

Skill Development in Higher Education: Trends and Issue

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Abstract-

India has the second-highest population of the working age (15–59 years) individuals in the world. The skill set of this population group plays a critical role in the growth of the country. In India, education plays a vital role to build skill-based society of the 21st Century. It is the quality of education that decides the quality of human resources of the country. The intent of the present paper is to analysis and highlights the status of contemporary education with respect to skill development. This study answers these questions, where are we on skills? What are the opportunities available to learners for skill development? And what is the way forward?

Key Words- Contemporary education, Learners, Skill-based, Skill development.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace”- Confucius

India is a Country with the 2nd largest population. It is renowned for its size, diversity and complexity, whether it is geographical, socioeconomic, cultural, political or developmental. All these factors impact on every aspect of life including employment, labour force considerations, education and training. If nation is a system, education is the heart of it. Education empowers the nation. Education is an important input for the growth of the Nation. Properly planned educational can increase national gross products, cultural richness, build positive attitude towards technology, increase efficiency and effectiveness of the governance. Education opens new horizons for an individual, provides new hopes and develops new values. It strengthens competencies and develops commitment. So, every govt. is now committed to provide the facilities that are required for educating a child right from the beginning. As compared to western economies where there is a burden of an ageing population, India has a unique 20–25 years window of opportunity called the “demographic dividend.”, means India has a higher proportion of working age population

II. OBJECTIVES

The present paper is designed for following objectives:

1. To study the present scenario of India on skills& education.
2. To examine opportunities available to learners for skill development.
3. To explain the future prospects of skill development in India.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on secondary data collected from reputed articles of research journals, books, prominent sites, report sets relevant to higher education and skill development. The study is all about to focus on contemporary educational scenario with respect to skill development in the India.

India’s scenario on skills

India has seen rapid growth in recent years, due to the growth in new-age industries. The demand for a new level of quality of service has increased with the increase in purchasing power. However, there is a large shortage of skilled manpower in the country. In the wake of the changing economic environment, it is necessary to focus on the skill development of the young population of the country. India lags far behind in imparting skill training as compared to other countries. As compared to western economies where there is a burden of an ageing population, India has a unique 20–25 years window of opportunity called the “demographic dividend.” This “demographic dividend” means that as compared to other large developing and developed countries, India has a higher proportion of working age population about its entire population.

The rapid economic growth has increased the demand for skilled manpower that has highlighted the shortage of skilled manpower in the country. India is among the top countries in which employers are facing difficulty in filling up the jobs. The key reasons in finding a suitable candidate for available jobs in the country are lack of available applicants, shortage of hard skills and shortage of suitable employability, including soft skills.

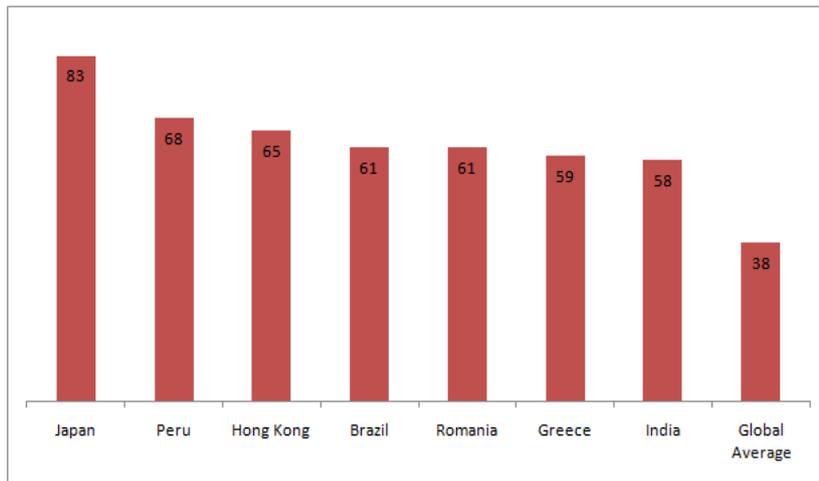


Fig 1:-Percentage having difficulties in filling the jobs globally

Source: ILO

Worldwide, the percentage of employers who are experiencing difficulties filling job vacancies continues to rise. If we talking about India than it is on 7th position in facing difficulty in filling jobs. For India, the difficulty to fill up the jobs is 58%, which is above the global standard of 38% in 2015. The World Economic Forum indicates that only a little bit % of the total Indian professionals are considered employable by the organized sector. The unorganized sector is not supported by any structured skill development and training system of acquiring or upgrading skills. The skill formation takes place through informal channels such as family occupations, on-the-job training under master craftsmen with no linkages to formal education training and certification.

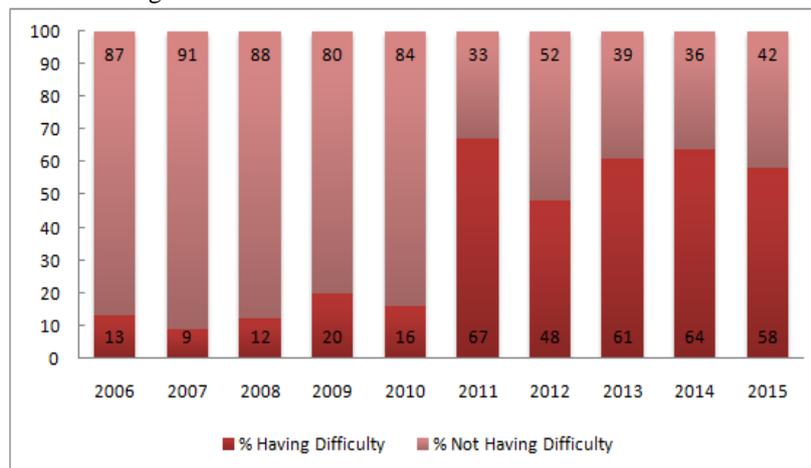


Fig 2:- Percentage having difficulties in filling the jobs in INDIA

Source-ILO

The percentage of employers who are experiencing difficulties filling job vacancies in India continues to fluctuate from 2006 to 2015. When compared with 2014, the proportion decreases from 64% to 58%. Employers are having major difficulty filling jobs in Accounting & Finance Staff ,IT Personnel, Secretaries, PAs, Receptionists, Admin Asst. & Office Support Staff , Teachers, Engineers, Marketing / Public Relations / Communications Staff Sales Managers, Management / Executive (Management / Corporate),Legal Staff, Researchers (R&D). On the other hand, Higher Education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University level Institutions & Colleges since Independence. The number of Universities has increased 34 times from 20 in 1950 to 677 in 2014. The sector boasts of 45 Central Universities of which 40 are under the purview of Ministry of Human Resource Development, 318 State Universities, 185 State Private universities, 129 Deemed to be Universities, 51 Institutions of National Importance (established under Acts of Parliament) under MHRD (IITs - 16, NITs – 30 and IISERs – 5) and four Institutions (established under various State legislations). The number of colleges has also registered manifold increase of 74 times with just 500 in 1950 growing to 37,204, as on 31st March, 2013. The quantum growth in the Higher Education sector is spearhead by Universities, which are the highest seats of learning.

In order to provide adequate training to the youth and develop necessary skills, the Government of India took steps to improve the skill training scenario in the country. In 2009, the government formulated the national skill development policy that laid the framework for skill development, ensuring that individuals get improved access to skills and knowledge. This Institution-based skill development, including ITIs/ vocational schools/technical schools/ polytechnics/ professional colleges, etc. Training for self-employment/entrepreneurial development is given under this policy-learning, web-based learning and distance learning is also parts of national skill development policy. The policy states the roles

and responsibilities of stakeholders, which include the government, industry, trade unions, local governments, civil society institutions and all skill providers. The policy lays down following institutional framework comprising:

- Prime Minister's National Council on Skill Development
- National Skill Development Co-ordination Board
- National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)
- National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT)

The policy also lays down special emphasis on skill development for the unorganized sector. The policy provides for having a separate institutional mechanism to plan, implement and monitor the skill development for the unorganized sector. It focuses on having target groups within the unorganized sector, literacy and soft skills, recognition of prior learning, and skill development for self-employment.

IV. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The current vocational education is shifting from welfare approach to a demand driven approach. The government has undertaken various efforts to strengthen its scattered VET (Vocational Education Training) delivery system under various departments and ministries, e.g. the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE) through its Director General of Employment and Training (DGET), the Ministry of Urban Affairs and the Ministry of Rural Development. Opportunities available to learners for skill development are facilitated by Central & State Government & by Private sector.

Government's Role in Skill Development

Government gave priority to Skill development in Twelfth Five Year Plan. The government plans to set up sector skill councils to prepare standards required for training programs. The industries are also proactively taking steps to partner with the government and reduce the skill gap. The government has doubled the allocation of funds for skill development under the National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) by INR10 billion in the Union Budget 2012–13. The total corpus of funds has been increased to INR25 billion.

The various ministries have created infrastructure for skill development such as it is, polytechnics, community polytechnics, secondary schools (in association with private sector). Recently, government has passed the amendment to the existing act known as 'Apprentices (Amendment) Bill, 2014' to increase the number of skilled man power and provide industries with flexibility to hire apprentices as well as improve stipends specified to them. According to the Bill, the industry will have 2.5-10 percent of the total work force as apprentices Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June 2014 announced the creation of a first-ever separate Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to promote entrepreneurship and skill development.

MHRD governs polytechnic institutions with the current capacity of diploma level courses under various disciplines such as engineering and technology, pharmacy, architecture, applied arts and crafts and hotel management. As per AICTE Annual Report- 2011-12, total number of institutions is 3205 within take capacity of 8, 87,825. Another key initiative of MHRD is the scheme of Apprenticeship Training, which aims to provide practical experience to engineering graduates, diploma holders and students in 10+2, and make the trained candidates job ready as per industry requirements. A part from this, MHRD has also introduced vocational education from class IX onwards, provision of financial cost for engaging with industry/SSCs for assessment, certification and training

'Aajeevika' is as killing and placement initiative of Ministry of Rural Development. The aim of the scheme is to impart specific set of knowledge and skills to rural youth and make them job ready. The scheme is catering to youth without formal education.

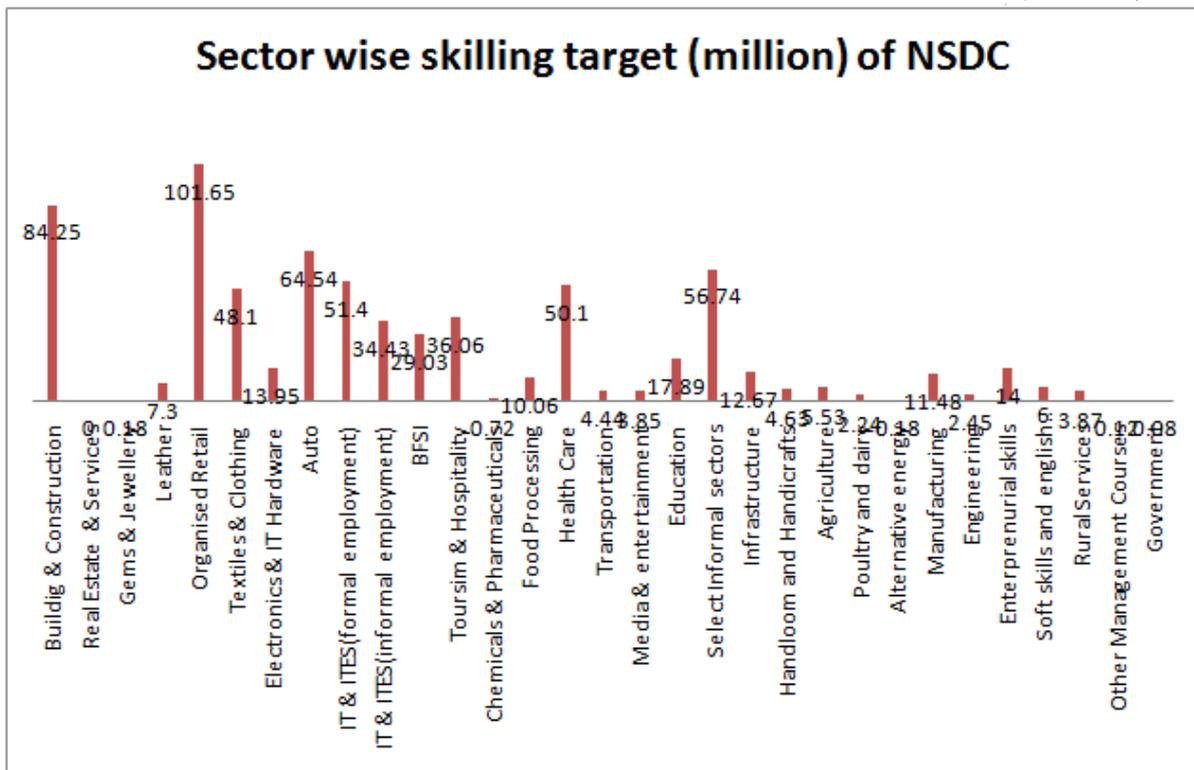
Textile is the second largest employer after agriculture in the country. The work force will increase from 33-35 million in 2008 to 60-62 million by 2022. The ministry has an Integrated Skill Development Scheme for the Textiles and Apparel Sector including Jute and Handicraft. The scheme aims to fulfill the need for skilled manpower to the textile and related sectors. The scheme aims at targeting 15 lakh people over the span of five years.

The NSDC formed in 2009 under National Skill Policy, which is a public-private partnership body mandated to skill 150 of the 500 million people by 2022 and the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), an autonomous body formed in 2013 to coordinate the government and the private sector initiatives to achieve the skilling the targets of the 12 plan and beyond has been subsumed under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to give coherence to skill training efforts in the country. The figure below elucidates NSDC's target of producing skilled workers per sector over the next ten year.

Source: NSDC

Some of the other key initiatives of the government are as follows

- Establishment of new ITIs in underserved regions and the existing ITIs being upgraded to centers of excellence to produce multi-skilled workforce of world standards
- Setting up more polytechnics in the PPP mode and 400 government polytechnics being upgraded
- Expansion of vocational education from 9,500 senior secondary schools to 20,000 schools; intake capacity to increase from 1 million to 2.5 million
- Establishment of 600 rural development and self employment training institutes (RUDSETI)
- To set up a virtual skill development resource network linking 50,000 skill development centers (SDCs)
- Skills training have been made more affordable by exempting vocational education institution from paying service tax.



Private Sector's Role in Skill Development

Over the years, the private sector has increased its presence in the field of vocational education in India. Unemployment and underemployment are two of the most serious development problems currently being faced by the country. The equality vocational education and training courses for the learner can solve this problem. The private sector comes into play here with its ability to match better the demand for workforce by the industry with a supply of superior skilled manpower. The private sector can contribute to supplement infrastructure, facilities, technology and pedagogy. There are several roles that the private sector plays in this domain, namely, as a consumer of skilled manpower, as a non-profit facilitator of quality knowledge or as a for-profit enterprise providing education.

In the first role, the private sector would deeply benefit by training the available manpower with appropriate skills and then ultimately employ them. Corporate houses can train learners by diverse methods and in varied fields such as research and development, academic internships, on-job training, programs in line with the market demand and several collaborative programs. As a consumer, the private sector is educating learners with the right balance of academic skills, analytical skills, attitude and exposure. This approach ensures only industry demanded skills/expertise being imparted to develop a suitable talent pool. Many private sector players have also entered this space as a way of giving back to the society from which they otherwise gain immensely. These players have the requisite funds, expertise and infrastructure to invest in constructing an appropriate platform for vocational education and training. Many industry experts or young business leaders interact with the learners via this mode to provide a unique training package.

Finally, the private sector may enter vocational education and training with a sole purpose of profit building. By constructing infrastructure facilities in terms of schools, training institutes and universities, such players provide education at a price. In a nation such as India where maximum emphasis is laid on education, there are immense opportunities and a vacant capacity to tap this sector.

V. FUTURE PROSPECT FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

India, as a whole, realizes the complete seriousness and importance of possessing a skilled workforce. As highlighted above, there are several programs and schemes initiated to address this issue. However, considering the rate at which the eligible working population of India is growing, these skilling initiatives would fall short by a severe amount. India is perceived to be emerging as a service-driven economy with quality human capital as its competitive advantage. For continuing this growth in the service sector and achieve competitive advantage in manufacturing, it is imperative that the human capital asset is developed further. The future prospects give birth to a serious concern of inadequate educational facilities of the nation.

Skilling has certainly seen a growing focus from government and other stakeholders and we hope it would have sustained attention from decision makers. While structurally the government has introduced a new Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, further clarity on its operational mandate and alignment with other ministries' skilling programmes is still awaited. With amaze of schemes and training initiatives at multiple ministries, it would be imperative for the new ministry to streamline government focus and ensure efficient implementation in the right areas with optimum fund utilisation targets. With the recent announcement of it is and DGET being aligned with the new ministry, they would also need to revamp the existing massive infrastructure to make it industry relevant. Schemes like

National Career Services Project by DGET and National Textile Policy targeting to create 35 million jobs are encouraging steps where effective implementation would be the key.

NSDC would also need to get large training players backed by employers and industry to join the training industry as credibility and sustainable infrastructure would be the key to meet its target of 150 million training by 2022. While by setting up 31 SSCs, they have laid the path for establishing training standards with employers at the fore front, ensuring financial sustainability

of SSCs would be equally important.

Another key government initiative--'Aajevika', which is a flag ship initiative of MoRD, also needs to align itself with training standards and focus on outcome-driven funding. Right monitoring and striving for impact-based implementation is certainly required and we hope this is taken up sooner than later.

With a trained workforce of 500 million, the nation is looking at creating a fine balance between quality and quantity, which would be vital to create a credible and sustainable reform. At an annual addition of 9.25 million per year approximately 37 million jobs are expected to be created from 2012-13 through 2016-17.

VI. CONCLUSION

To sum up, we need to recognize that the knowledge, skills and productivity of our growing young and dynamic workforce form the backbone of our economy. To reap the benefits of such a young workforce, we need to implement the reforms in the education system and also bring forth new factors of production, namely knowledge, skills and technology which have the ability to unleash the productive frontiers of the economy in the most efficient and dynamic way. Besides, taking a leaf from the western hemisphere, India should try to become "knowledge economy" to promote inclusive growth. The three major areas to be focused to ensure that our education system is sustainable and meets global standards:

Quality of Education – in terms of infrastructure, teachers, accreditation, etc.

Affordability of Education—ensuring poor and deserving students are not denied of education. Ethics in Education – avoiding over-commercialization of education system.

It is time to bring in the changes that will give us the momentum to find a place in the global scenario. Govt. and public both should work hand-in-hand to support each other and look for the required upliftment of education. Change in the GER will not come in a year, but it can be achieved by consistent persuasion, Using of state-of-the-art infrastructure allied with ICT and a developed curricula for industry-ready candidates seems to be the dream of the country and its people, but, the possibilities of such extent need to be channelized and it is make sure that everyone do get the opportunity to be a part of such system.

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