



Empowering Students of Higher Educational Institutes to be Economically Productive Human Resource through Tribal Resources

Dr. Kirti Diddi

Assistant Professor,

Department of Commerce and Management Studies &
Coordinator, IQAC,

Mata Gujri Mahila Mahavidyalaya (Autonomous),
Jabalpur (M.P.), [INDIA]

Email: kirtididdi@rediffmail.com

Abstract—Students of the higher education institutes (HEIs) in Madhya Pradesh are rated high on their subject knowledge, skill set and value education. However, a few areas of concern, which demand attention of the higher education institutes, are their basic problem of mother tongue influence (MTI) in verbal communication, internationally accepted standards of spoken English, attitudinal problem of parents and students in leaving comfort zones etc. Tourism is a growing portion of India's economy with an increase of earning more than 17 percent from 2009 onwards and benefits specific sectors. HEIs need to realize the entrepreneurial as well as job opportunities available from this sector. Traditional tribal crafts and manifestation of tribal literature through performing arts are a potential revenue generating source. Tribal tourism focuses on the harnessing of tribal literature and resources to enhance economic productivity. This is hitherto unexplored by the higher education institutes as a potential field for making their students economically productive human resource. Madhya Pradesh has the advantage of a strategic central position in the country's map. It has ample of tribal resources and a rich tribal culture. This research paper shall focus on tapping the opportunities this sector offers to be pursued by the HEIs in an organized manner to

empower their students to be economically productive human resource.

Keywords:—Higher Educational Institutes, Tribal Resources, Economically Productive Human Resource

1. INTRODUCTION

Reckoned world-wide for its teaching-learning process since the days of yore, the Indian Higher Education system had always been a perfect balance between both, the knowledge as well as skill components. Students of Gurukuls knew exactly for what they were being prepared and inculcated with the specific knowledge and skill set demanded by the aspired profession or industry. Even post independence, all our commissions for higher education, including the Knowledge Commission and the University Grants Commission (UGC), have stressed upon increasing access to education especially for marginalized segments i.e. women, SC/ST/OBC and minorities. In accordance, UGC has been perseveringly performing the herculean task of maintaining and enhancing quality in higher education system, both, in the public, as well as, the private sector. True, government institutions and universities are bound by a lot of norms and procedures which result in a slow process of updating. On the other hand, Autonomous and private institutions are able to

accommodate change at a faster pace. The XI and XII plans of UGC place the highest priority on education as a central instrument for achieving rapid and inclusive growth. Also the National knowledge Commission has recommended the launch of a National Skill Development Mission towards vocational training and skill development through education, which has been duly structuralized by UGC in its XII plan guidelines. The maximum ever, resources have been allocated in the XII plan period to ensure national development, especially in the economic perspectives through higher education. However, the increase in easy access to higher education is resulting in an ever increasing pool of students waiting to be employed. It is imperative that access to higher education be linked in direct proportion to employability, thereby contributing to the GNP.

The Higher Education system of India is constituted of Government Universities, Deemed Universities, Central Universities and various government, private and autonomous colleges. The concept of Private Universities is not new to India. However, the Higher Education system of Madhya Pradesh is definitely gearing up to face privatization of education at tertiary level with the budding private universities in the non-technical or non-professional course category. There have been numerous qualitative efforts from the government and University Grants Commission to sustain and enhance the quality of academics, in, the already highly acclaimed education domain at the tertiary level. Statistics prove that the Indian intellect from professional spheres is highly sought after by multinationals, research and development organizations the world over. Many Commissions, such as the Kothari Commission have been constituted by the government to ensure that the contemporary relevance of the higher education system is never lost. Herculean efforts are put in to ensure curriculum and pedagogy suiting industry needs. UGC has worked closely with the Planning Commission and Ministry of Human Resource to develop a strategic approach and

along with National Knowledge Commission, considered recommendations for qualitative and quantitative progression of higher education. Plan after plan, UGC has been liberally funding higher education institutes through well formulated schemes to ensure that the academic output of the higher education system, i.e. our students can be converted into highly productive human resources. However, there persists, a wide gap between industry needs and present employability standards in terms of soft skills of our students. Consequently, there are unfilled positions on one hand, and on the other, ever increasing rate of unemployment.

2. NEED OF THE PROBLEM

Education at tertiary level in any subject stream is with a singular common purpose that of, gaining desirable, economically productive employment. Irrespective of what subject they have studied under which faculty from which college or UTD, the students and their parents have a job or a career aimed for at the end of higher education. Times demand a set employability skills which have risen above subject constraints from all students whether from Science, Arts , Commerce or any other stream. Therefore, this research study has strong interdisciplinary relevance in terms of ascertaining the required employability skills as well as opportunities for students of every subject stream from a UTD of Government or Private University or Government / Private college from urban / rural / remote area.

Being a signatory to the World Trade Organization's agreement, the Indian service sector is as accessible to International counterparts as to Indian citizens. This is one sector which offers the maximum job opportunities to the students from conventional degree colleges and ironically, this again, is a leading sector where our students fail to meet international standards. This situation is worse in rural and remote geographical locations. Somewhere the inability to procure desirable employment and embark on flourishing careers by our students, coming from conventional courses, has resulted in more and more

students opting for professional courses. Admission statistics of our colleges and universities prove that the students opting for pure arts and sciences are rapidly decreasing day by day.

The author has been dealing with student career counseling, training on soft skills and placements for professional and technical courses like MBA, MCA, MBE, PGDCA and PGDBM as well as students from regular degree and post graduate degree courses. However, the extent of this paper restricts reference to context to the students of the conventional degree and post graduate degree courses in non technical higher education institutes including the University teaching departments and colleges, both government as well as private. On the basis of this experience, the author realized that there is much more than mere curriculum that is responsible for this paradox of job vacancy and un-employability. The curriculum is the same that is applicable at both a Government college as well as a private college. Both are entitled to the same grants from UGC for training students through remedial coaching, entry in services coaching, career and counseling cell etc. There are also efforts at all levels for including the marginalized segments of society into mainstream education with extra support. Then, the question arises, why is it so that the percentage of students from government colleges differs from that of private colleges when it comes to employment? Why is it so that the same company which is ready to visit a particular city for one college backs out for another? What is the percentage of students from SC/ST/OBC/Minorities that are getting employed? What is the percentage increase in employment due to all efforts put in by UGC as well as other Government agencies? Added to these questions is the apprehension of the students as to would the number of companies coming for them also stop due to the setting up of Private universities which will have their own employable pool of students.

3. OBJECTIVE

The questions raised above and many more similar ones have given rise to the research problem, leading to a diagnostic field based study to compare the employability statistics from affiliated Government / Private colleges, UTDs, Autonomous degree colleges and also compare the placement percentage of SC/ST/OBC and minorities in comparison to the General category of students in order to set definite directions and utilize the UGC grants for training students in any respect, irrespective of nature of a higher education institute or its geographical location and assess how higher education can be contributory in economic development of the country through its students as economically productive human resource. This paper is especially focusing on the tribal students.

4. HYPOTHESIS

Practical focus on regional influences on skill development is imperative along with subject knowledge to enhance employability percentage of students of the tertiary education system.

5. METHODOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS

This research work has been based on primary data, collected through interviews, questionnaires and on site visits.

Random sampling was done within the geographical domains of Madhya Pradesh A computerized data bank was prepared using the appropriate DBMS software. Statistical software was used to administer the appropriate statistical tests. This Research work diagnosed and analyzed the employability statistics of students from non technical streams of different Higher Education Institutions in Madhya Pradesh region with specific reference to University Teaching Departments, Government and Private Colleges as well as the responses of Teachers, Students, Principals, incharge of UGC schemes such as Career and Counseling / Placement Cell, consultants and industry representatives

in relation to their professional experiences. The samples, other than Recruitment Consultants and HR departments of select Corporates were from the State of M.P.

6. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

UGC XI and XII plan guidelines have been reviewed for studying the schemes relevant to contributing in enhancing the employability of students in any way, be it through skill enhancement or be it in the form of harnessing marginalized tribal students into mainstream college life. Also the reports of the National knowledge Commission have been consulted for this research work.

7. CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS AND ASSESSMENT

The data obtained from the University Teaching Departments, Government colleges, private colleges and Autonomous colleges for the last three years, viz-a-viz 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12 was collected through a self designed structured questionnaire. Statistical analysis of the result clearly shows that there has been maximum increase in the percentage of placements in case of autonomous colleges closely followed by the private colleges as compared to the university teaching departments and government colleges (other than autonomous government colleges). From amongst the sample units of university teaching departments and government colleges, the latter have shown a better performance in terms of placements of their students.

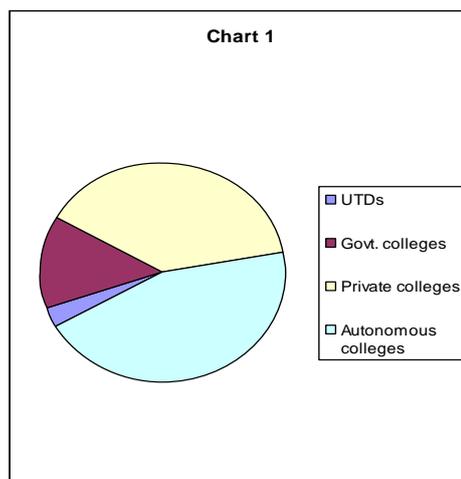


Figure 1: Graphical representation of growth in placement statistics in last three years in terms of nature of HEI

From amongst all the higher education institutes covered whether government colleges or private colleges, one success factor that has been common in those institutes which have shown a greater percentage of placements is that they have been NAAC accredited or re-accredited with at least a B+ grade. Another success factor is the UGC schemes that are being implemented in particular higher education institutes. The placement scenario of students in those higher education institutes is better both in terms of numbers as well as diversity of employment sectors, in which relevant UGC schemes are being implemented. All top performing higher education institutes in this category are effective and active implementers of UGC schemes such as Remedial coaching, Entry-in-service coaching, coaching for NET/SLET examinations and Career and Counseling cells. On one to one interaction with the students who have been placed from these institutes as well as the training and placement officers, it has been found that the students who had been subject to these schemes were much better aware about career opportunities and their wide spectrum as compared to their counterparts who did not avail these UGC schemes. The knowledge and skill components of the students who had availed of the UGC scheme of remedial coaching and UGC scheme of NET / SLET examination gave them a competitive edge during the campus and recruitment interviews.

Students who had availed of the UGC scheme of Career and Counseling Cell were much more aware of the types of careers available and also the diverse eligibility criteria involved and how and from where to fulfill them.

On interpreting caste category wise data, the author found that the percentage growth of placements was the maximum in the general category of students followed by the students from the Other Backward Caste category followed by the students from the minorities and then the students from the schedule tribes and schedule castes. The performance of the students of minority groups and other backward castes was almost at par with each other in terms of securing placements through the campus and recruitment drives in a higher education institution. Similarly, there was very little distinguishing difference amongst the students belonging to schedule castes and those belonging to schedule tribes with regard to their performance in the process for job placement. Thus, the data of students placed under the categories of minorities and other backward classes and the data of the students under the categories of schedule tribes and schedule castes have been considered in the same segment.

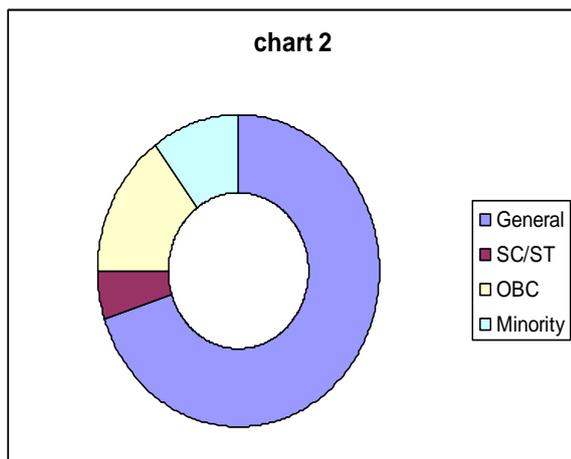


Figure 2: Graphical representation of growth in placement statistics in last three years in terms of caste category of students

On interacting with the students from rural, remote and tribal areas, it was obvious that the reason of low rate of employment through the campus and recruitment drives

organized by the higher education institutes was the misfit between the skill set possessed by these students, their mother tongue influence, popularly termed as MTI, the regional influences of a prominent Hindi speaking belt and the expected employable standards of the jobs offered by the respective placement cells. However, a success factor has been the implementation of the UGC scheme of Equal Opportunity Centre. The percentage of placements of students from Schedule castes, schedule tribes and other marginalized segments of society has been much more where the UGC scheme of Equal Opportunity Centre has been effectively implemented. These students who were made aware of their strengths and motivated to join the mainstream of their institutions, performed much better than their counterparts in placement interviews and also in choosing their career streams, albeit from indigenous sectors and local business houses.

From different subject discipline (non technical) viewpoint, students from Commerce stream were far ahead in securing placements as compared to the students from pure sciences or pure arts. However, the students pursuing courses in IT were an exception. During the one to one interaction with the students, it was observed that students from pure arts and pure sciences were, attitudinally; not very open for jobs in the private sector, especially the knowledge process outsourcing or business process outsourcing companies. They were more inclined towards higher studies and jobs involving pure disciplines, such as the research and development fields. Also an inclination towards government jobs was clearly visible, with the favourite sectors being the Public Service Commission and the Union Public Service Commission jobs.

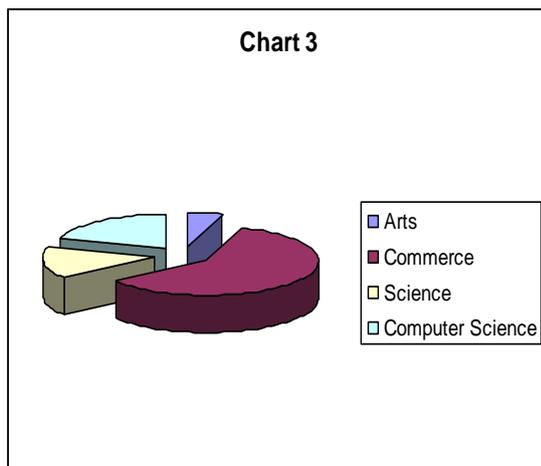


Figure 3: Graphical representation of growth in placement statistics in last three years in terms of subject disciplines of students

However, in those higher education institutes, where the Career and Counseling scheme of UGC was being actively implemented and the students, irrespective of subject background were given ample exposure to multidisciplinary career opportunities, the scene was different. On interaction with these students it was found that even the students from pure arts and pure sciences streams were enthusiastic aspirants for private jobs, BPOs, TPOs, KPOs and entrepreneurial opportunities.

On the basis of the statistical analysis of data, students from higher education institutes located in urban areas were found to have the distinct competitive advantage of more convenient mode of access in terms of travel and transportation of prospective employers. Thus, students of higher education institutes from urban areas have shown greater employability percentage in multinationals and corporate from private sector as compared to their rural counterparts. Students from higher education institutes in rural areas and tribal belts have shown hesitation in venturing into these segments due to their regional influences and are mostly all occupied in family businesses or in the agricultural sector, which is unpaid in monetary terms. This clearly puts them on their back foot when it comes to seeking white collar jobs outside their geographic comfort zones. However, the same students would excel in case they are presented

for employment opportunities in cottage industries related to tribal natural produce and other related opportunities at local and regional levels.

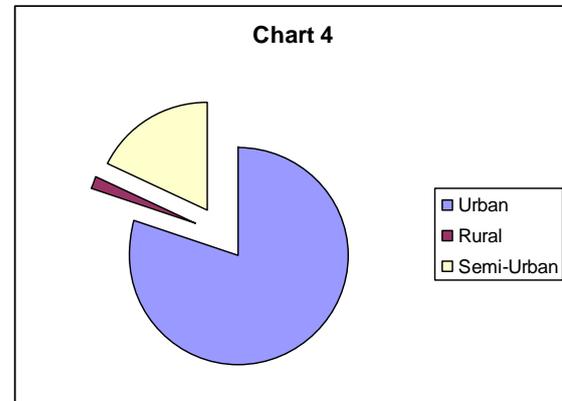


Figure 4: Graphical representation of growth in placement statistics in last three years in terms of geographical location of HEIs

On compiling the feedback from various recruitment consultants and Human resource managers and executives from various companies, it has been concluded that students of the higher education institutes in Madhya Pradesh, including the ones from tribal areas, are rated high on their subject knowledge, skill set and value education as compared to their counterparts from other similar states. However, a few areas of concern, regarding the students in general and those from tribal backgrounds in particular, which demand attention of the higher education institutes, are the basic problem of mother tongue influence (MTI) in the verbal communication of the students, standard of spoken English expected by multinational corporates, lack of confidence in facing one to one interviews, reluctance in migrating out of home town for a job, traveling on-job and comfort zones, low joining rate, high attrition rate, attitude of parents and so on. Added to these concerns, a major lacuna discovered in the training and placement scenario of the higher education institutions, was, that, the major focus of all efforts were on training students for being placed in private sector, specially multinational companies in service sector. Due to this, training was also being imparted for the skills required for these companies, irrespective of the social, family,

medium of instruction and academic background of the students. A major chunk of the student population aspiring for public sector or government sector jobs were getting grossly neglected as for them also the same training was available. As a result, there resulted a mismatch between the skill pool of the unemployed segment and the desired skill set by the vacant job market. This in turn resulted in a low percentage of placed students in the regular colleges offering non-professional courses. When we talk about the rural, remote and tribe populated geographical locations, the situation is even worse.

During this project a total number of 125 students have been trained on communication skills and other employability skills. It has been observed that out of these students who had been rejected so far, approximately 21 % students could get selected in multinational companies. Out of this 21%, only 7.3% students agreed to join. On follow up, the attrition rate of this group was a significant 45%. Decidedly, this provided reason enough to critically analyze all three groups, i.e., the low 21% percentage of selected students, even after extensive training in the required standard set of employability skills, the denial of a greater percentage of more than 50% students to join and the significant attrition rate of 45%, even though, the remuneration packages ranged from 1.5 lacs to 2.5 lacs per annum with additional incentives and scope of progress, which, happens to be a comparatively good launch for graduates from non professional courses. This resulted into further analysis. A fact that emerged was that students from rural areas were attitudinally not willing to migrate beyond regional boundaries, leave alone to metro cities.

8. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Decidedly, one approach can be intensifying the efforts of the higher education institutes towards imparting training on communication skills and soft skills to enhance the employability probabilities of students. However, another way, pertinent to the scope of this paper, is to hone the natural language,

communication and soft skills possessed by the students for indigenous and available resources towards achieving economic stability. Madhya Pradesh is rich in natural resources, and has substantial tribal belts, which are again rich in natural resources as well as art, culture and tradition. Mapping these assets with knowledge and indigenous skill set of the students, especially the Hindi speaking students can go a long way in empowering them to be economically productive human resource through tribal resources. A few suggestions are presented below in this regard:

Madhya Pradesh has the advantage of a strategic central position in the country's map. It has ample of natural resources like forests and forest produce, and large untapped deposit of minerals and is the producer of best quality agricultural products, amply available in tribal belts, especially when it comes to natural resources used for alternative medicines. These fields and location provide lots of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the students at local, especially the semi urban and rural regions. These opportunities are yet to be pursued by the HEIs in an organized manner.

The training and placement cells of the HEIs can focus on spreading awareness amongst the students regarding the center and state initiatives towards utilization of tribal resources for economic productivity. Students must be made aware of various opportunities offered through microfinance and relevant institutions such as the Jila Udyog Kendra, National Institute of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBED), The National Small Industries Corporation Limited (NSIC), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, (NABARD), Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO), The Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) and so on.

The present schemes of University Grants Commission are highly relevant. However, considering the students of those higher education institutes which are located in

rural and semi urban areas, it is recommended that new schemes can be initiated. The focus being, imparting skills and knowledge exclusively required for vermiculture/sericulture, organic farming, and agricultural sector, marketing and sales of the agricultural and tribal natural produce, setting up of industries based on this produce and so on. Our policy makers have been continuously stressing upon developing entrepreneurial skills amongst our youth and higher education institutes have been continuously targeted by UGC/NSDC for this. Instead of churning out degree holders, adding to the ever increasing unemployed force, HEIs can approach skilled tribal youth, through distance short term certificate courses along the lines of IGNOU and enhance their social status, prevent migration and churn out students who are economically productive human resource.

Careers and entrepreneurship training based on indigenous tribal cottage industries, art and craft from easily available and low cost natural produce should be made a mandatory part of the career and Counseling scheme of UGC for the higher education institutes in semi urban and rural areas, which will immensely help Hindi speaking students and those from semi urban, rural and tribal areas making students aware of newer and hither to unexplored avenues of employment or entrepreneurial ventures, especially through tourism and travel industry, agricultural sector and indigenous tribal produce and crafts.

Students can be trained to form cooperatives or self help groups of tribes and undertake entrepreneurial opportunities in marketing the same to a bigger market, thereby also fueling growth in the rural communities to which they belong.

Even though most of the population of Madhya Pradesh is rural and still works in the agriculture sector, India's service-based economy has rapidly brought about a thriving development, especially in the last 20 years when India liberalized its markets. Tourism is a growing portion of India's economy with an increase of earning more than 17 percent from

2009 onwards. Travel and tourism encompassing transportation, catering, accommodations, recreation and services for travelers, is actually the world's largest industry and generator of jobs. Throughout the world, tourism brings money to cities and countries. Tourism also provides jobs for the local residents, further benefiting the destination. HEIs need to realize the entrepreneurial as well as job opportunities available from this sector. Rural tourism focuses on the rich culture to be found in the remote villages mostly tribe populated. Nature tourism centers on the country's wildlife and nature preserves. Wellness tourism promotes the various medical and healing systems that are practiced in the country. Adventure tourism pushes for development of outdoor recreational activities. All of this is hither to unexplored by the higher education institutes as a potential field for making their students economically productive.

Jobs generated by travel and tourism are spread across the economy - in retail, construction, manufacturing and telecommunications, as well as directly in Travel & Tourism companies. These jobs employ a large proportion of women, minorities and young people; are predominantly in small and medium sized companies; and offer good training and transferability. Madhya Pradesh Eco Tourism Board states that, tourism is a major growth engine to propel effective placements of students of HEIs in areas rich in tourism potential. Madhya Pradesh Eco Tourism Board also states that, Madhya Pradesh, with an annual tourism influx of around 0.11 million generates benefits equivalent to Rs.637 crores annually. If HEIs properly target tourism industry with the coming 2-3 years bringing 2.69 million employment opportunities in Madhya Pradesh as stated by MP Eco-tourism Board, the placement percentage of students who are not keen on migrating out for corporate jobs will decidedly increase exponentially. As per the Madhya Pradesh Eco tourism Board, Madhya Pradesh can generate one job each against 2 Foreigners and 17 Local

Tourists. Tourism industry surpasses the employment potential of agriculture and industrial sectors. Travel and tourism also contributed over 6 percent of total employment, which means that as of 2009, about one in every 15 citizens worked in this service industry. In 2009, over 31 million people were employed in travel and tourism; this number is expected to increase to over 7 percent by 2019. The HEIs can tap this hitherto unexplored placement area for their students. Tourist locations are amongst forest areas and primarily in the tribal belts. So, targeting employability, tourism can also be one of the most effective drivers for the development of regional economies, which can be tapped by the higher education institutes in specific tribal regions for empowering their students to be economically productive human resource.

An 'Employment Portal' can be set up by the training and placement cells of the higher education institutes focusing on all employment opportunities from public and private sectors. On interviewing the students, one fact that has emerged regarding their liking for government jobs as against private jobs is that the private sector employers do not give any benefit of reservation to the SC, ST, OBC, classes or women candidates. The number of students belonging to these categories is substantial in the conventional non-technical higher education institutes of Madhya Pradesh. Another factor kept in consideration, were the Hindi medium students, who unintentionally always got elbowed aside by the English medium students whenever the campus/recruitment drives were conducted by corporate giants. These students, and those from marginalized segments of society have come forward in large numbers to avail the facility of the Employment portal.

During the research a major finding that emerged was concerning the substantial strength of students hailing from tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh and their numbers in terms of 'placed' students, which resulted in form of this present paper. Whichever policy/

technique/method be used, the bottom line remains that education should reach its logical culmination of knowledge being used for society and nation's development. An essential element of this development is decidedly the economic prosperity of every member of the society. The higher education institutes have a herculean responsibility in this regard and should make parents necessary partners in this exercise right from the first semester instead of the fifth or sixth one. After all, in a longer temporal perspective, not only is higher education a good economic investment for students, but also that these individual returns are only a part of the contribution that higher education makes to the nation's well being by preparing its students into economically productive human resource, a fundamental progressive force, in any society's development.

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