

Skill development initiatives in India- A study of its challenges and strategies

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ABSTRACT: Skills and knowledge are key drivers of macro economic growth and socioeconomic stability. Appropriate policies for the skill development occupy a dominant place in the development of economy. According to five year plan, India has set aggressive goals for faster and sustainable economic growth of nation. With the demographic dividend, India needs to impart adequate skills to its workforce. Skill development has emerged as national priority for which a number of measures have been taken and in process for future. In this context, present paper studies and analyses the present status of skill development and the challenges India faces while implementation of different initiatives and strategies.

Key words: Skill, employment, demographic dividend, training.

1. Introduction

India is uniquely positioned in world due to demographic dividend as compared to developed countries whose population is aging. China, US, Western Europe, Japan and many countries in the world are grappling with an aging population. On the other hand, India with an average age of around 29 years and with a median age much below China and OECD countries. India's 65% of the population is below 35 years of age and 70% of the population will be of working age by 2025. High population if employed, trained and productive can easily capitalize the advantage of demographic dividend and lead to sustainable development but same high unemployed, untrained and unproductive population can even turn demographic dividend into demographic liability.

SKILL REQUIREMENTS IN THE SECTORS

Given that all the industries would require a varied profile of skill sets, the following section presents an overview of the skill requirements as derived from an IMaCS study of human resource requirements across different sectors. Considering the diversity of skill requirements across various levels for construction, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, construction materials and building hardware, electronics and IT hardware industry, food processing sector, furniture & furnishing industry, gems and jewellery industry, leather industry, organised retail and textile and clothing industry; a skill pyramid for the industry as a whole has been created considering the weighted averages. The skill pyramid, in summary, captures where the overall industry stands relatively in terms of skills (a function of activity, educational requirements and the amount of 'preparatory' time required to inculcate a specific skill). As can be observed, the lower portion of the pyramid, 'Skill level 1', has the highest incremental requirement of human resources. It requires persons who are minimally educated, but can still handle simple and/or repetitive tasks (e.g., persons such as cutters, those engaged in polishing, etc). Such skills can also be attained in a lesser time duration as compared to engineering or ITI. Skill level 2 relates to areas where substantial skill building efforts would be needed (e.g., carpenters, electricians, welders, operators, plumbers).

In the 10 sectors listed below, as many as 370 million persons are required across various skill levels outlined above by 2022. Out of this, Skill level 1 accounts for over 66 per cent of the human resources with skilling requirements.

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Table 1
Skill Demand across sectors

Segment	Skill level-1	Skill level-2	Skill level-3	Skill level-4	Total Employment in 2022.
Construction industry	80-81%	14-15%	3-4%	1-2%	83,270
Chemicals and pharmaceuticals	20-25%	25-30%	44-45%	5-6%	3,548
Construction materials and building hardware	35-40%	40-45%	15-18%	2-5%	2,497
Electronics and IT hardware industry	19-21%	25-27%	49-50%	4-5%	4,129

Food processing sector	80-81%	9-10%	8-9%	1-2%	17,808
Furniture and furnishing industry	80%	12%	7%	1%	4,873
Gems and jewellery industry	74-75%	4-5%	18-20%	1-3%	7,943
Leather industry	88.5-89%	4-4.5%	6-6.5%	0.5-1%	7,139
Organised retail	50-53%	10-15%	30-33%	4-5%	17,625
Textile and clothing Industry	85-86%	10-11%	3-3.5%	0.5-1%	61,600
Industry average	66.0%	12.6%	18.5%	2.9%	369,059

Sector-specific technical skills, machine operations and services are the main areas of skill gaps, i.e., where the industry demands skilling of personnel.

II. INITIATIVES FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Skill development in their respective areas. These ministries have either set up their own training centres in specific sectors (examples of such ministries include Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare) or provided subsidised training to specific target populations (examples of such ministries include Ministry of Rural Development, and Ministry of Women and Child Development).

Most state governments have also set up state skill development missions (SSDM) as nodal bodies to anchor the skill development agenda in the state. SSDMs are expected to play a significant role in escalating the pace of skilling. Their mandate pertains to identification of key sectors for skill development in the state, and enabling coordination between union ministries and state departments, as well as industry and private training organisations. Each state has adopted a structure of SSDM that best suits the local environment and its vision for skill development. While some states have formed the SSDM as a society or corporation under the Chief Secretary or Chief Minister, others have housed it under relevant departments such as labour, human resource development or planning. Many states are beginning to set year-wise targets for skill development, specifying the state budgetary allocation, and complementing government efforts by encouraging private investment.

According to the Planning Commission, there are 1,896 ITIs (under state governments), 1,244 polytechnics, 669 community polytechnics, 9,583 secondary schools with vocational education and training (VET) stream and 3,218 industrial training centres (ITCs) in the private sector. Besides, Ministries of Rural Development (RD), MSME, Health, Tourism and several others have their own training centres.

The Directorate General of Employment & Training (DGE&T) in the Ministry of Labour is the apex organisation for development and coordination at the national level for the programmes relating to vocational training.

The key training schemes that have been undertaken at the national level are:

- ✚ Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS)
- ✚ Apprenticeship Training Scheme(ATS)
- ✚ Craft Instructors' Training Scheme(CITS)
- ✚ Advanced Vocational Training Scheme(AVTS)
- ✚ Supervisory/Foremen Training Scheme
- ✚ Staff Training and Research Programme
- ✚ Instructional Media Development Programme
- ✚ Women's Training Scheme
- ✚ Hi-Tech Training Scheme
- ✚ Informal sector training
- ✚ Community Polytechnics training about 450,000 people a year within communities
- ✚ Jan Shikshan Sansthan offering 255 types of vocational courses to almost 1.5 million people, mostly women, and
- ✚ The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) offering 85 courses through over 700 providers recognised by the NIOS

Ministry of Labour & Employment (MoLE) implements various vocational training schemes and imparts skill trainings. Two of the notable schemes are (i) Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS) and (ii) Apprenticeship Training Scheme (ATS). These two schemes cover almost the entire array of vocational training activities under DGE&T.

Craftsman Training Scheme was initiated by DGE&T in 1950, which set up 50 industrial training institutes (ITIs) to impart skills in diverse vocational areas to meet manpower requirements for the technological and industrial growth of the country. Under this scheme, institutional training is provided through a network of 9,025 ITIs/ITCs (2,228 in government sector and 6,797 in the private sector) spread across various states and UTs with a total seating capacity of 1.3 million in more than 114 trades. The courses conducted by these institutes are open to youth in the age group of 14 to 40 years, who have passed either Class VIII or X depending on the trade and are of 6 months, 1 or 2 years duration; which varies from course to course.

In order to supplement the efforts taken under the CTS, The Apprentice Act, 1961 was enacted for governing apprenticeship trainings dealing with employers in public and private sector establishments. The major apprenticeship types are: Trade apprentices, graduate apprentices, technician apprentices and technician (vocational) apprentices. As per the latest information available, 254 groups of industries

are covered under the Act. About 25,500 establishments engage apprentices and 235 trades in 37 groups have been designated. Educational qualifications vary from Class VIII pass to XII pass. The minimum age required is 14 years and the duration of training varies from 6 months to 4 years. As mentioned in the Annual Plan 2009- 10 and 2010-11, a sub-committee was formed to examine the apprenticeship regime in the country to make appropriate changes in The Apprenticeship Act, 1961. MoLE is taking steps to move a proposal for the Union Cabinet for various amendments in the Apprenticeship Act, 1961.

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) conducts and facilitates training in numerous kinds of courses. These courses range from a couple of weeks to 2 years in duration.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs' initiatives include working through non-governmental organisations or voluntary organisations in providing professional coaching institutions for ST students to appear in competitive examinations.

In April 1999, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) launched the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) to ensure inclusion of the rural poor in the growth of the nation. It aims to bring the assisted families above the poverty line by ensuring an appreciable sustained level of income over a period of time.

The Department of Information Technology, through its Human Resource Development Division, has started initiatives aimed at ensuring availability of trained human resources for the manufacturing and service sectors of the electronics and IT industries. The initiatives include identifying gaps emerging from the formal sector and planning programmes in the informal and formal sectors for meeting these gaps.

III. Measures taken by private companies

Ground reality is known by the Industry and is working to find out solutions to these challenges. Non-profit organizations in large numbers are being engaged in providing skill training to enhance employability among the weaker sections of society. Companies like Tata motors, Bosch India, Toyota etc. at their level are also trying to develop the workforce and have built up their own training infrastructure to re-train entry-level candidates. As part of a national mission, Bosch India along with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is working to achieve its objective of fulfilling the growing need for skilled manpower across sectors in India. Funding from NSDC and skill development competence has join hands to develop and deploy a vocation training model for making underprivileged children employable. It will help in providing a pool of high quality skilled manpower to the industry. It will help the trained youth find employment (including in the Bosch automotive sales and service dealer network). From January to April 2013, the pilot program under this model was conducted in Bangalore. A second batch for girls was inaugurated exclusively with the aim of empowering them financially. Soon, the scope of the program will be extended to Nashik, Jaipur and Pune.

Some companies have adopted various trades at ITIs in a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model to make the students industry ready. Bharti –Walmart, a joint venture between Bharti Enterprises and Walmart, has established skill centers to train youth, free-of-cost, in retail skills to make them employable in a sector short of skilled manpower. Similarly Tata motors training institutes keep upgrading existing technical training institutes and establishing new technical training institutes. NSDC signed MOU with Tata Motors for skill development programs in automotive sector. Automotive skills will be taught to students in class 11 and 12 as a vocal subject in a few government schools for schools identified by Tata Motors. This pilot program will be introduced in 5 schools, teaching 50 students each. A total of 250 students will undergo this program and if it is a success, a full scale program will be launched. Volkswagen India also keeps investing on employment and education for locals.

Buhler India has implemented this approach at their plant in Bangalore. Every year apprentices are hired from ITIs. They are then enrolled under the vocational courses provided by Skill Sonics. Theoretical training is provided by government ITI teachers where as practical training at Buhler which has world-class training facilities where students and other entry-level employees are trained practically. The apprentices become multi-skilled professionals after two year vocational course, with dual certification and get the opportunity to work as employees in Buhler.

IV. Challenges with respect to skill development initiatives

The current capacity of Government/private training institutes are quiet low in number. It is only million per annum. The eligibility criteria under the current vocational training structure requires secondary education-class 8th as mandatory which restricts a significant number of less educated or illiterate workers to enter the formal training system. The course pattern is not as per industry requirement and latest developments of market are not covered in the curriculum which effects employability as Companies have to re-train the apprentices at the time of hiring. The under quality of training program is also one of the issues. Apprenticeship training where students are trained at the company premises is also a failure in India because of inadequate private sector participation and administrative challenges arising from the distribution of power across various levels of governments (Government of India 2009:23).

The number of entrants in the non-farm sector is only increasing every year because of movement of labor from farm to non-farm sector. There has been no change in farm based jobs. The growth in skill training provided in sectors such as retail, customer services etc have been uneven. Meeting the training requirement of such large workforce has remained a challenge. The under quality of training program offered and lack of interest by the private partners is a major disadvantage.

V Suggestions

1. It is without doubt that a lot of initiatives are being taken and a lot of efforts are being made to improve the skill development landscape in India. How-ever we need to accelerate the skill development movement in our country. The author has offered some suggestions in this regard.

2. There needs to be a paradigm shift. An attitudinal change in the way the society thinks is required. The community of parents has to be oriented that vocational courses are not like second class citizens meant only for the unprivileged. Skill development for various jobs based on the interest and aptitude leads to self-reliance and a life of dignity can be led.
3. The general Arts and Science courses taught presently in most of the higher education institutions is theoretical and lacks the orientation to skill development which is relevant in today's scenario. The Vocationalization of the existing courses becomes important in the view that more than 50% of the students are enrolled for Arts and Science courses (UGC Report, 2012). University courses need to be revised in terms of skill component by the way of more practicum and internship. Our general courses of Arts, Science, Commerce do not inculcate adequate skills to make our students job ready. Several private institutions were asked to close down due to lack of giving practical exposure in laboratories. However some universities like the Team Lease Skill University in Gujarat have taken a step in this direction.
4. The objective of the community colleges has been to offer skill training to the poor and underprivileged sections of the society. However this thinking needs to change in the present context where skill training is the need of nation. All the learners in schools need to be given rigorous orientation on the courses offered by the community colleges irrespective of their class and background.
5. Schools, colleges and universities can play a vital role in dissemination of information of the vocational programmes and also take students to them for visits of skill training institutions. The career counselling programmes in schools and higher education institutions in rural and urban areas need to focus on all the vocational programmes offered by various institutions and ministries.
6. There needs to be a constant updating of training programmes and syllabi periodically to ensure that the youth are exposed to the latest technology and industry practices and business environment.
7. Effective and timely monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the skill development programmes need to be given due emphasis. Feedback from the target groups need to be considered to bring about qualitative improvement.
8. More research studies need to be conducted by higher education and independent research institutions to find out the status of skill development programmes launched by the government and private players.
9. There is a dire need to bring best practices from the different corners of the globe to India's skilling ecosystem. The developed countries are far ahead of us so far the enrolment and quality skill development is concerned.

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The Centre and the States of India need to create good infrastructural facilities i.e. roads, power, buildings etc. to kick-start and sustain skill development programmes. There are district towns in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where the power only comes for a few hours. Therefore observing job trends based on available data and mapping skill requirements nationally and internationally which takes care of supply and demand becomes imperative.

According to the NSDC report on Education there is a massive requirement of 86,64,000 teachers and trainers between 2008 and 2022. This challenge has to be met with training the trainers on a mission mode. The quality of skill training imparted depends on the quality of the teachers and trainers to a large extent.

The Indian Bank Association in liaison with the NSDC is thinking of giving skill loans to students for vocational courses in the range of Rs. 20,000 to 1.5 lakhs. These plans need to be expedited by the Centre as there is no time to lose.

It is required that both public sector and private sector organizations invest in the skill training as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility. As per the requirement of the law The PSUs with about 100 crore profit are to invest about 5 per cent in skill training. The centre and state need to develop monitoring mechanisms to observe if these responsibilities are being effectively met.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the government of India is giving impetus to skill development for the urban and rural youth. The policies and programmes by it-self may not work unless effective implementation and monitoring is ensured by all stakeholders. There is hope in the country that the war against poverty and unemployment can be won by skilling the youth of India.

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