



# Achieving Youth Empowerment Through Education

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## Abstract

India boasts of largest youth population in the world. Around 70 % of the total population is below the age of 35 years. If this large resource is properly managed, our country will be able to occupy the top position in all aspects of development. The youth needs to be empowered to develop their employability and entrepreneurial skills, besides many other skills. Education plays a key role in empowering the youth. There are many organization working in the field of youth empowerment by offering education in different forms to create qualitative human capital for the nation. The strategic education approach is needed to empower the youth. But unfortunately, the empowerment of youth is hindered by certain barriers. This paper reviews the road blocks of youth empowerment and the role of education in making youth empowered. At the end, this paper offers certain recommendations for achieving youth empowerment.

## Key Words

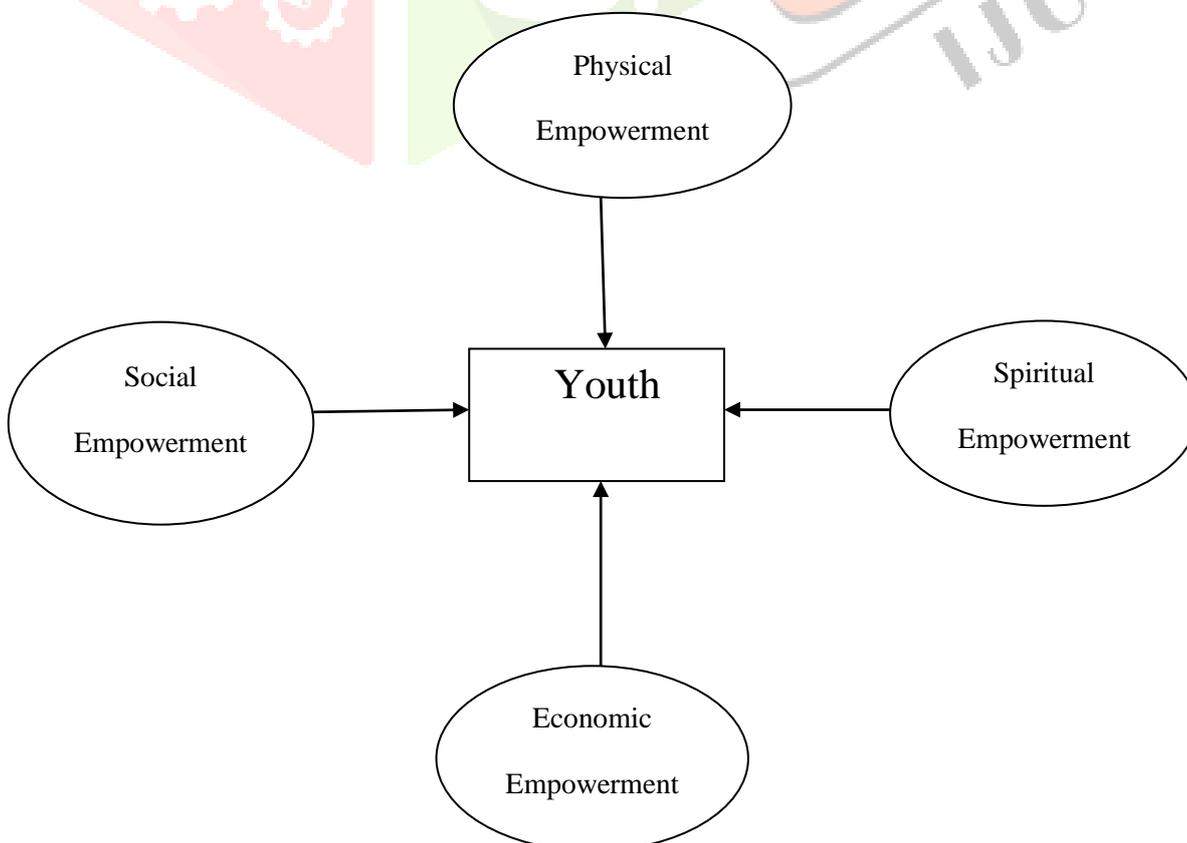
Youth population-- Employability skills--Entrepreneurial skills-- Youth Empowerment-- Human capital-- Strategic Education approach.

## Introduction

As per 2001 census of India, every 5<sup>th</sup> person in India belongs to the age group of 15 years to 24 years, which is identified as the youth group, by Population Fund (UN, 2009). After the completion of 1<sup>st</sup> decade of the new millennium, India's youth is still bulging unlike the youth of 1980s & 1990s. The present day youth is exposed to every technological advancement like – iPods, digital cameras, smart and android TVs, social networking low-cost flying, social media and many more. Employment opportunities have grown tremendously in the ultramodern fields like – Gemmology, social entrepreneurship,

Information Technology, Rural Management, Agri marketing, Tourism Management, Social Work, Environmental Science Web designing. Working young woman is growing rapidly, making young women self-reliant and self decisive, than ever before. Younger generation is enjoying sizeable disposable income, increasing their purchasing power. Changing demographic environment, developing technological environment, growing opportunities globally etc are just one side of the coin, the other side of the coin is very much serious concern area for the potentiality of this younger generation to convert the opportunities into reality and to explore the new possibility & even impossibilities on this earth. This is made possible only when the youth is encouraged, nurtured and empowered. When the youth is given the required strength , they can create wonders in all the social and personal aspects.

Youth is a vibrant resource of any nation. According to Commonwealth secretariat, 2007, empowering youth is defined as “ creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others”. This resource must be managed properly by instilling the belief that they can control their own life and can change their circumstances positively towards their goals. Youth needs to be empowered to develop their competencies. This youth empowerment is a process, where youth gain the capabilities to make right decisions at right time to introduce favourable changes in their own life and the life and situations of the other people in the society. The United Nations Human Settlements Program ( UNCHS-HABITATAT) defines youth empowerment as “ the circumstances and factors which enhance the development and citizenship and productiveness among young people as they move into adulthood. It is concerned with the adaptation of government structures and institutions to protect and deliver children’s, youth’s and human rights. The word empowerment means giving power. Empowerment process equips the youth with knowledge, skills and capabilities in various dimensions of their life.



There are many Non-Government Organisations such as-- Parivaar educational society, Salaam Bombay Foundation, Dakshatha Foundation, Youth Alliance, Youth Empowerment Foundation, Samarthan etc, have been providing training, vocational training, mentoring, employability training, entrepreneurship training, personality training, guidance and counseling to empower youth. Many other organisations are providing life skills and leadership training to help them become empowered citizens.

## **Roadblocks of youth empowerment**

The development of any nation depends on the percentage of its youth empowered in all aspects of their life. The youth power can create wonders towards achieving Millennium Development Goals. But, unfortunately, there are certain road blocks that hinder the process of youth empowerment. If the following roadblocks are removed, the youth will be empowered to a greater extent.

### *A) Attitude of the youth*

The first hurdle in the youth empowerment process is the youth itself. The attitude and the perceptions of the youth, particularly the urban, and rural youth in India is not self-centered. In metropolitan cities it is a bit positive. Urban and rural youth are not having sound planning mechanism for their development. They are not aware of their own potential and they never pay attention to dig out their inner talents and capabilities. In this age of globalization and fierce competition, still the rural and urban youth in many parts of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tamilnadu, Telangana, Uttarpradesh, Madhyapradesh etc., are influenced by the cheap tactics of politicians. It is very much unfortunate to find youth lacking individuality, which is a prerequisite for empowerment. A majority of youth is lacking decision – making skills. They can't identify the problem, define the problem properly and they are incapable of evaluating the alternate solution for the problem.

Indian youth do not have a vision to achieve something great. A majority of rural youth are lacking orientation of life. The initiation should come from within the individual. Only the self motivated youth can tread the path that facilitates empowerment. As a wise saying goes - "One can take a horse to water but one can not make it drink." If the youth is not ready to accept the challenges and are not ready to embrace a change in their life, the youth empowerment process becomes meaningless.

### *B) Parenting*

Socialisation of the human being starts at his / her home. Parents and family members are the driving forces in the initial stages of a child to show him the direction towards empowerment. But due to illiteracy, poverty, semi literacy, lack of awareness etc., parents are unable to guide their wards in the right way. Specially in urban and rural areas the head of the family, father is migrating to foreign countries in search of earning, leaving illiterate and innocent mother at home alone. In the early adolescence stage the wards are exposed to a new society where they don't have any parental clutches and they are free to act in their own way, which is not a proper way and hinders growth when they attain youth. Indiscipline

brought up, poor family position, absence of control & monitory mechanism on youth and free will of youth directs them towards a negative, unproductive path, which hinders youth empowerment process.

### C) *Ineffective Youth Development Programmes*

Youth Development has been the most neglected area in terms of youth leadership development and youth empowerment in India. As is admitted by youth affairs and sports minister, Ajay Maken, youth development schemes suffered due to lack of proper evaluation. Different programmes are designed, budget is sanctioned, programmes are carried out and concluded but no positive outcome of the programmes is seen, making the programmes ineffective.

The National Youth Policy, 2003 is designed to galvanize the youth to rise upto new challenges, and has introduced various programmes like – NSS (National Service Scheme) NYK (Nehru Yuvaka Kendra) Scouts and Guides, National Youth festival, Youth hostels, Youth exchange programmes and Sports Authority of India. The motive behind all the programmes may be positive and it is directed towards youth empowerment but those programmes are not properly positioned in the minds of the target group – Youth. These programmes don't help the youth to identify the opportunities. All the youth oriented programmes have become certificate courses, which facilitate the youth to learn the theoretical concepts only. Paradigm shift, which is the end result of these programmes is not achieved just because of the ineffective organization of these programmes.

NSS programmes in the colleges and universities have become entertainment programmes instead of service oriented activities. NSS programmes have been confined to just clean and green activities. Even after participating for three years in NSS programmes in degree colleges, the mind set of the students is not transformed towards social work and social development. These programmes have not been yielding the desired results.

NYKS (Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangatan), whose vision is to involve rural youth in nation building activities and youth development programmes, have been organising many programmes but the effectiveness of those programmes in terms of youth empowerment and youth development has been still unanswered.

### D) *Poverty*

As of 2010, more than 37% of Indian population, still lives below poverty line. As per Multidimensional Poverty Index, the intensity of the poverty in parts of India is equal to if not worse than, that in Africa. The poverty does not allow the individual to be bold enough to get empowered. Youth from poor families are always in search of two square meals a day. They are never bothered about their competencies. Youngsters from poor families are with low self confidence and low self – esteem, do lack decision making skills. They just ascribe their poverty to their fate. Poor youth never aim high. They want to be satisfied with what they get.

The poor youth is always attracted by short term gains of development programms. They view the empowerment activities as temporary and limited beneficial. Young people from poor families, because of financial problems, may discontinue their studies and may not enter colleges and universities, where the empowerment of youth is at it's peak.

## Role of Education

According to Rigveda, “ Education is something which makes man self – reliant and self – less”.

Among all the creations of the almighty, the human being is the most intelligent creation. He/she is blessed with the power to receive knowledge, to disseminate knowledge, to think, to comprehend, to imagine, to speculate and to decide the best among the alternatives. All these characteristics can be sharpened and converted into capacities to achieve extraordinary goals in life, by means of Education. This education is a long and constant process that keeps on refining the thought power of human beings. As said by J.S. Makenjie-” Education is a process that goes on throughout life and is promoted by almost experience in life”. Education brings about the change in socio, cultural, economic, psychological, spiritual aspects of all human beings in various stages of human life cycle, to result in their empowerment. Education has the power to bring about positive changes in the mindsets and perceptions of the youth.

Comprehensive education develops tolerance levels in the youth, thus maximizing their potentiality. Education is a right of every citizen, but it is not a privilege. Education acts as a central tenet of empowerment process that boosts up the self esteem & self confidence among the youth. As is defined by the UNESCO, Education can be provided to youth in 3 categories viz. Formal, Informal and Non – Formal education. Formal education provides the youth with job skills. Informal education provides them with personal and social skills and the Non – Formal education facilitates them to master life skills. Education transforms the raw youth who are in the form of uncut diamonds into polished diamonds. Education improves the moral values among the youth. Right education helps youth in improving their Quality of Life. Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh has termed the 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan as – “India's Educational plan”. This 11<sup>th</sup> plan presents a comprehensive strategy for strengthening the education sector covering all the segments of the education pyramid.

The National Youth Policy -2021 seeks to catalyse widespread action on youth development across five priority areas including Education, youth leadership and development, employment and entrepreneurship, health and fitness and social justice. The education is the basic pillar for the overall development of youth. Further, the NYP 2021 envisages an education system that ensures holistic learning and development of all segments of youth by making education relevant for those in secondary and higher education, supporting the segment of youths not in education, employment or training (NEET), and by building an inclusive education system that leverages technology for enhanced ‘teaching-learning’ experiences for youths from disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

There are various kinds of educational elements such as--technical education, vocational education, entrepreneurship education, sports education, skill development, life skills education, sex education, music education, moral education etc to enhance the career prospects of youth and shapes their positive personality. Education prepares the youth to face the risk and uncertainties of the future. And the education acts as a road map to the youth in designing proper plans for their future.

## **Suggestions for achieving youth empowerment**

Youth Management and empowerment is a challenging task that can't be achieved over night. It is a constant process, requiring serious attention from various elements like – youth itself, the Government, the education system and Non- Government organizations. Youth should be self – motivated to realize their potentialities. They should try to have individuality of their own, not negatively influenced by any external element. Youth should identify the new challenges and opportunities created as a result of globalization. Youth should develop leadership skills, decision making skills, analytical skills & life skills in order to empower themselves absolutely. The youth should try to explore all the avenues, for their development. Before all these , they must be ready to get empowered.

As the educational attainment affects the potentiality of youth in various fronts. Strategic education approach is needed to impart pragmatic education that facilitates the youth in empowerment. Education should create awareness and ability of youth development. Education should result in a constructive change. Education should help the youth to acquire knowledge, develop skills and shape the values, attitudes and beliefs. The right education shows the right direction to the youth on their way to self development.

- 1) In the higher education level, regular curriculum should be supported by peer counselling & employability skills training.
- 2) Youth empowerment process should start from 10+2 level in the education. Class room teaching in 10+2 & undergraduate level should enhance creative thinking & problem solving skills. Since this level is crucial in the life of youth, the academic environment should be designed in order to empower youth before they leave the college.
- 3) Certificate oriented and marks based education should be replaced by knowledge & skills based & Development oriented education. Youth must be counselled & motivated to pursue the academic courses of their own choice but not their parent's choice.
- 4) Education which is positioned as “For the jobs”, in the minds of the youth needs to be re positioned as “For knowledge, for decision making & for self – reliance”.
- 5) Education should bring about a youth revolution in the aspects like perception, decision making, leadership, group dynamism, problem solving and Human relations to facilitate youth empowerment.

- 6) NSS programmes in colleges and the universities should be redesigned to help the youth to develop their creative thinking and problem solving skills. Participation in NSS should be made mandatory in the universities for all round development of the youth.
- 7) Entrepreneurship Development Programmes should be introduced in 10 + 2 + 3 level in degree colleges. Youth should be guided towards entrepreneurship in the modern potential areas like - Organic farming, Rural tourism, Eco friendly products, IT based projects, Food services etc.
- 8) Vocational Training Programmes should be more realistic and practical to empower rural youth, and make them self employed for a long period. The training in vocational areas such as-- Sericulture, Dairying, Fisheries, medical lab technology, office assistantship, accountancy, hospitality management, electrical expert, public relations, data entry courses, basic computer courses, plumbing, ophthalmic technician, salesmanship, housekeeping, event management, catering management, web designing, fashion designing, refrigeration and air conditioning, beauty care and life style, interior designing, fitness, yoga and wellness, nursing, digital marketing, tax consultant, diet and nutrition, cookery, retail business, horticulture, farm management, media and journalism, physiotherapy assistant etc.
- 9) Contextualized Research on youth needs to be carried out in order to ascertain the problems of youth empowerment. The innovative and demand driven vocational courses need to be researched to enable youth to learn and master those areas.
- 10) The educational curriculum from 10 + 2 should contain compulsory education in the areas like - Individuality, Agriculture, Money Management, Human Rights, Environment, Information Technology etc., to enable the youth to achieve holistic development.

When the teaching-learning systems and pedagogy is changed as per the requirements of the modern day youth, both technical and non technical education will serve its purpose of producing fully empowered youth for the country.

## Conclusion

The youth needs to be given power in order to make them self reliant, result oriented and positive. This can be achieved by imparting education in different aspects that bring about changes in socio, cultural, economic areas of youth. and The quality education plays a vital role in achieving youth empowerment not just in India but throughout the world. Since the youth constitute the vibrant resource of the nation, all the local, state and central governments have been designing innovative programmes to empower youth. The educational programmes such as-- skill development, entrepreneurship development, life skills development, leadership development etc are designed creatively to empower youth by different government and non-government organisations. The National Youth Policy 2021 articulates a ten-year vision for youth development that India seeks to achieve by 2030. And it is sure that the technical and non technical education has the power to create fully empowered youth.

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