



Growing unemployment of the Educational Youth: A serious threat to Punjab

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Abstract

With the structural changes associated with the rapid growth of agricultural sector, demand for skilled and unskilled labor has been rising in Punjab. But the size of land holdings is diminishing and is becoming unattractive even for the agricultural graduates to enter farming business. There are few jobs outside the farm sector for the educated youth of Punjab. Self-employment schemes have not been very helpful in solving the unemployment problem. Political approach in Punjab towards the growth of employment opportunities for the educated young people is not very favorable. Consequently, most of the youth in Punjab are going abroad in search of jobs. Brain drain is, therefore, another problem which the government has to grapple with. In such a situation, it is of paramount importance that the rural areas of Punjab should be industrialized, and medium and large-scale industries should be set up in the state to solve the unemployment problem of the educated youth.

Keywords: cropping intensity, skilled and unskilled labor, industrialization, educated youth, self-employment schemes, political parties, surveys, brain drain, unemployment problem

Fulfilling the dream and desire of its far-sighted founder Mr. Pratap Singh Kairon, the then Chief Minister of Punjab, and living up to the expectations of people of Punjab, Punjab Agricultural University has played a key role in ushering in the green revolution. Thanks to this much talked about revolution, there has been a marked increase in the index of production of cereals, rise in yield levels and increases in cropping intensity in Punjab and above all a dramatic increase in the employment of unskilled labour. It is also a fact that with the structural changes associated with the rapid growth of agricultural sector, demand for skilled labour has been rising and the wages of skilled labour have experienced a significant increase.

Undoubtedly this development presents a rosy picture and might give a wrong impression to a gullible stranger that there is no unemployment problem in the state. But what is unique about the employment situation in Punjab is that with the rapid increase in the number of holdings resulting from sub-division of land, the size of holding is rapidly diminishing and is becoming unattractive even for agricultural graduates to enter into

farming business. This problem assumes more serious dimension for all such young people who finish up at high school level and look for government jobs which are still considered prestigious by the Society. Since there is no large-scale industry in Punjab and there is very little industrialization of the rural areas, it means very little employment for the educated youth in the rural areas, and there are not many jobs outside the farm sector even for those who have obtained graduation and postgraduation degrees in the arts subjects.

Self-employment schemes have not been very helpful in solving unemployment problem. Training programmes are not adequate for this purpose and are not effectively linked up with financial institutions for the purpose of providing adequate financial support that would help the needy educated youth stand on their feet. Besides, beneficiaries of such programmes are children of influential and politically linked cross sections of the population.

While writing on growing unemployment of the educated youth in Punjab, one must try to measure the impact of political approach towards the growth of employment opportunities for this large section of our society. Before every election, political parties promise to the unemployed young people that they will create jobs if voted to power. But the employment situation continues to remain the same, rather it is becoming worse, no matter which political party forms the government. It is election time again in Punjab and political parties are back to making promises regarding creating many jobs. While one political party has announced one lac jobs for the young every year if it forms the government, another has promised a 75% quota for locals in private sector jobs. Thus it has been noticed that employment is a keyword whenever any party launches its election manifesto in Punjab. Notwithstanding these tall claims, the employment scenario in the state remains grim, according to various surveys by government and non-government organizations.

In 2017, when the SAD-BJP government left office after ruling the state for 10 years, Punjab unemployment rate stood at 7.8% quite higher than the national average of 6.11%, according to the union government's first Periodic Labour Force Survey Report for the year 2017-18. In the second NSO (National Statistical Office) Report for the year 2018-19, Punjab unemployment rate slightly improved to 7.4% but its gap to the national average of 5.8% grew. Further, the unemployment rate of Punjab remained the same at 7.4% in the third NSO Report for the year 2019-20 even as the national unemployment reduced to 4.8%. This was the last reliable report on the subject. Independent think-tank Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), in its latest unemployment data report released on January 3 claimed that over 8 lac people are currently unemployed in Punjab. It is thus quite clear that the successive governments have failed the educated youth in Punjab with promise of jobs. With B.Ed. and M.A. degrees they are forced to do odd jobs due to lack of teaching jobs in the state. Office bearers of Punjab Unemployed Teachers Association often rue that several of their association members have to work as labourers to eke out a living. Most of the youth in Punjab go abroad in such of jobs. There have been cases where farmers are selling off their lands just to ease the financial pressure of their children who are travelling abroad. So we can say brain drain is another problem which the government has to grapple with.

In order to overcome this deteriorating employment situation in the state, stress has been rightly laid on developing agro-based processing industry in Punjab but the growth of processing industry itself depends upon the infrastructure that goes with medium and large scale industries. In such a situation, it is of primary importance that rural areas of Punjab are industrialized, and medium and large-scale industries are set up in the state to solve unemployment problem of the educated youth.

References:

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