Should students focus more on skill training or a college degree?

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**Abstract**

Students should focus more on skill training or college degree is one of the controversial questions in the current academic discourse. It invites attention from a number of relevant subtopic such as, the association between degree and occupation to be opted in future taking into account that most of the students study those subjects that have no relation with future occupation. The ratio of employment and requirement of a job is also a significant topic to address. A comparative analysis of education and areas of employment reveal that higher education is termed as one of the necessities for achieving some particular job that is not possible without a degree, taking into consideration that skill is the actual hallmark of success and progression so it should be focused more on the theoretical framework. Career development is another paradigm to consider because what matters for every human being is a career and future goals. An emphasis on the labor market is also of prime significance because it shuns the idea of degrees and assert practical approach towards job and work. The assessment scale of success is performance so skill training should be given more importance than the degree.

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**Introduction**

 Since early childhood, everyone hears from his family members that it is significant to have a good education. It is considered to be the key to live a successful life. That is why an individual is encouraged to study as long as he has achieved his goals. many successful people believe that students should focus on their skills but not college degrees, the reason behind it is that, over the last few decades, the market of the job has been transformed in many aspects. There are several degree holders in the market as a result of which getting a job only through a college degree is becoming difficult, therefore, the person who has a degree with a right skills sets can beat his competitors easily. Today, there is an evident shift from degree and marks to skill because it is the time of invention and innovation that is the product of human critical abilities.

 It would not be wrong to say that this idea has become a tug of war because requirements of the job are increasing over time and there is a lack of required skill in entities enrolled in organization due to the lack of training. An emphasis on degree has distorted the orientation of academia where more stress is given to the number of degrees rather than the practicality of whatever is learned. It has been believed that the person who does not perform well in a college degree is not smart enough to get a job, but this is not true. The reason test score does not reflect the smartness of an individual is that system of education all around the globe are oriented towards making him skilled at a particular task, that may not have necessarily much value in life. So, the marks of degree do not reflect the true person's smartness (Hulten & Ramey, 2017).

**Background Section**

# The degree and education can help an individual in determining that whether he or she is a hard worker or not but the most significant requirement for a candidate getting a job is to possess powerful skills set. These set of skills are considered to be a necessary element for overcoming many challenges which individual may face on a daily basis. Multiple degrees or qualification cannot give a dream job but the courses which are based on skills can to attain such jobs. This is where degree steps down the ladder and does not give sufficient insight to an individual. Every person requires to possess a powerful skill array in order to be successful at their job. It includes the ability for communicating, managing time or team, and working as a team. It is not enough to have just one skill in specific and then struggle with others. College degree can enable a person to indicate the communication skills level but may not display the capability for working within a team or for managing a team. A degree can only be useful for a job of entry-level as wide skills sets range are not needed in this regard. So, in order to progress the success ladder, everyone requires to have roles which need higher responsibilities. Moreover, the highly skilled businesses man invests where they can hire the employee required for helping their organizations to grow (Centre for Cities., 2019). If a person is about to start his career in the later period of their life and does not have much experience, then they should highlight their appropriate skills in their resume. (Nickson, et, al., 2017).

**Context**

# Good interpersonal skills can permit a person for participating efficiently as team members, satisfying the expectations of the customer, solving problems, making decisions, and working efficiently with the other employees, taking into account that it is a complementary. Oral and written communication proficiencies are consistently ranked in the top ten desirable skills by employer surveys year after year (Rebecca, 2015). These skills permit for empathizing and building rapport with the colleagues that lead to an environment of work. There are several aspects of areas that cannot be covered by college degree but training skills can help to achieve it which include manual handling, emotional intelligence, team working, conflict mediation and resolution, team-working, persuasion, negotiation, and influencing skills, problem-solving and decision-making (Careerwise.minnstate.edu., 2019). Similarly, manual handling can help to cater to the present problem adequately, the skills of emotional intelligence can help a person manage, understand, and recognize the emotion of a person and then utilizing them positively for achieving the required results. The skills of team working are also significant as it can help a person to work in teams or groups both informal or formal which cannot be possible through a college degree. Moreover, the skill of influencing, persuasion, and negotiation that enables a person to find efficient solutions to any problems whether by searching a better alternative through sharing ideas or persuading other about the efficiency of work. Spencer Thompson who is considered to be the founder of Sokanu said that "it doesn't matter whether you come from high school or come from a Ph.D.".

**Statistical Information**

Skill learning process is considered to be a more dependable and reliable process. It can help a person to be organized and manage his time efficiently. These skills also teach a person to be self-regulated or have the ability to take responsibility for their actions. Once David Blake who is considered to be the co-founder of learning platform Degreed has said in a speech that "It shouldn't matter how you picked up your skills, just that you did." (Eisenber, et, al., 2004). The more one develops the skill of life individually, the more these have an impact on the world by recognizing the awareness of culture and citizenship by making global cooperation easier. According to the recent research, the industry of customer service had more than two million open position last year and more than sixteen million positions in the field of sales, such number is rising day by day (Nickson, et, al., 2017). These two industries do not need college degrees but still have high wages job and better opportunities. In sales, one has the ability to creating a fine income by utilizing his appropriate skills. Similarly, it also helps to respect the diversity which allows imagination and creativity for flourishing the more tolerant society. These skills sets can also develop a habit of negotiation which is considered to be the ability for networking and empathizing (Paccagnell, 2015). The development of skills of life can also assist the students in analyzing options, making a decision, and understanding why they make certain choices after graduation. It also helps in developing a higher sense of appreciation and self-awareness for others. Statistics show the rate of skilled-person required in the labor market. See Appendix I

# Organization and Programs

# According to the Economist, return on investment of a degree does not remain higher for the youth. The value which is added from the degree of college decreases on increasing the number of graduates. Richard Lambert said in his speech that, “The global economy is rapidly evolving and if the UK is to retain its position as the fifth largest economy in the world we need highly-skilled graduates who are able to respond to these developments” (Paccagnell, 2015). The foundation of Bill Gates is also encouraging the employers to hire employees on the basis of their skills rather than to hire them on the basis of their college degree. By utilizing a degree of college, employers are overlooking those people who are capable but do not have a degree which isn't helping the employers, economy, and the workforce. According to recent research, despite the high rate of unemployment, more than three million jobs in America are unoccupied because the organizations cannot search people with the right or appropriate skills. CEO of IBM, Ginni Rometty said, "Getting a job at today's IBM does not always require a college degree". Similarly, according to the CEO of LinkedIn, "What matter most is relevant skills" (Federer, 2018).

A research was conducted over 21 countries from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies 2012. They have used this data to compare the literacy skills of adults that have different levels of education across countries. There is a number of factors that affect the acquisition of educational qualifications and literacy skills. These are parental education, language and migration background. The results of this research found a high degree of heterogeneity of skills among equivalent education categories across the population of the study. (Massing & Schneider, 2017). Moreover, the study also requires the need for harmonization in future adult literacy surveys.

The development of skill enhances the capacities of employees and their opportunities at the workplace by proposing more scope for satisfaction and creativity at work. The future well-being of any state ultimately depends on the rate of employment and how productive employees are at work. It has been believed that one percent rise in the days of skill training can lead to a three percent rise in productivity. Several evidences show that the combination of good education with the right skills in the labor market can raise the productivity of both enterprises and workers (Kappelman, et, al., 2016). The market full of a skilled person can contribute to boosting future development and innovation, encourages both foreign and domestic investment, job growth, and lowering underemployment and unemployment, leads to a higher salary, expand opportunities of the labor market, and decrease inequalities of society. Freelancers are earning more than a professional degree holder; they do not need any degree to start their career. All they need to focus on particular skills training rather than the degree. Many researchers believe that the future of work won't be degrees, it will be related to the skills of the job. The degree can be considered as a tremendous debt without any true guarantee of a financial payoff in the future. statistics shows the demand for skills in the labor market. See Appendix II

**Literature Review**

**Introduction**

 Degrees serve as the basis for excellent careers as these are validate certificates about person acquaintance and capabilities. These are a source of knowledge for persons that can be applied in the practical work. Today employers are looking for candidates that have an intensive degree in hand as these are the guarantor of success. Employee’s needs degrees to enter into the market and today millennials have a special focus towards degrees. Hence, a person with multiple qualifications will get more chances of success in the market as the number of skills a person gets vary with the education levels. A degree without skill is just a piece of paper. However, skills are the ratio of product when a piece of paper in the form of degree is presented. Right degree along with set skill is a home to success and productivity. Degrees signal the desirable qualities of potential employees and show the capacities to show other desirable skills. This literature review will examine different researches related to the preference of degree or skill in order to get well-paying job.

**Summary**

skill training is important than degree as it deliberates explicit chances for the holder in his career. This guarantees those competencies that are required to perform certain tasks and jobs. Students enter colleges and select their degree fields hoping to enter the labor market after the completion of their degrees but degrees are of no use if an individual lack skill. (Robst, 2007). Different factors affect the selection of majors; expected earnings, configurations of the labor force as well as non-price preferences. (Robst, 2007).

There must be a match between the degree field and occupation to avoid any uncertainty in employment. In the United States, there is a dramatic increase in college enrollment in the past decade. (Horowitz, 2018). For instance, in 1950, there was 7.7 percent of people in the United States with a bachelor’s degree and in 1980, it was 22.5 percent. (Horowitz, 2018). This sharp increase is the result of state support for universities. Moreover, there are greater monetary returns to education that have increased the need for a college education. Fenesi and Sana consider the postsecondary degree just as an investment in stocks (Fenesi & Sana, 2015). More than 80% of high school graduates are going for postsecondary education as it ensures employment opportunities and income for graduates. (Fenesi & Sana, 2015). University graduates during their careers earn two to three times more as compared to high school graduates. Moreover, employment rates for university graduates are higher than high school graduates. (Fenesi & Sana, 2015).

In addition to this, the values of postsecondary degrees also vary from program to program. All postsecondary degrees and programs do not have the same values. There are some programs that offer a high return and employment opportunities as compared to others. Additionally, degree value is not even unconditional, but it is taken as comparative to the education of one's peers. Graduates from humanities are at substantial determinants compared to graduates from social science and business. (Fenesi & Sana, 2015). However, these graduates do not have fewer skills and knowledge as humanities graduates in research have shown to possess critical thinking, complex reasoning as well as communication skills. They also have a deeper knowledge of historical issues in politics and culture that allow them to make more authentic decisions. Thus, each degree has its own worth and market that makes it competitive.

Moreover, Robst has also conducted research about the degree worth in career development. The focus of the research is to enhance the college graduate's selection of their field according to their job types. The research is also informing students about the results of mismatch of their degree fields and related consequences. For example, the mismatch can bring different effects over wages, income, job satisfaction as well as productivity. Therefore, the degree is worthy when employees are not over graduates or undergraduates. (Robst, 2007). If people are over graduate, then this may affect their earned wages and their returns to surplus schooling get lowered. Different theories can be used to explain this mismatch such as capital as well as job search and matching. According to human capital theory, over education can substitute the skills. If there is over education, then it shows the underutilization of human capital. Education can be considered as a type of investment and with over graduation or selecting the wrong field, the result can be an economic loss.

Likewise, there is no more value of degree when it becomes common in the labor market. This competition can be faced effectively by getting into a feedback loop that requires each person to acquire more education to remain competitive(. Horowitz, 2018). This helps them in maintaining their desired position in the labor market. Moreover, this dilemma then requires degree holders to have a specific set of skills for the desired positions. Educational qualifications and learning skills are highly connected. Educational systems not only equip students with desired competencies but also train them about the skills necessary to take part in society (Massing & Schneider, 2017). Due to this, employers with the degree of education not only expect from potential employees to possess the required knowledge but also possess a greater work ethic. In addition, the degree is also evidence of the applicant's future productivity by signaling its capacities to acquire new responsibilities. (Horowitz, 2018). Degrees are taken at the start of working life and their due place is given by work experience. Generally, the written job advertisements by recruiters demand the presence of specific degrees as there are now more jobs that require critical thinking as compared to manual skills. Having a degree also allow further development of the person. For example, there is an effect of education and degree over wages and worker mobility. If a person has more occupational skills, then there is an increase in wages. For a better career, employees must make the investment and acquire a more and more education to remain competitive. Moreover, it also examined the role of higher education and purpose behind the education of individuals in society. Universities are now required to prepare graduates and equip them with the desired knowledge, skills as well as ethical responsibility so they can fulfill the needs of society.

Organizations now require employees to have at least a college or graduate degree as these are the all-time stamps of professional proficiencies and guarantee financial payout in the future. Along with financial payouts these are also a source of certain other skills such as ethics, intelligence, and multiple tasking. Thus, these are considered as an effective path towards economic progression (Horowitz, 2018). Different skills can make them think logically and develop sophisticated values in order to enter into a highly competitive global labor market whereas this study does not highlight that skill is the key to achieve a mark in global competitive environment. An advanced degree is an inevitable requirement of today's society in the context of employment opportunities. Due to these benefits, now there is an increase in the number of students that are enrolling in colleges and universities. The benefits of the degree education are also insisting government and state supports. They are not only encouraging people and providing them financial assistance but are also providing them guidance related to the selection of their study programs. Now degree education is taken as an investment and all efforts are put to earn huge profits from this investment both at individual and state levels. Without a degree, people cannot learn any additional skills required to get success in their careers. The purpose of higher education is to prepare a workforce for the economy by equipping them with new knowledge whereas there is no analysis of the modifications that are required in higher education in order to secure the future of individuals. (Chan, 2016).

**Discussion**

Degree and the set of skills is more like a platform that invites discussion and arguments from different researchers and areas of work. The research from some authors lack the significance of skills that are necessary to pertain to organizational attributes having the potential to incorporate success and productivity. However, human capital theory aids in understanding the relationship between degree and required skills for a job. (Massing & Schneider, 2017). In accordance with Chan’s research, degrees also allow employees to learn the set of skills required for certain jobs. Research conducted by Chan in 2016, reviewed the economic and social benefits of completing a college degree but failed to address what is the importance of skills. (Chan, 2016).. Although the research by Massign & Scheinder is necessary to understand organizational framework, still it neglects organizational theories that stresses manpower and learnability of employees. Horowitz highlighted interpersonal skills as a necessity to empower organization neglecting that interpersonal skills complementary, relevant skills also include techniques that are necessary for addressing management and technicalities of the workplace.

**The validity of the claim**

 The tug of war between skill training and a college degree is one of the crucial academic topics because it has the potential to direct student’s thought and change the paradigm of eligibility in organizations. A critical analysis of the past highlight that farmers never went to agricultural school, it is their skill that made them the bread providers of nations. Over the course of years, the entire spectrum of agriculture has changed by the use of technology and the innovative sources of information but a number of methods are still in compliance with the traditional framework. Even modern education of agriculture is not valid until there is some course of training and practice. It is the practice and the novel experiences of the people that made them address devastating situations with such intelligence that the theoretical framework seems faded. It would not be wrong to say that there are a number of fields of education that are highly dependent on the practicality of knowledge. A common example is the Wright Brothers who initiated the idea of aircraft and added a remarkable invention to the human history, they were not having any theoretical knowledge, in fact, it was their intelligence and critical thinking accompanied by ideologies that laid down the foundation of an entirely novel platform of invention. It is significant to note that the comparative analysis of degree and skill paves the way for another ideology that is, “experience”. It is termed as a framework that has the potential to endure histories of what an individual has learned over time and what is acquired by the exposure to the subject in terms of all critical problems and catering to the unfavorable situation.

Theory is a pathway but practice is the footsteps that can lead to destination, taking into account that footsteps have the potential to make a new pathway but pathway is nothing without footsteps and the one who is willing to walk through it. It is asserted that degree serves as a paradigm for analyzing the validity of individuals' capabilities and acquaintances. In accordance with the analysis of theorist and academic instructors’ degree and skill are the two sides of the same coin. Horowitz, (2018) inferred that there is an increased enrollment of college students over the course of years, this fact seems fading when the ratio of unemployment is observed and analyzed because an illusion is stressed that highlight that degree is necessary for education. A reality picture highlight that fulfilling a job title is not confined to the worth of degree. The assessment of Feesi & Sanan, (2015) is highly suitable in this context where degree is just an investment in the stock. It is important to note that today, there is greater stress on the number of internships that an individual has attended, taking into consideration that there are a number of professional internships that are offered after the completion of undergrad studies. It infers the importance of skills. The glitch between theory and practice infer that there is no worth of theoretical framework without its practice and degree fails when there is no clear validation of the application of skill. Theory is just a collection of facts and figures that can be learned while application and it is critical to note that there are hardly two or three subjects that are directly associated with the actual training program, remaining are just the source of information for students.

Research by Robst, (2007) highlight that usually degree programs are a mismatched collection of interest where they are not linked to the future job in any way. If a student has to strive for the skill after the completion of degree in order to learn what is required of the job description then it is necessary to learn in time. Horowitz, (2018) shared his ideology of labor market and it highlights the significance of skill. There are few institutions that actually train students while numerous institutions are just the providers of degree. However, the training provided by the education institution is not that effective as that of a training institution. The idea proposed by Chan, (2016) infers that today there is more demand of critical thinking other than manual skills and it is a clear illusion of rote learning because critical thinking can only be achieved with practice and comparative analysis, repetitive theories cannot incorporate those learning attribute that can address the core of problems. As Bill Gates said, “A piece of paper cannot decide my future”, it can be inferred that piece of paper has the power to represent going to any institution but it never guarantees that an individual is skilled enough to address its job description. So, skill has more significance over degree because action and the maturity of actions, addressing concern is the hallmark of abilities, there is no significance of knowledge without practical approach.

**Conclusion**

Having a good education is considered to be the key to be successful because education is learning. The aim of education is to enlighten however, this reality is taken for granted and it is misdirected. Learning is the scale that determines success because it invokes critical thinking and open doors of novelty and innovation. Good GPA or marks can never determine the intelligence of an individual because there is no future of crammed and rote learning. The scale of success is the knowledge that is gained and how it is applied to a real-life situation. the descriptions on paper are just the tendency to describe memorizing power but education is the analytical and critical thinking. Interpersonal skills do not determine the suitability of the job because there are a number of people who fake personality when they are called for a job. Interpersonal skills are an attribute but those skills are not the hallmark of job because employees are hired for productivity, mere interpersonal skills cannot inculcate any productivity and innovation that could benefit the organization in which an employee is hired.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix I**

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**Appendix II**

