

ROLE OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES IN RURAL YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract: India is the country with youngest population in the world and it has maximum numbers of working population involved in formal and informal sectors. The current government of India is trying to reap in the benefit of this demographic dividend. The challenge is to make this population a human resource which is not possible without education and skill development. According to the report, “state of the urban youths, India 2012, Empowerment, Livelihoods skills by 2020”, it is a huge and gigantic task to ensure that regular checks are made and the talent is tapped. India is set to become the world’s youngest country with 64% of its population in the working age group. With the west, Japan and even china is aging. This demographic potential offers India and its growing economy an unprecedented edge that economists believe could add a significant 2% to the GDP growth rate by 2020, developed countries are predicted to face a short fall of over 57 million semiskilled man power while India is expected to have a surplus of 47 million. It will not only address domestic industry problems but also fulfill global manpower demand.

Rural development and prosperity is deeply integrated to any nation’s growth. Skilled workers and entrepreneurs are the need of the hour with the government committed to improving the skill landscape in the country over the next few years. The mobilization of the available and willing youth and man-power and making them as skilled individuals is the need of the hour with the burgeoning youth brigade of India.

This paper focuses on the current state, existing ecosystem for skill development in rural India and the role skill development has to play in the future for increasing employment and entrepreneurship opportunities among the youth of rural India.

IndexTerms – Rural Youth, Skill Development, Rural India

I. INTRODUCTION

The dream of India becoming a super power aligned with countries such as the US, and neighboring China, can be transformed to reality only through optimum utilization of resources. Human resource is the best resource for nation to bank upon and the real talent lies in the rural areas of the nation and it can become the driving factor for the development and industrialization. It is the need of the hour to make best use of this resource for the development of the nation and for their development as well.

Logically any nation cannot develop without rural development. Soon after independence, the emphasis became more marked to achieve regional development, eradication of poverty and reducing disparities between urban and rural sector and within each sector itself. It has been experimented with number of rural development programs with different goals, policy, logistics and approaches at different point of time. Various rural employment programs were undertaken in order to develop infrastructure as well as to provide employment in the villages.

Rural development may be broadly defined as the process of improving the quality of life and the economic well-being of people living in isolated and sparsely populated areas. According to the national sample survey organization, a rural area is one:

- which has a population of 400/sq km
- villages with clear surveyed boundaries but no municipal board
- that has a minimum of 75% of the working male population involved in agriculture activities.
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Skill Development: The History

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation said that India's strength lies in its villages. Rural areas contribute significantly to the overall growth and economic development of a country. A statistics states that of the roughly 5.98 billion people who live in the world, close to 3.4 billion people live in villages/rural areas. However, many issues still plague the villages of India such as poverty, water scarcity, malnourishment, lack of basic facilities, illiteracy, unemployment, anti-social elements etc. While many of these exist from time immemorial, unemployment seems to be the major threat in today's scenario with the ever growing population, and India is expected to outgrow China as the world's largest populated country. India sits on a goldmine of raw talent waiting to be nurtured, developed and added to the HR pool. Effective utilization of resources and availability of skilled individuals help in ensuring that developmental activities do not get compromised. This is where skill development plays a major role.

Skill is required for the following reasons:

- To attain employment
- To improvise in existing employment
- Reduce poverty
- Enhance standard of living
- Provide livelihood opportunities
- Enhance productivity
- Promote environmentally sustainable development

According to the 12th plan document of the Planning Commission, India's labour force has increased from over 478 million in 2011 to over 502 million in 2017 and over 85% of this labour force has an educational qualification only till the secondary level of which over 55% only have an educational qualification till the primary level and only 2% have had vocational training. A World Bank report states that India is one of the few countries where working population continues to grow till 2050. With an annual addition of 9.25 million jobs per year, over 37 million jobs are expected to be created from 2012-13 through 2016-17. Rural India, awash with natural resources has the potential to be the most efficient powerhouse for national development. Other facts include total fertility rates and pregnancies are reported more in rural than in urban areas and that the rural population is much younger than the urban population.

Some of the setbacks which prevent from ensuring an amiable ecosystem for rural areas are:

- Still raging farmer suicides
- Migration of many people to urban locales
- Depriving of quality education
- No proper financial support
- Poor infrastructure etc.

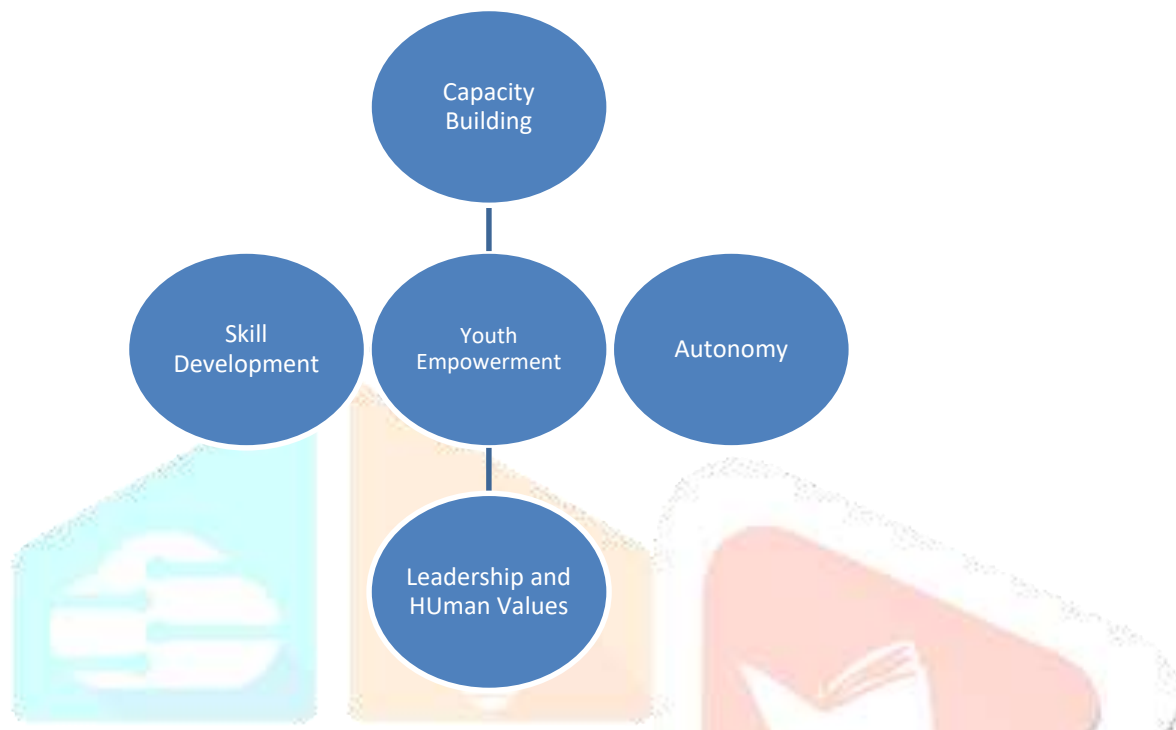
Skill development as an important pillar for growth is often ignored and put in the backburner and perennially looked upon as a non-scalable model due to the high capital required and the low ROI. It is a huge challenge not only for the government, but also for the private sector and educational institutions to rise up and specialize in making youth employable and ensuring no mismatch between demand and supply. They must also focus on an increased usage of modern technology in the workplace/assembly line. Also there is a mismatch between the aspiration of youngsters and the jobs available. For e.g. the construction sector usually has migrant workers from other states who are employed.

With more than 65% of India's population under the age of 35 years, there is a plethora of labour power waiting to be deployed. The buying power of people has been consistently increasing all over the world and as a result many foreign companies are willing to invest in India and as a result lots of industries in various sectors have a huge demand of skilled labour in the coming years.

Youth Empowerment

The Youth represent the most dynamic and vibrant segment of the population. India is one of the youngest nations in the World, with about 65 per cent of the population being under 35 years of age. The National Youth Policy, 2014, seeks to define the vision of the

government of India, for the youth of the country and identify the keys areas in which action is required to achieve their full potential and through them enable India to find its rightful place in the community of nations in the area of, education, employment and skill development, entrepreneurship, health and healthy lifestyle, sports, promotion of social values, community engagement, participation in politics and governance, youth engagement, inclusion and social justice.



The need for empowering youth arises due to the following reasons:-

- To enable youth to acquire such knowledge, skills and techniques which will help them in their personal and social growth as well as foster in them sensitivity towards problems in the society.
- To promote national integration and international understanding by developing youth leadership and providing a forum for youth from diverse background.
- To promote regional co-operation and exchange between people of various countries.
- To foster initiatives for unfolding the potential of youth through a constant process of self-evaluation and self -exploration.
- To promote research in youth work.

Skill Development Initiatives of Government for Youth

The Government of India, on its part has initiated 2 programs, Skill India and Make in India to create a framework for skill development and entrepreneurship activities in the country. Skill India's primary objective is to ensure a well-established infrastructure for skill development and focus on professional skills and employment oriented training in order to create skilled labour workforce.

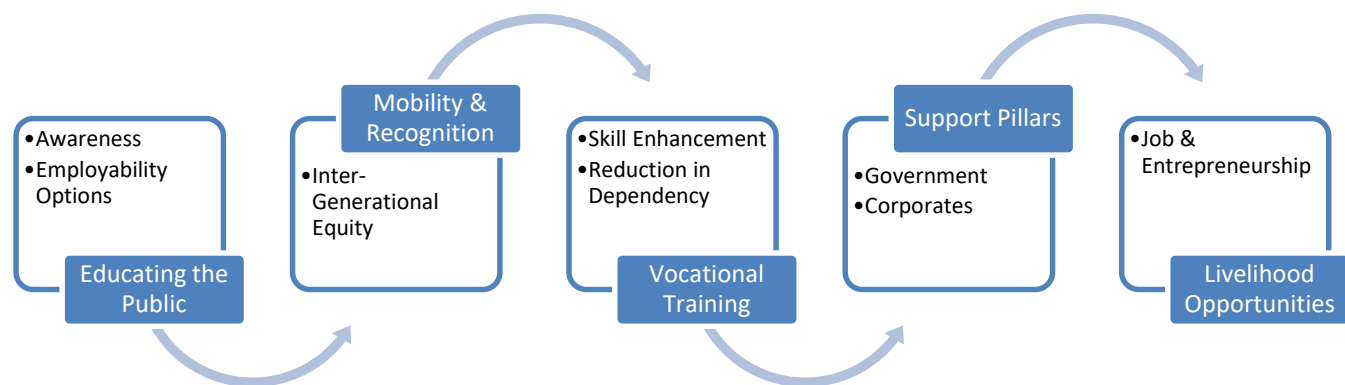
Young Indians must be prepared not just for domestic markets but also for the international labour markets which are in line with the PM's vision of Make in India, the skill capital of the world. Make in India is another major initiative to encourage manufacturing activities in India, especially the rural areas which has a tremendous potential to be an intriguing feature in manufacturing export activities of the country (e.g. handicrafts, handlooms, textiles, herbal products etc.). The Government has relaxed the FDI norms to encourage domestic and foreign companies to manufacture in India and contribute to the rise in GDP.

As per the report by Ministry of Labour & Employment of India, unemployment among rural youth in India is highest today since 1993-94. About 5% of the rural youth between 15-29 years remain unemployed. This is an alarming situation if the most energetic and productive generation of our country is being wasted

The Central Government on its part is leaving no stone unturned. The annual budget of 2017-18 allocated for employment generation, skill and livelihood is pegged at an approximate value of Rs.17, 000 Cr where the Ministry for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is allocated Rs.3000 Cr. Some of the other salient features in the budget relating to skill development are as follows:

1. PMKK (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra) is one of the biggest schemes and there are PMKK's currently in 60 districts and government plans to open PMKK's in more than 600 districts.
2. Pradhan Mantri kaushal Vikas Yojana is another flagship scheme of the government meant to skill youth pan India.
3. The government has planned to have 100 International Skill Centers to offer training for foreign placements.
4. SANKALP (Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion Program) to provide market relevant training to youth.
5. The next phase of Skill Straightening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE to be launched) at a cost of Rs. 2200 Cr which focuses on improving quality and market relevance of vocational training provided in ITIs and strengthen the apprenticeship programs through industry cluster approach.
6. A special scheme for increasing employment in leather, footwear, textile sectors is launched. Textile is in fact the 2nd largest employer in the country after agriculture with a current workforce of 33-35 million which is expected to increase to over 60-62 million by 2022.
7. Allocation of Rs.4500cr for Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana for promotion of skill development in rural areas.
8. The budget allocation for PM's employment generation program (PMEGP) has increased by 3 times.
9. For imparting new skills to the people in rural areas, mason training to be provided for over 5 lakh people by 2022 with an immediate target of 20000 by 2017-18.
10. In order to foster the emergence of technology which plays an important role in new age start-ups, high speed broadband is expected to be provided to over 1.5 lakh villages.
11. Apart from these, there is Aajeevika which is the skilling and placement initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) whose aim is to impart a specific set of knowledge and skills to rural youth without formal education and make them job ready.
12. The Ministry of Rural Development has been allocated Rs.1500 Cr from the yearly budget for its flagship scheme NRLM (National Rural Livelihood Mission) which trains unemployed youth below poverty line on various skills.
13. In Totality, 73 skill development schemes are implemented in 20 ministries.

Role of Skill Development Schemes in Youth Empowerment



Challenges in Skill Development Program Implementation

- Curriculum Development
- Program approval and validation
- Development of assessment tools
- Quality of infrastructure and faculty

- Career Advice
- Flow of Funds
- Establishing linkages with corporates for placement of skilled youth
- Research, Innovation, and Knowledge sharing
- Creating holistic learning environment

Perspective as an Outsider

Proper identification of skill challenges faced by people in rural areas, finding out what works in promoting and sustaining skill development in rural areas, enumerating the measures taken to boost employment in rural areas in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and discovering the skills which are foreseen to be in high demand in the coming years are some of the strategies which needs to be taken for integrated rural development. Skill development activities need to be done in a cost efficient way in order to have a sustainable development over a long term. It must be directed towards mainly improving the gender equality and social inclusion in rural areas. The private sector must also actively participate and should also introduce technology enabled skill development initiatives

Possible solutions to the above mentioned concerns would be to have government schools which add vocational training along with other subjects in earlier classes itself, use the school infrastructure for post school hours for training and skill development, and have incentives for industries to setup units in rural areas thus leveraging their resources

There is also a need to create synergies between partners of the skill eco-system where the stakeholders are responsible from the design part to the execution. They must complement each other rather than competing with each other at the operational level. Also the identification of the right training partner is an important aspect. Skill development initiatives must also dynamically align itself with the needs of the industry and work backwards to create training programs. There must be job creation in such a way that discourages migration to other places amongst the youngsters.

The existing labour laws also prove to be a menace for any start-up. With over 50 parliament acts and regulations governing employers in industry relation practice and a complex bureaucratic process, it is an imminent deterrent for any company wishing to set up shop in India. The Government must ensure a smooth and hassle free process for companies with regard to the legalities and modalities involved in initiating a start-up.

Frequent skill gap studies must also be conducted and the framework must be adapted and aligned to suit the existing trends and practices. With technological disruption in the air almost every day, it is but inevitable that we prepare our citizens for the jobs of tomorrow.

Key Suggestions:

1. The skill development programs must meet the demands and requirements of the current scenario. It must be relevant to needs and necessities of both, youth and corporates.
2. The programs should have key feature of adapting to the changing times.
3. The schemes should ideally be designed with a futuristic outlook and a model which can be scaled and adapted for the challenges ahead in the future.
4. It must be a coordinated and cooperative effort from the government, academia and the industry regarding designing the framework and pedagogy of study.
5. It must be holistic in its approach and thereby create unison between different sections of the society thereby mitigate social and gender stigma and practices.
6. Depending upon the natural resources available in a particular area/region, skill development initiatives and courses relevant to that resource utilization can be linked/framed so as to have perfect demand-supply ratio of workforce. This will also ensure that no migration activity happens between regions and that native individuals can find employment in their homeland itself.
7. Popularizing and propagating the idea of rural development among the youth by introducing “Rural development management” courses in educational institutions, conducting competitions and hackathons for the purpose of solving problems faced by rural areas through implementation of science and technology.
8. The key stakeholders like villagers and farmers should be talked to and brought on table on a regular basis regarding the frequent problems they face and the ways and methods in which it can be solved.

9. Conduct summits/conclaves for rural skill development involving all stakeholders for creating a common forum and platform where they can discuss the latest trends/practices followed, act as a knowledge sharing place where farmers and people in remote areas can be aware of standard practices followed and the initiatives taken by the government, complaints if any and take suggestions on how we can improve the scenario in the coming years. These conferences can be done region wise to facilitate the people living there.

10. The existing CSR activities of corporate companies need to be amended to include and allocate a major chunk of their fund for rural skill development activities by providing financial aid, adopting villages, conducting training sessions and educating the rural youth on relevant topics and practices etc.

Conclusion:

While the Government of India is hugely investing in skill development initiatives for the future, there is widespread concern among the industry and academia that the efforts may not be sufficient to avoid a skill scarcity in the future. The opportunity for India largely lies with skilling the youth in the country. Hence there is a need to align the efforts of the Government with the Industry that will pave way to successful implementation of the programs, thereby enabling the skilled manpower for the nation by 2020.

Skill development in India should envision the “Creation of an ecosystem of empowerment by skilling on a large scale at speed with high standards and promote a culture of innovation based entrepreneurship generating wealth and employment and ensuring sustainable livelihoods for all.”

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