

# **Skill development and Quality of Higher Education- Challenges and prospects**

## **A comparative analysis of India and Canada**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*Higher education along with skill development is critical for the holistic and sustainable development of the Nation. In India, the importance of education in stimulating social and economic development has always been central to Government interests. However, higher education in India has not proved too efficient to make youths of the country employable as per need of the employer due to low Skill Quotient (SQ). Whereas in Canada, Higher Education with skill development was always given a top priority and therefore Canada's performance in higher education and skill development is fairly well then India since many years. Moreover, the youth of the country are highly skilled and contributes to the economic competitiveness, social innovation and political and community wellbeing. In the above context, the present paper attempts to compare Higher Education and skill development in India and Canada as both countries have a common underline philosophy when it comes to skill development in Higher education. Moreover, in both the countries policy makers, academicians and international education community believes that a skilled workforce with quality higher education has the potential to be productive and can contribute immensely to the economic growth and development of the country.*

**Key words:** *Canada, Higher Education, India, Quality, Skill development,*

### **1.Introduction:**

*“Guaranteeing skill development with access to affordable, high quality, and lifelong education is one of the most important policy goal to strive towards a meaningful bilateral partnership between India and Canada.”*

*The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau*

*Prime Minister of Canada at Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad*

#### **1.1. Skill Development and Quality of Higher Education:**

Quality education along with skill development is critical for the holistic and sustainable development of the Nation. Moreover, it enhances the nation's competitiveness globally. In case of India at present, more than 50% population is below the age 25 and therefore it is essential to focus on the youth of the country by providing a suitable platform for employment and also to reap the demographic dividend. In case of Canada, Higher Education with skill development was always given a top priority and therefore Canada's

performance in higher education and skill development is fairly well then India since many years. Moreover, the youth of the country are highly skilled and contributes to the economic competitiveness, social innovation and political and community wellbeing. In the above context, the present paper attempts to compare Higher Education and skill development in India and Canada as both countries have a common underline philosophy when it comes to skill development in Higher education. Moreover, in both the countries policy makers, academicians and international education community believes that a skilled workforce with quality higher education has the potential to be productive and can contribute immensely to the economic growth and development of the country. (Munro,2014)

More often than not, Indian Universities and Institute of Higher Educations are in constant pressure to provide a decent employment to their students. However, it has been observed that the curriculums in the Universities does not give priority to the component of skill development. This is not the case with Canada as the higher education curriculums are more focused on skill development moreover, it is considered as essential part of higher education over years. Moreover, there are criticism like Canada's skills and education performance is deteriorating, that not enough is being done to address a range of economic and social problems, and that opportunities and benefits have been poorly distributed across regions and groups. (Munro,2014)

In a nutshell we can say that the major challenge for Indian higher education system is 'unemployment' for the students. To overcome this challenge, there is an urgent need to improve the relevance of higher education curriculum and pedagogy to fit the world of work. This can be done by introduction of international standards in higher education and development of practice based higher education curriculum and pedagogy. Further, the research culture in the Universities should focus more on entrepreneurship, innovation and world leading research which can be helpful in providing solutions for India's grand challenges. It is worth appreciating that the present government is also making efforts to overcome this challenge by introducing initiatives like National Skill Development Coordination Board. It is an association of public sector and private entities. The main function of the board is to formulate policies and programs on National Skill Development with the directions of Prime Minister's Council along with evaluation and monitoring of this programme (The Hans India, 2018)

In case of Canada it is observed that the Canadian government spends enormous sum skill development of youths who are pursuing higher education. According to estimates, private and public spending on skill development in Higher Education alone was over \$40 billion in 2016. Moreover, Canada's per student spending on higher education is second in the OECD (organisation for economic cooperation and development) and above the average of \$13,528 (USD). As a result, over 51 per cent of the Canadians holds a university or a college degree versus an OECD average of 32 per cent also Canadians perform far better in international assessment of skills (literacy, numeracy, problem solving) etc. (Munro,2014).

In existing literature, several studies have compared developed economies in terms of skill development and higher education different institutional settings. For instance, one study compared the higher education and skill development policies of United States and Canada (Auerbach,2014). Another study by world bank has compared higher education

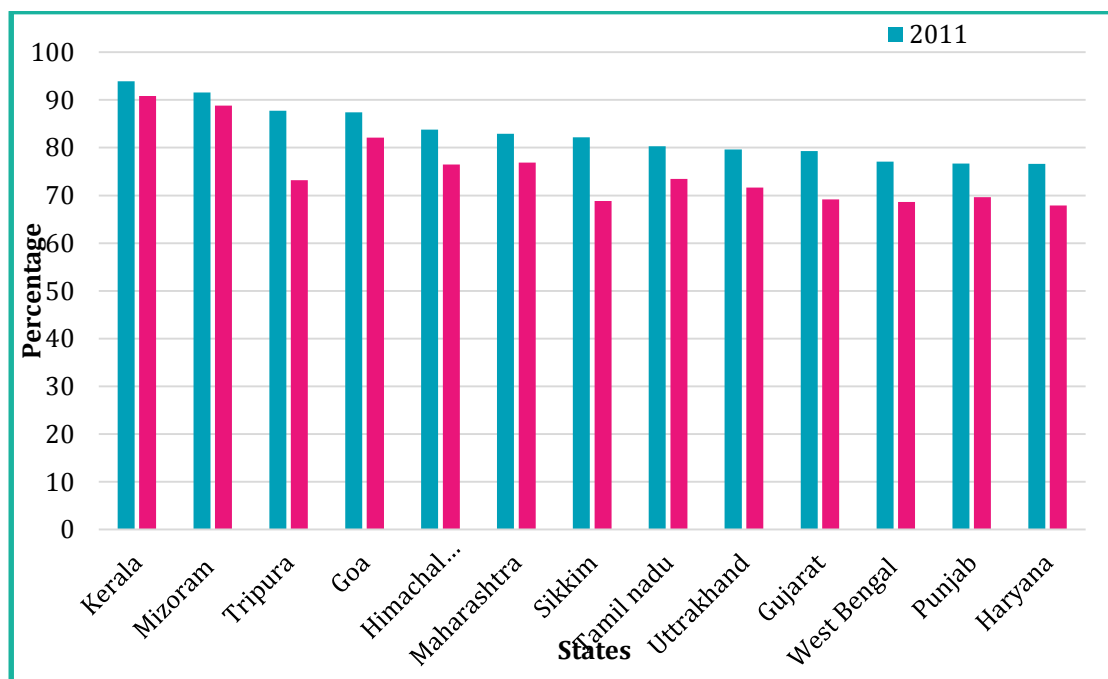
in developing countries focussing partly on skill development (World Bank,2000). It is evident from the findings of these studies that there is a growing research interest in higher education reforms focussing on skill development. However, to date this paper is probably the first to compare the skill development in higher education in India and Canada. The contribution of this study will be significant mainly in understanding the common and the uncommon institutional and pedagogical differences in higher education in case of India and Canada, also the it will help in overall understanding of skill development scenario in both the countries

The reminder of the paper is structured as follows; the next section will discuss the skill development in Higher education in India followed by Section 3 which sheds light on the skill development in Higher education in Canada; Section 4 concludes the paper with suggestions.

**2.Skill development and Higher Education: Indian Scenario:**

With the country of 672 million people out of which 1.1 billion belong to the working age group of 15-59 years it is essential to focus on the youth of the country and provide suitable opportunities to them in order to reap the demographic dividend. However, the trend of rising youth and unemployment in the country infers to the fact there is an urgent need to address the problem of unemployment in the country.

**Figure: 1: State wise literacy rate in India 2001-2011**



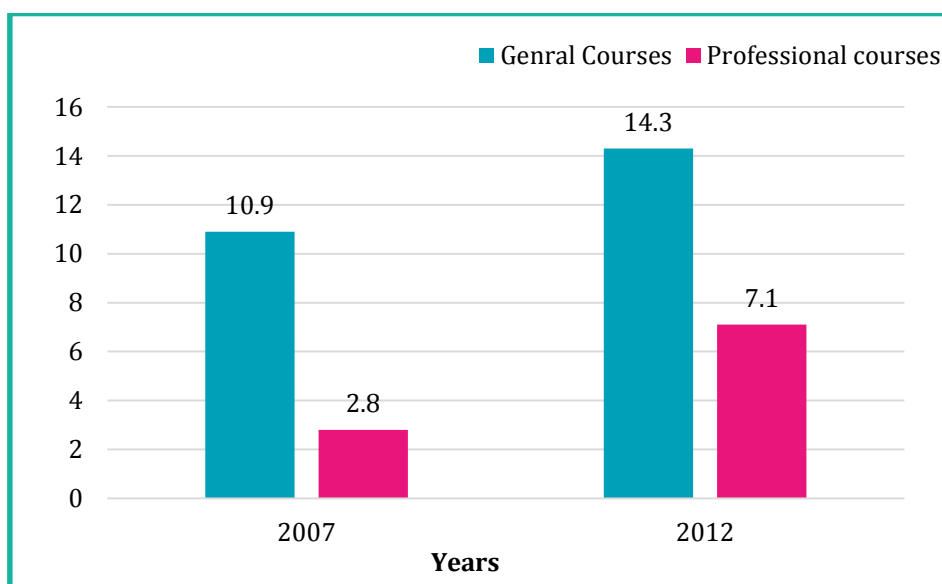
Source: Census 2001 and Census 2011

The focus of the 11<sup>th</sup> five-year plan was to enhance skill development by developing a comprehensive national skill development mission. To achieve this, aim a three tier institutional structure was formed comprising of Prime Minister’s National council, National skill development Mission Coordination board and National skill development cooperation of India. This institutional structure aims to create 59 crore skilled people by



2022 through skill system backed by relevant higher education curriculums. Therefore, there is a tremendous growth in the number of higher education institutions along with the gross enrolment rates. In spite of such a growth challenges like accessibility, equality and quality of higher education are the major obstacles in producing a skilled workforce for the country. Therefore, the need of an hour is to seriously consider these challenges. Given the fact that employability is important aspect of higher education it is necessary to inculcate requisite skills such as analytical thinking, communication skills and presentation skills. In order to empower the youth who are the main beneficiaries of HE it is necessary to restructure academic courses to ensure their relevance in the Industry. Moreover, we can see that there has been tremendous rise in the enrolment of general courses and professional courses. However, the employment opportunities for these students are rare.

**Figure 2: Annual Growth Rate of Enrolment (million) 2007-12**



Source: EY Report: Higher Education in India: Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012–2017) and beyond

**Table 1**

**Related statistics on Indian higher education (As on February 2018)**

Central Universities	47
State Universities	381
Deemed to be Universities	123
State Private University	291
Institute of National Importance	91
Number of Colleges	22860

Source: University Grants Commission.



**Table 2**

**Level wise enrolment of students**

Year	Higher Education(millions)
1950-51	0.4
1960-61	1
1970-71	3.3
1980-81	4.8
1990-91	4.9
2000-01	8.6
2005-06	14.3
2006-07	15.6
2008-09	18.5
2009-10	20.7
2010-11	27.5
2011-12	29.2
2012-13	29.6

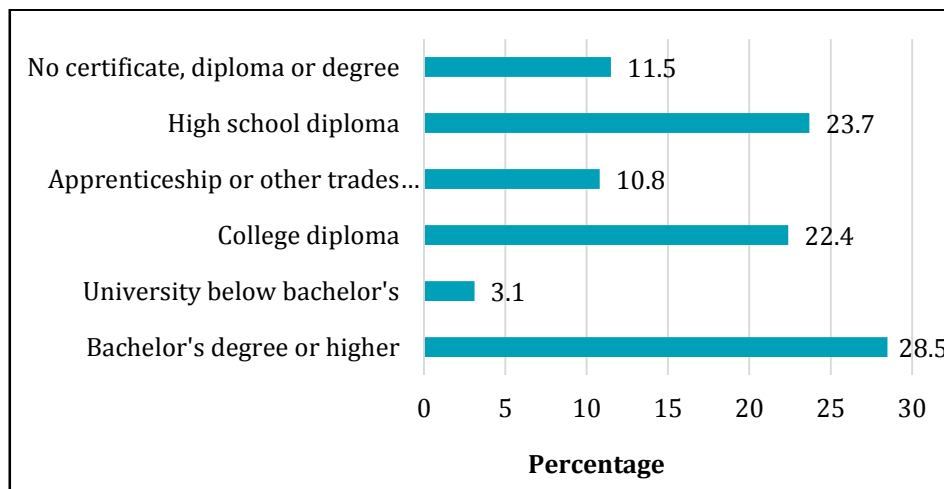
*Source: Compiled from Educational Statistics at a Glance, Bureau of Planning, Monitoring & Statistics, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, Government of India, 2014*

### **3. Skill development and Higher Education: Indian Scenario: Canadian Scenario**

The efforts by the Canadian government in higher education and skill development has been appreciated and applauded on many national and international platforms. Quality education with the requisite skills are considered as a key determinant of economic productivity and growth. Therefore, Canada is among the most developed and prosperous countries in the world. As can be seen in Figure 3, 28.5 per cent of the population has Bachelor's degree followed by 23.7 per cent high school diploma, 22.4 per cent of the population has college diploma and only 11.5 per cent of the population has no degree or diploma.



**Figure 3: Education attainment for the population aged 25-64 in Canada (As on March 2018)**

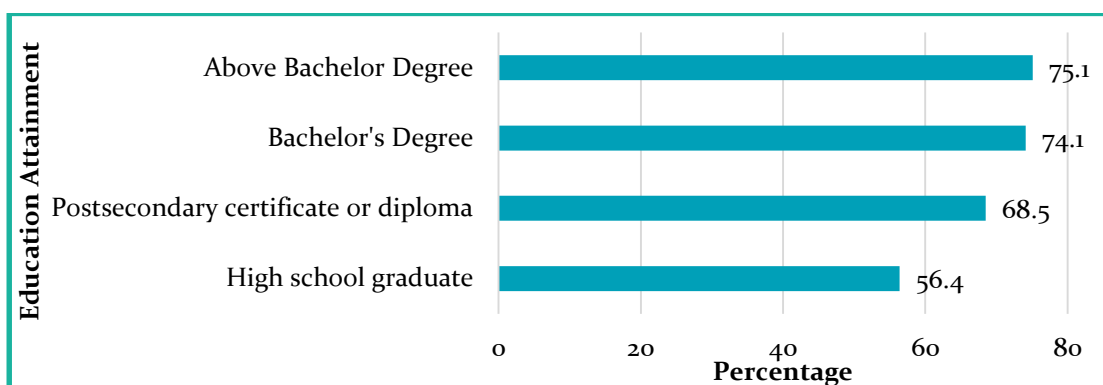


Source: Statistics Canada, Government of Canada, 2018

### 3.1. Education attainment and Employment:

According to the report by The Conference Board of Canada<sup>3</sup>, the employment rate for Canadians who are high school graduate is only 56.4 per cent less than a high school diploma is only 55 per cent whereas for those with postsecondary certificate or diploma programme have employment rates of 68.5 per cent followed by Bachelor's degree with 74.1 per cent and for those who have above Bachelor's degree the employment rate is 75.1 per cent (See Fig.3)

**Figure 3: Education attainment and Employment outcomes (As on March 2018)**



<sup>3</sup> Skills and Higher Education: Why should we care? Accessed on 28.04.2018 from [http://www.conferenceboard.ca/commentaries/technologyinnovation/default/hot-topics-in-ducation/2014/02/03/skills\\_and\\_higher\\_education\\_why\\_we\\_should\\_care.aspx](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/commentaries/technologyinnovation/default/hot-topics-in-ducation/2014/02/03/skills_and_higher_education_why_we_should_care.aspx)

*Source: Statistics Canada, Government of Canada, 2018*

Though Canada has shown favourable results for skill development through higher education, however still much ground needs to be covered. According to the report HR council of Non-profit Organization in Canada, following strategies can help in decreasing the skill gap with the help of higher education.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

The aim of this paper was to examine the state of the higher education and skill development in case of India and Canada. So far the comparative analysis reveals that Canada leads the world in producing higher education graduates. The skills they acquire place Canada near the top of international rankings, and our highly skilled people contribute to economic prosperity, and social, political and individual well-being. However, there are also criticism like Canada's skills and higher education performance is deteriorating, that not enough is being done to address a range of economic and social problems, and that opportunities and benefits have been poorly distributed across regions and groups for these reasons, Canada needs to embark on an excellence and equity agenda for skills and higher education. In case of India, there is a shortage of 48% of skilled workforce in India. Only 10% of the total workforce in the country receives some kind of skill training (2% with formal training and 8% with informal training). Further, 80% of the entrants into the workforce do not have the opportunity for skill training. Thus India has set the target of providing skill education to 500 million people by 2022. Therefore, the government should make the following changes in the higher education policy

- Skill oriented courses should be designed as per NSQF/NSDC guidelines.
- Curricula of all skill based courses should be constantly monitored and updated.
- Skill based courses for different levels of specialization should be introduced.
- At least one skill should be made compulsory for Engineering and Polytechnic colleges
- Skill development should be part of regular curriculum of Universities/Colleges.

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