many educated youth remain excluded from the job market during the early stages of their careers.

9. Heavy Dependence on Government Employment Opportunities:

Government employment continues to be seen as a symbol of job security and social recognition. Because of this perception, a large number of educated youth devote several years to preparing for competitive examinations. However, the number of vacancies remains limited, and only a small fraction of candidates succeed. Those who do not secure these positions often face long periods of unemployment, having postponed entry into alternative career paths.

10. Negative Attitude Towards Vocational and Manual Occupations:

Despite the availability of jobs in skilled trades and vocational fields, such occupations are often considered socially inferior. Many educated youth hesitate to pursue careers involving manual or technical skills, even when these fields offer steady income and growth potential. This social attitude reduces the acceptance of diverse career options and increases pressure on white-collar employment, where opportunities are already limited.

11. Employment Challenges Specific to Educated Women:

Educated women in India encounter additional barriers when seeking employment. Social

expectations related to family responsibilities, concerns about workplace safety, and limited flexibility in work environments restrict their career opportunities. Interruptions due to marriage or caregiving further reduce employability. As a result, a significant portion of educated female talent remains underutilized in the workforce.

12. Psychological impact of unemployment:

Prolonged unemployment affects mental health and self-esteem. Educated youth often experience stress, frustration, and loss of motivation. Social pressure and uncertainty about the future intensify these challenges.

13. Migration and brain drain:

Lack of suitable employment opportunities encourages skilled youth to seek jobs abroad. This migration results in loss of trained human resources and reduces the nation's return on educational investment.

14. Gaps in policy implementation:

Although several employment and skill development initiatives exist, their implementation is often weak. Poor coordination, limited awareness, and inadequate monitoring reduce their effectiveness. Policies frequently focus on enrolment numbers rather than actual job outcomes.

15. Way forward and suggestions:

Addressing educated unemployment requires comprehensive reforms. Curriculum design must emphasize practical learning and skills. Industry-academia collaboration should be strengthened. Vocational education and entrepreneurship must be promoted with dignity. Career guidance should be provided from early stages of education.

Conclusion:

The struggle of educated youth to find employment in India is a systemic issue rooted in structural imbalances between education, skills, and labour market needs. Degrees alone are no longer sufficient to guarantee jobs. Transforming education into employability requires coordinated efforts from government, educational institutions, industry, and society. By focusing on skill development, job creation, and mindset change, India can convert its educated youth into a powerful driver of national growth.

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