Central Pillar Of Employability: Skill Development

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Abstract: “education, vocational training and lifelong learning are central pillars of employability, employment of workers and sustainable enterprise development” - international labour organisation

Skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development for any country. Countries with higher and better levels of skills adjust more effectively to the challenges and opportunities of world of work. As India moves progressively towards becoming a ‘knowledge economy’ it becomes increasingly important that the country should focus on advancement of skills and these skills have to be relevant to the emerging economic environment. Globalization, knowledge and competition have intensified the need for highly skilled workforce in both the developing and developed nations as it enables them to accelerate their growth rate towards higher trajectory. For India, skill development is critical from both socio-economic and demographic point of view. Therefore, the present paper attempts to study the present skill capacity, challenges in front of skill development initiatives in India along with their solutions. The skill capacity has been assessed in the form of general education and vocational training level of the Indian workforce. The study also found that both the government and its partner agencies have undertaken various measures/initiatives for the effective implementation of the skill development system in the economy, but still faces a number of unresolved issues/challenges that need immediate attention of the policy makers. Hence, skill development initiatives of the government should focus on these obstacles and develop the programs accordingly to resolve these hurdles for the complete success of the skill development initiatives.

Keywords: present skills capacity; skill development, ways forward;

INTRODUCTION

Skill development is critical for economic growth and social development. The demographic transition of India makes it imperative to ensure employment opportunities for more than 12 million youths entering working age annually. It is estimated that during the seven-year period of 2005-2012, only 2.7 million net additional jobs were created in the country. To enable employment ready workforce in the future, the youth need to be equipped with necessary skills and education. The country presently faces a dual challenge of severe paucity of highly-trained, quality labour, as well as non-employability of large sections of the educated workforce that possess little or no job skills. The skill development issue in India is thus pertinent both at the demand and supply level. To meet the demand side challenge, consistent efforts are being made towards expansion of economic activities and creation of large employment opportunities. On the supply side, a simple look at the projected youth population provides a fair reason to believe that India has the strength to cater to this demand. However, the employability quotient is questionable and remains a major area of concern. Already huge gaps exist between the industry requirements and the level of skills of workers due to varied reasons including inadequate training infrastructures, inappropriate mix of skills and education, outdated curricula, limited industry interfaces, limited standards, etc. The skill development ecosystem in India is skewed towards a formal education system with limited vocational training. While the vocational training is in a dismal state both qualitatively and quantitatively, the higher education system itself is grappling with issues related to scale and quality. Moreover, there is a disconnect between the formal education system and work requirements, compounding the challenges related to the skill gap. A concerted action is thus required on the supply side to ensure sustained employability of the Indian youth. Extensive efforts to skill the workforce are required, both in quantity
and quality. Transforming the skill development ecosystem and making it responsive to needs of both industry and citizens requires a scalable, efficient and comprehensive vocational training ecosystem to meet future requirements. There is a need to assess the traditional approach of skill development delivery in India in light of the successful models and best practices in other economies. The learnings can be imbied and custom adopted to address the skill development challenges of India. This is one of the key objectives of the study presented.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To study the present skill capacity of India.
2. To study the challenges faced by skill development system in India.
3. To suggest possible solutions or ways forward.

**Present Status Of Skills In India**

Reaping the benefits of demographic profile looks more of a fantasy than reality due to quantity and quality gap in terms of skilled workforce in India. It is estimated that India will face a demand of 500 million skilled workers by 2022. But India is still struggling with the supply of skilled workforce as presently only 2% of the total workforce in India have undergone skills training.

According to the Government of India estimates, 93% of workforce employment is in the unorganized or informal sector, which is not supported by a structured skill development system. No training on employable skills is being given to young people who can provide them with employment opportunities as per current education system. Workers in the unorganized sector are often skilled informally or on-the-job. The information channels and skill development process are not understood or not clear. India's labor force constitutes high number of labor force with outdated skills.

The pace at which economy is growing and the rate of growth that is expected, the challenge will only increase further as more than 3/4th of new job opportunities are expected to be skill based. The loss of employment and wages during the skill training program also acts as a disincentive to skill acquisition. The skill development environment in India is quiet complex. The vocational training landscape in India has been dominated by the public sector. However, the private sector’s participation and prominence in the skill development space has started to grow, particularly in services sector training. In order to capitalize the demographic dividend, India will need to empower its workers with the right type of skills. The above facts are a stark reminder that India’s demographic dividend can rapidly convert into a demographic nightmare if skills are not provided to both new and existing workforce.

Thus, there is a need for increasing capacity and capability of skill development programs. In this direction, both the Government and its partner agencies have undertaken various measures/initiatives for the effective implementation of the skill development system in the economy. But still India faces a number of unresolved issues and challenges that need immediate attention of the policy makers. Hence, the next section deals with some of these bottlenecks along with their way outs.

**Challenges Before Skill Development Initiatives In India & Ways Forward**

Despite various concentrated efforts, there is still a long way to bring the skill development mission to completion due to the presence of certain serious key challenges in the path of the mission. Some of these hindrances along with their possible solutions are outlined below:

**1: Demand & Supply Mismatch**

The demand made by the industries and supply of labour-force mismatch leads to aggravate all types of skill development initiatives of the Government and its partner agencies as: The number of people formally trained in a year is only 1,100,000 by Ministry of Labour and, in India a small portion of labour force is actually undergoing for formal training. It has been observed that there are more people than the available jobs at the low skills level, while there are more jobs at the high skills level than those available for such jobs. This demand and supply mismatch indicates that there is a serious mismatch between the education and skills that the youth attain and what the labor market demands.

**Possible Solutions:** In order to create a people-centric approach for skill development, it is required that the skill development initiatives needs to be coordinated with demand and supply scenarios across geographies, industries and labour markets so that new skills required by industry or changes in supply of labour are speedily adjusted with adequate and efficient training programs.
2: Geographical Problem: It is another serious problem plaguing the labor market and has a more serious impact in larger economies like India as the geographical set-up or outreach of the people for skills in India are uneven and in dismal share:

* The states with much higher economic growth rates have more new jobs with lower rate of labour-force while on the other hand, the states with slower economic growth rates have higher population growth rates with fewer new jobs. Thus laggard states need to rely on migrant workers so as to cope with this challenge.

* Majority of formal institutions are located in urban areas as compared to rural areas and even private sector institutions are also reluctant to operate in rural areas. Hence, large proportions of rural population do not have any formal vocational training institutions.

* Districts notified as backward have serious paucity of formal skill training as majority of skill development institutions in these locations emphasized only on basic livelihood skills and that is generally provided by NGOs or provided by other agencies as a part of social development programs. Therefore, these types of skills are often not formally assessed and as a result are not recognized for employment by industrial sectors.

Possible Solutions: In order to combat the problem of large geographical and socio-economic conditions of the economy, the Government along with its partner agencies should set-up more standardized skill-based institutions or skill development centers across the country, particularly in laggard/backward states with a view to provide equal access to all segments and sections of the society, so that the whole society gets the benefits of the skill initiatives and strategies.

4: Low Educational Attainment:

some regions are still lags behind as compared to other regions in terms of accessibility of education and skills in India are:

* Higher drop-out rates of educational institutions mostly after the age of 15 years and above and especially in female students.

* Accessibility for the disadvantaged and rural section of the society is difficult due to high costs and other social impediments like transportation problems especially for a girl student travelling away from home.

* Poor quality of education which result in lack of literacy and numeracy skills on the part of students. These students find it extremely difficult to absorb even basic skills.

* Many skills taught in curriculum are obsolete and their end result is that workers are unable to find jobs according to their aspirations.

* Increase in educational institutions further lead to multiplicity of curriculums for the same skill resulting in uneven competency levels.

* There is lack of platforms where industrial and governmental agencies can meet regularly for systematic up-gradation of curriculum for new skills. Ultimately it results in lack of coordination between the job aspirants and employers.

* Inflexibility in curriculum framework of vocational training and education made it difficult for the individual to imbibe the proper skills as who enters the vocational training will find it extremely difficult to enter general education field due to lack of equality between the two.

Possible Solutions: The need of the hour is to provide quality educational curriculum at all levels with targeting skills development programs. Hence, the instructional material or syllabus must be prepared jointly by the industry and the educational planners. It should be regularly updated and must include more of practical learning than theoretical. So that students should imbibe the necessary job skills as demanded by the industrial sectors.

5: Vocational Training:

India is progressively moving towards knowledge economy, where skills are widely recognized as the important lever of economic growth, but the perception about vocational education is still doubtful i.e. it is generally meant for those who fail to get admission in the formal system. Thus, it still need time to be considered as a viable alternative to formal education

* Due to lack of awareness about industrial requirements and the availability of matching vocational courses, most of the prospective students in the country do not go for vocational education.

* Despite of various efforts on the part of Government and its partner agencies, the credibility of vocational courses in India is still questionable. Moreover, the
low reputation linked with vocational courses (or blue collar jobs) and also low compensation levels among people with such skills, prevents the students from taking vocational education as they are not aware on how vocational courses can improve their career prospects.

**Possible Solutions** Hence, a scalable, efficient and comprehensive vocational training system with proper awareness generation programs is the need of the hour. As these programs help in spreading information about existing skill development courses and market requirements which lead to increase the student enrolment as well as enhance the credibility of vocational institutes. As education and vocational training are the important contributors to overall skill capital pool of an economy. Education provides a base in the form of ability in literacy, numeracy and cognitive abilities and vocational training equips an individual with specific skills. Vocational training is practical/manual in nature in contrast to education which is purely theoretical in nature. Thus linkages of both serve simultaneously the hand and the mind, the practical and the abstract aspects.

6: Skill Development For Women:

In India, women also form an integral and substantial part of the workforce; but the working percentage rate of women in total labor force is declining. *women in India are mainly concentrated in the informal sector and are engaged in low paid jobs with no security benefits. This represents lack of employment opportunities and skills for women workforce. *Currently, a majority of the female workforce in India is unskilled, i.e. a very low percentage of women have any kind of formal education. In India, around 65% of women in rural areas and over 30% of women in urban areas lacked basic primary school education.

**Possible Solutions** a strong policy measures and operational linkages are needed to bring together the public and private sector to improve the quality and relevance of training.

**CONCLUSION:**

As a fast growing developing economy, India needs skilled architects, plumbers and masons among others to contribute to the country’s growth. Towards this end, multiple skill development initiatives have been launched in the country but it appears that these are unable to create avenues for casual workers and are not of the scale needed. This is problematic because it can stall the country’s growth plans and development goals. To make India internationally competitive and to boost its economic growth further, a skilled workforce is essential. As more and more India moves towards the Knowledge economy, it becomes increasingly important for it to focus on advancement of the skills and these skills have to be relevant to the emerging economic environment. For transforming its demographic dividend, an efficient skill development system is the need of the hour. Therefore to achieve its ambitious skilling target, it is imperative to have holistic solutions of the challenges instead of piecemeal interventions.

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