



Challenges of skill development in India

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Abstract

Since independence, attempts were made to increase the contribution of manufacturing sector and to exploit the potential of job creation. The fast pace of economic growth in the post liberalization era has necessitated skilled workforce that could effectively participate as well as lead the country's growth story. With the view to fully exploit the growth potential of various sectors, there is a need to develop a skilled workforce that possesses the required competence and skills to be able to take up jobs generated in various sectors. Skilling India's youth is the need of the hour as it is the only way by which we can utilize the tremendous power of human resources available to us in the form of young population.

In this paper the researcher has tried to analyse the issues/challenges involved in skill development in India such as skill gaps, issue of demographic dividend, absence of common standards and common curriculum and other challenges etc. An attempt has also been made to understand the national skill development policy and to provide necessary suggestions in the form of adoption of technology in education, introduction of: skill university model in whole of India, women- oriented programmes, innovative policies like scholarships, rewards and skill vouchers to fund poor students, making availability of study material in local languages etc., so as to overcome the challenges.

Keywords: Skilling, skill development, skill gaps, training

Introduction

Since independence, attempts were made to increase the contribution of manufacturing sector and to exploit the potential of job creation. The fast pace of economic growth in the post liberalization era has necessitated skilled workforce that could effectively participate as well as lead the country's growth story.

With the view to fully exploit the growth potential of various sectors, there is a need to develop a skilled workforce that possesses the required competence and skills to be able to take up jobs generated in various sectors.

Skilling India's youth is the need of the hour as it is the only way by which we can utilize the tremendous power of human resources available to us in the form of young population.

'Skilling' basically means training practical, theoretical and soft skills as per the current industry requirements. This involves grooming the individual in such a way that they are equipped with all the current knowledge required to start working in the organization. This means training the youth in a way that they become 'employable'.

Studies on of skill development

C.S.K. Singh (2003) ^[7], observed that deficiencies in labour market like shortage of skilled and educated labour force contribute more to the unemployment trend in the economy than the deficiencies in aggregate demand. His study highlighted that micro level interventions in order to correct the macro policy distortions tend to have negative consequences like overcrowding and create an even larger pool of skilled and unskilled workers. It suggested the requirement of better policy planning for manpower planning.

Sahana Roy Chowdhury (2014) ^[2], while observing the existence of skill mismatches in Indian labour market has pointed towards a deviation in typical labour-intensive

sectors and an absence of skilled manpower in those areas. According to her, this dearth of skilled manpower is due to lack of incentivization in job market and dissent of education system with the job market requirements. She suggested identification of skill gaps, designing skill initiatives in high potential sectors, development of skill infrastructure as measures to correct skill gaps in the concluding remarks.

Santanu Paul (2014) ^[4] studied the domino effect of technology in education and training sector. The study emphasized upon the unification of new technology with existing infrastructure in order to create click-and-mortar platforms to infuse current generation, employment-ready skills. It concludes by saying that social innovations and adoption of 'Learning by Doing' mantra for vocational education can prove to be rewarding.

Rashmi Agarwal and Indra Kumar (2014) ^[1], in their study pointed that the courses offered under vocational training in India are not demand driven and lack forward linkages. The country suffers from a lack of infrastructure which is required for vocational education. Students perceive vocational education insignificant relative to general education. The study highlighted the need to change the attitude and mindset of students towards vocational training and revamping it at school level.

Pushpak Sharma (2015) ^[6], in his study identified the need to foster skilled labour in our country. It pointed towards the huge shortage of skilled labour in the country in the years to come if we continued moving at the same growth rate in terms of skilled labour. It concludes by giving reasons for skill shortage that include lack of awareness among students, lack of efforts by educational authorities to inculcate practical training among the students etc.

Vandana Saini (2015) ^[5], in her study assessed the skill capacity in terms of general education and vocational training level of Indian workforce which was reported to be

extremely low. The study also assessed various initiatives taken by the Government and other agencies and discovered various obstacles which were faced by the skill ecosystem of the economy. She suggested holistic solutions as an imperative to counter such bottlenecks.

Nandini Gooptu (2018) ^[3] highlighted the key issues of intended beneficiaries. Based on the preferences of beneficiaries, the study emphasized upon the role of human-centric theories of skill development. In this study, attention is drawn to the fact that skill training involves not only the development of technical competencies but is also a process of change of attitude, disposition and identity of a new generation of workers, with wide-ranging cultural, social and political implications that merit closer analytical attention.

National Skill Development Policy, 2015

The National Policy on Skill Development had the objective of working on a 'demand driven system' which is guided by labour market signals and minimized skills mismatch.

Some innovative approaches to expand the outreach of the policy were adopted. New and emerging occupations were given due consideration and existing ones were polished by providing pre-employment training and lifelong learning.

The National Policy on Skill Development through its objectives attempted to remove the major challenges which are faced by the skill development scenario in India.

The major challenges which the Policy hoped to tackle were: (i) Equitable access to all to the existing system by expansion of its capacity. (ii) Promotion of lifelong learning and maintenance of quality and relevance with regard to the changing conditions of the knowledge economy. (iii) Creation of effective convergence between school education, various government skills development efforts and private sector initiatives in this area. (iv) Building an institutional capacity for planning, quality assurance and involvement of stakeholders. (v) Creation of structural mechanisms for research development, quality assurance, examinations and certification, and affiliations and accreditation (vi) Increase in the stakeholder participation, mobilization of adequate investment in skills development, attainment of sustainability by strengthening physical and intellectual resources.

Challenges of skill development Skill Gaps

The supply of skilled workforce in India is very low when compared to other countries. For instance, In India only 5% of the workforce is skilled as compared to 68% in UK, 75 % in Germany, 52% in the US, 80% in Japan and 96% in South Korea.

The level of skill and training of the youth that actually undergoes technical training/higher education is not as per the industry requirements. For example, according to the India Skills Report 2023, the employability of B. Com graduates is 60.62% Engineering graduates stood at 57.44%, and for MBA it is 60.1%. respectively. (India Skills Report, 2023).

The training provided to the students was sub-standard and did not provide them with decent job opportunities. Actually, the trainees were trained only on paper and not in reality.

The training is characterized by poor placement records and low salaries being offered to the students enrolled in training courses. This discourages people to get them enrolled in the

training programmes leading to low student mobilization in the training institutes like it is and polytechnics. Students prefer to get awarded with a regular degree as it seems more favourable to them in contrast to a vocational training certificate.

The students simply followed the crowd and enrolled themselves in random courses without even assessing their areas of interest and abilities for training causing a great mismatch between the course requirements and aptitude of the students leading to a high dropout ratio.

Demographic dividend

India is a younger country when compared to China and has a low dependency ratio, which we can term as a 'demographic dividend' enjoyed by India. This demographic dividend would conclusively be over by 2040.

Segmentation of labour market

The Indian labour market is highly segmented with several different bases of segmentation which include gender, caste, geographical barriers, economic space like rural/ urban area, sectoral barriers, education/skill, institutional barriers, work arrangements, etc.

Sharda Prasad Committee Report on major issues facing vocational and training system include, Absence of: (i) Sound national vocational education and training system; national vocational education and training standards; an integrated in-plant apprenticeship training. (ii) Vocationalization of education in schools; (iii) inadequate: industry interface and lack of relevance of VET, financing of VET system, training capacity in the country (iv) Poor quality outcomes (v) short term VET courses, (vi) Large school drop-outs, (vii) Recognition of prior learning, (viii) promotion of soft and life skills, (ix) shortage of qualified trainers, (x) need for a comprehensive legislation.

Recognition of Prior Learning programme

With respect to this programme, it was noted that the students were trained only for 2-3 hours and certified to have completed the whole training programme leading to a shortfall of training facilities and the new entrants to the industry are deprived of training facilities every year.

Common standards and curriculum

Absence of common standards and common course curriculum leading to difficulties in accessing the performance of the students thereby, creating confusion among the employers as well.

The curriculum of the education provided to the students at school and college levels, significantly lacks practical insight and exposure through internships, workshops etc. The training institutions are required to develop linkages with the industry to estimate their demands for skilled manpower.

Short term course

The duration of a short-term course is just eight hours which would neither meet the needs of the industry nor of the students. Hence, leaving them on the verge of unemployment.

Other challenges

Dearth of efficient trainers; Limited mobility in respect to skill, higher education programs and vocational education;

Limited access of the programmes and deficient industry linkages; Low participation rate among women; More inclination of people towards the non-farm, unorganized sectors; Omission of various areas from the course curricula like entrepreneurship; Startups lacked push in terms of financial assistance, innovation, mentorship etc.

Suggestions

To reap the benefits of demographic dividend a careful and thorough quantitative and qualitative assessment of the extant workforce has to be done so that the economy is able to absorb the potential of massive workforce supply.

Low levels of education forces people to move towards agriculture sector and constrain them to rural areas therefore, efforts be made for the transition of workers from agricultural sector to industrial sector by making conducive environment for them. For instance, National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF), has laid down guidelines for provision of certification to youth who possesses some kind of technical skill but no formal training certification for the same.

The training infrastructure needs to be created in areas close to sourcing cluster.

This would improve the prospects of gainful employment of local youth.

Adoption of technology in education and training is another way through which we can meet the challenge of providing a practical experience, improving learning outcomes and training large number of people. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) are gaining immense popularity towards achieving these objectives.

The access of vocational training can also be increased by implementing the model of movable training institutions. This will ensure that training infrastructure becomes available to the remotest parts of the country and the youth in remote rural areas has equal opportunities for skill development.

The 'skill university' model which aims to improve the quality of skill education and provides programs at certificate, diploma, short-term courses, Bachelor's, and Master's education levels to cater to students' skill requirement has to be extended to whole of India.

Some women-oriented programs should be introduced to increase the participation of females in the workforce.

Private sector can play a critical role in designing skilling development programs. Recognising socially cramped groups, and directing the re-design of training courses through market leaders and private players can prove to be of great assistance in improving skill development scenario prevailing in the country.

An effective and efficient system of career counselling and vocational guidance should be established to offer professional guidance to the students.

Awareness campaigns can also be organised in schools to re-shape the perception of students who would be a part of the workforce in years to come.

There is a need for a regular skill gap analysis in order to design skills as per the local needs. Evaluations must be made on a regular basis to assess the performance of students as well as of those imparting the training. A performance based ranking system can be established to rank the training institutes and the trainers.

The licenses assigned to the training centres must be renewed from time to time on the basis of feedbacks acquired from students and those from the assessors.

The training curriculum should be designed keeping industry-specific requirements in mind. It must be developed after consultation with the industry experts and academia.

The apprenticeship trend needs to be encouraged by incentivizing the industry houses and MSMEs for institutionalizing paid apprenticeship.

Industry linkage serves an imperative role for the training providers as well, as it acquaints them with the latest changes taking place in an industry.

A combination of public and private funding is required to meet financial constraints in the skilling process. The government should thus provide partial funding to the skill centres, and devise incentives to invite private investment.

Innovative policies like government scholarships, rewards and skill vouchers to fund the training costs of those unable to pay can be introduced.

Financially weak students should be assisted through government-initiated training funds, or easy loan facilities. International players from technologically advanced countries should be invited to sponsor training providers in India.

To cater to students' requirements, part time learning modules, distance learning programmes, webinars, and competence-based learning, etc must be designed to preclude any potential loss of their professional aspirations.

Another important aspect is the availability of study material and imparting of training in local languages to make it easier for them to learn and grasp the technicalities in training.

Conclusion

These suggestions shall be taken into consideration so as to overcome the challenges faced with respect to skill development which will lead to the availability of necessary skilled man power in India.

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