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SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND UNEMPLOYABILITY IN INDIA: *A Discussion*

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Abstract: India's demographic dividend, characterized by a large and young population, presents both a significant opportunity and a formidable challenge. While this youthful workforce has the potential to drive rapid economic growth, it also necessitates a robust and effective skill development ecosystem to prevent widespread unemployment and to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving job market. This review paper delves into the intricate relationship between skill development initiatives and the persistent issue of unemployability in India, examining the underlying causes, current policies and programs, challenges faced, and potential solutions for harnessing the demographic dividend and fostering inclusive economic growth.

Key words- Skill Development, Unemployability, India, Demographic Dividend.

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of a nation depends upon the workforce of its nation. The workforce of the nation contributes in much better way when it is skilled in proper manner. The higher level of skill development leads to the higher level of economic development of a nation. Thus, the skill development contributes positively towards the economic development of a nation.

According to oxford dictionary, "skill refers to the ability to do something well or in better manner especially because of education, training and practices etc." According to the India skills report 2015, a mere 4.70 percent of the total workforce in India has experienced the transformative power of formal skill training, a stark contrast to 52 percent in the United States, 80 percent in Japan, and a remarkable 96 percent in South Korea. This revelation underscores India's struggle in skill development. Among aspiring candidates in the labor market, only 33 percent possess the requisite skills sought by employers. Yet, amidst these challenges, a glimmer of hope emerges: recent endeavors have borne fruit, with the latest data from the India Skills Report 2024 revealing that 51.25 percent of assessed youth are now deemed employable, equipped with the necessary skills. However, this positive note is tempered by the disheartening statistic that 48.75 percent of assessed youth remain unemployable, lacking vital skills, as highlighted in the same report.

Furthermore, the most recent PLFS Reports indicate that the estimated unemployment rate for youth aged 15-29 years stood at 12.9 percent, 12.4 percent, and 10 percent during the years 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23, respectively. This data reflects a declining trend in youth unemployment in India. Nonetheless, the nation's education system continues to grapple with the rapid

changes demanded by employers, often resulting in a discord between the skills job seekers possess and those that employers seek. Now we have two sources adding to the mismatch, often referred to as the "unemployability paradox," is characterized by the coexistence of high unemployment rates and a shortage of skilled labor (Chhaya, 2016). A larger share of unemployable youths is the result of education system while the rest share of unemployable youths is the result of skill development centers in India. This double coincidence is posing serious threat to India's vision 2047. This needs to be addressed seriously and required a holistic approach towards the studying the challenges, problems and steps taken so far and way forward in context of India. This paper seeks to illuminate the intricate tapestry of skill development in India, exploring the myriad challenges and opportunities that lie within the enigma of unemployability and unemployment.

II. UNEMPLOYABILITY PARADOX: A DEEPER DIVE

India faces a paradoxical situation: a large pool of unemployed individuals coexists with a shortage of skilled labor. This "unemployability paradox" arises from a discord between the talents held by the workforce and the abilities sought by the ever-evolving realm of employment. (Assan & Nalutaaya, 2018). Traditional education systems often fall short in equipping individuals with the practical skills and industry-relevant knowledge required in today's rapidly changing economic landscape. The unemployability paradox in India stems from a complex interplay of factors, including:

- **Curriculum Gaps:** Conventional educational frameworks frequently emphasize theoretical wisdom at the expense of practical abilities, rendering graduates unprepared for the challenges of today's professional realm (Kasman et al., 2018).
- **Lack of Industry Relevance:** Many educational programs lack alignment with industry needs, resulting in graduates lacking the specific skills and knowledge sought by employers (Gupta, et.al. 2020).
- **Quality of Training:** Concerns persist regarding the quality and relevance of vocational training programs. Many programs suffer from inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of qualified trainers, and outdated curricula (Farooqui, 2023).
- **Information Asymmetry:** Job seekers often lack information about available job opportunities and the required skill sets, while employers struggle to find suitable candidates.
- **Social Barriers:** Discrimination based on caste, gender, and religion can limit access to education and employment opportunities for certain segments of the population.

Many attempts have been made so far to address the above mentioned factors discussed under skill development initiatives.

III. SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Skill development is the art of unveiling the latent potential within an individual, guiding them to bridge the chasms of their skill gaps. These abilities are the very essence that empowers one to reach for the stars and weave intricate plans into reality. Skills manifest in diverse forms, such as Cognitive Skills—encompassing the fundamental arts of literacy and numeracy, the wisdom of applied knowledge, and the higher realms of reasoning and creativity. Then, there are Vocational and Technical Skills, where the mental and physical prowess harmonize to conquer specific tasks using tools and methodologies across various vocations. Lastly, Social and Behavioral Skills shine forth, illuminating the paths of collaboration, communication, and attentive listening. These dimensions interlace beautifully, allowing for the classification of skills into foundational, employability, and entrepreneurial realms, creating a rich tapestry of human capability.

IV. WAYS TO DEVELOP SKILLS

There are basically two ways to develop the skills, formal and informal respectively. The informal way of skill development comes through learning by practices without getting any certification of that skill. Such people don't get formal recognition of their skill, e.g. a boy becomes bike mechanic at the bike repairing shop. Another way of skill development is formal way. It requires training and learning by practices with a certification of that skill. Further, formal ways comprises of two methods Intervention and training methods and Games and simulation method (Costin, Y. et.al. 2018). Intervention and training method is a traditional tool for developing skills among the learners. It requires identifying the skill gap and consequently providing training to them. After successful completion of training, they are required to apply knowledge and skills in the real scenarios. On the other hands, games and simulation method is a modern tool of developing skills among the learners. In this method, the learners apply their skills and knowledge in virtual world scenario mirrors like real world. This method is very costly and cannot be afforded by each skill development centers. This is why most of skill development centers use traditional method for skill development.

V. CHALLENGES AND ROADBLOCKS IN SKILL DEVELOPMENT: CASE OF INDIA

Despite several initiatives, several challenges continue to hinder the effectiveness of skill development efforts in India:

- **Quality and Relevance of Training:** Ensuring the quality and relevance of training programs remains a major challenge. Many training providers lack the capacity to deliver high-quality training, and curricula often fail to keep pace with evolving industry needs. Many programs lack adequate infrastructure, qualified trainers, and updated curricula.
- **Reach and Accessibility:** Reaching marginalized communities and ensuring equitable access to skill development opportunities remains a challenge. Geographical disparities, social barriers, and financial constraints can limit participation for many individuals.
- **Industry Engagement:** Stronger collaboration between industry and training institutions is essential for ensuring that training programs align with industry demands and lead to gainful employment (Farooqui, 2023).
- **Assessment and Certification:** Robust assessment and certification mechanisms are vital for establishing the credibility of training programs and ensuring the quality of skilled individuals.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** To weave a tapestry of success, robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks are essential for tracing the impact of skill development endeavors and illuminating pathways for enhancement.
- **Skill Gap and Identification of the Gap:** In the vibrant landscape of India, a staggering chasm exists between the industrial demands and the skill sets possessed by the youth, honed through education and training.
- **Skills Mismatch in a Dynamic World:** The absence of meaningful interaction between industry and academia begets a discord, causing the skill sets imparted by educational institutions to fall short of employers' aspirations. Consequently, while many may be equipped with skills, the doors to employment remain closed.

- **Informal Workforce:** A staggering 80 percent of India's labor force dwells in the segment of informal sector. Researchers at the NCAER unveil a cycle of entrapment, where the informality of employment diminishes the motivation to pursue new skills.
- **Poor Quality of Skill Training:** Skill programs initiated by Government often falter, plagued by a lack of training centers, inadequate instruction, absence of certification, forced placements, scarcity of trainers, and a grim assurance of fair wages for the skilled.
- **Poor Industrial Linkage:** This disconnect leads to a profound misunderstanding of contemporary demands and trends, obstructing the alignment of curricula with the practical needs of the job market.
- **Absence of Curriculum Harmony:** The absence of a unified course curriculum casts shadows of uncertainty, rendering it challenging to draw comparisons between the offerings of diverse training institutes, thereby clouding students' understanding of the skills they shall acquire.

VI. SKILL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES: A MULTIFACETED APPROACH

Recognizing the critical need for skill development, the Indian government has launched several initiatives aimed at bridging the skill gap and enhancing employability. These programs encompass a wide range of sectors, from traditional crafts to cutting-edge technologies and a variety of approaches. Some of the notable initiatives of government include:

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** This esteemed initiative seeks to empower the Indian youth with industry-relevant skill training, paving the way for enhanced livelihoods. It emphasizes short-term training courses finely attuned to the needs of various industries.
- **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC):** A beacon in the realm of skill enhancement, the NSDC collaborates with training partners, industry leaders, and vocational providers to amplify skill development endeavors. It serves as a catalyst, nurturing public-private partnerships, championing innovative training models, and offering financial support to private training entities.
- **National Skill Development Mission (NSDM):** With a vision to forge a comprehensive implementation framework, this mission aspires to deliver quality short and long-term skill development opportunities, fostering productive employment and career growth that aligns with the ambitions of aspiring trainees. It aims to empower millions of youth across various sectors, including manufacturing, construction, healthcare, tourism, and information technology.
- **Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP):** This initiative endeavors to fortify institutional frameworks for skill development, broadening access to market-relevant and quality training for young minds throughout the nation.
- **National Migration Policy (NMP):** The government is dedicated to crafting a NMP that safeguards the migrant worker's rights, facilitating their mobility and ensuring access to essential resources.

- **Sector Skill Councils:** These industry-led councils are tasked with the creation of occupational standards, curricula, and assessment frameworks tailored to specific sectors, ensuring a harmonious connection between training programs and industry demands.
- **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme:** NAPS encourages employers to embrace apprentices, providing them with hands-on training and invaluable practical experience, thus nurturing the next generation of skilled professionals.
- **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana:** This program focuses on providing skill training and placement opportunities to rural youth, with a particular emphasis on marginalized communities.

VII. WAYS FORWARD

- **Developing Skill Mapping Database:** There should be an effort to develop a database of skill mapping so that the skill mismatch problem is reduced to a great extent in the market. Such efforts will help the industry to access out the people bearing such skills required by them.
- **Empowering the Workforce through Upskilling and Reskilling:** The ascent of transformative technologies—such as AI, automation, robotics, and analytics—has ignited an insatiable demand for professionals equipped with cutting-edge skills.
- **Collaboration Among Government, Academia, and the Corporate Sector:** This partnership will forge and implement holistic skill development programs, nurture employee growth, and cultivate a talent reservoir tailored to industry needs.
- **Advocating for Vocational Education and Apprenticeship Programs:** These initiatives will establish a consistent flow of skilled labor. By collaborating with educational institutions and industry sages, the curriculum can be finely attuned to the infrastructure sector's specific demands.
- **Elevating the Consultancy Realm:** This domain holds the key to specialized wisdom. Welcoming experienced professionals into consulting roles will enhance the efficiency and excellence of projects.
- **Guidance for Careers:** Instituting career counseling in secondary schools will grant students early glimpses into vocational education, illuminating their future journeys.
- **Cultivating Awareness:** Nurturing awareness and engaging students with groundbreaking technologies such as automation, Artificial Intelligence, data analytics, and robotics will spark their imagination.
- **Harmonizing Distance and Traditional Education:** This strategy will provide flexibility and expand access for learners of varied backgrounds, addressing their distinct preferences and needs.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The India Skills Report 2024 shines a brilliant light on the strides made in employability, the transformative essence of AI, and the challenges that persist in skill development. It calls forth a crucial rallying cry for collective action and proactive measures to bridge the skill chasm, equipping the workforce for the ever-

evolving and dynamic landscape of the job market. There is still a need for strong deployment of AI driven technology for fastening the real time assessment of skilled youths.

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