

Revamping India's Workforce with the Skill India Mission

Dr. Achinta Kr. Saikia*

Associate Professor, Department of Economics, North Lakhimpur College

Abstract – Skills and knowledge drive economic growth and social development of a country. Nations with higher levels and better standards of skilled workforce can deal with challenges and opportunities in the domestic and global market. India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world and with one of the youngest work force, it has a huge potential demographic dividend. However, the quality of work force is not consistent with industry requirements so that are number of unfilled job requirements and simultaneous unemployment. In order to bridge this gap, there is a need to skill the people to increase their productivity and employability. The Skill India Mission, launched in 2015, aims to provide vocational training to the youth with emphasis on certification to increase their overall employability and earnings. This paper discusses the main features of the mission and examines its functioning, a year into its roll out, using published reports from government agencies, media and newspapers. It analyses the need for such programmes to accentuate the demographic dividend India currently has.

Keywords – Skill, Schemes, Demographic Dividend, Training, Youth, Employment.

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INTRODUCTION

India is the second most populous country in the world with a population pyramid showing a huge demographic dividend. However, harnessing this demographic dividend is a challenge for the country given the current state of its workforce. It has been widely recognized that India needs to revamp its workforce making it consistent with industry requirements in order to increase employment and secondary and tertiary sector with skilled workers. While the government has initiated a number of programmes to encourage skill development, a National Skill Development Policy was formulated in 2009. Following it, a National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship was launched in 2015. The National Skill India Mission popularly called the "Skill India Mission" was officially launched by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 15 July 2015 with the target to train over 40 crore people in India in different skills by 2022. The mission aims at vocational training and certification for the better living condition or standard of living of the people in the country. It is an umbrella scheme overseeing various skilling schemes and programmes. The chief objective is to empower the youth with different skills that will help them getting jobs in the desired sector and enhance their productivity.

NEED FOR A SKILL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The urgent need for a skill development policy is clearly evident from the dichotomy between demand

and supply of labour in the country. Data from 66th and 68th round of NSSO suggest that of the estimated 487 million work force, around 57% is in the non-farm sector. This works out to around 256.72 million non-farm workers of which only 5.4% are estimated to be formally trained and skilled. The remaining 241.86 million are either non-skilled or skilled through non-formal channels. The need to highlight this information is that having a formal degree or certification provides the holder a certain legitimacy in the eyes of the employer who is then willing to pay a higher price for use of services. In the absence of such certification most workers like electricians, plumbers, carpenters etc. are forced to work at much lower rates than they could have otherwise charged. Skill provision including certification can help these people.

A study 'The Human Resource and Skill Requirement Reports' by the NSDC over 2010-14 has shown that by 2022 there will be a requirement of 109.73 million skilled workers in twenty-four key sectors. There is a cogent need to develop an environment of encouraging and harnessing the potential of the Indian workforce, keeping in mind that every year at an additional 16.16 million persons will enter the workforce. Employment opportunities are expected to increase from 461.1 million in 2013 to 581.9 million in 2022. Various industries like infrastructure, auto and auto construction, building & construction, textile & clothing, transport, retail, healthcare, food processing, education and other development

services, real estate services are expected to be the biggest generators of demand for skilled labour.

Only around 10% of the workforce currently gets any skill training in India which is much lower than countries like Germany, Japan and South Korea. This has led to a situation where there are numerous vacant high- skilled openings in construction, refineries etc. while there are millions of unemployed with traditional education who are unfit for these jobs.

As the country moves from being an agrarian economy to a knowledge-based industrial and technological hub, it is imperative to train people simultaneously. This will help them move towards higher paying jobs in the manufacturing and services sector. It will also help augment value addition in agricultural sector. These huge numbers underscore the need to develop a proper environment where skilling can be nurtured and made accessible to diverse sections of the population.

NATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT MISSION

The skill development policy is based on two constituents: A skill aspect and an entrepreneurship aspect. The skill aspect targets the issues behind low skill development such as low aspirational value, divergence between formal education and basic skilling, ignorance or overlooking the actual outcomes of existing programmes, lack of training infrastructure and trainers.

The entrepreneurship component concentrates on developing an entrepreneurial environment in the country. Recognising the challenges faced by the self-employed, the policy on skill development and entrepreneurship aims to create a conducive environment for business undertakers by supporting them in terms of credit and market linkages, improving ease of doing business, foster innovation and create a social environment promoting entrepreneurship among the youth. The needs of disadvantaged groups such as women, socially or geographically marginalized communities are specially considered under the policy.

With a view to enact the Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, the National Skill Development mission aims to *converge, coordinate implement and monitor skilling activities* across India. The Mission comprises a three-tier institutional structure starting with the Governing Council at the Centre to the various Development Councils at national and state level to provide policy guidance, review and monitor overall progress and achievement of Mission objectives, ensure implementation as per the objectives.

Earlier there were a number of departments, schemes and programmes aimed at skill development many of which overlapped each other in terms of objective or coverage. The Mission being an umbrella body seeks

to reduce repetition while simultaneously ensure better coverage and coordination.

The mission intends to create opportunities for the development of talent in Indian youth. It aims to develop those sectors which are already under some skill development programme as well as recognize new sectors for this. The chief objective is to provide market-relevant skills training to more than 40 crore Indians making them more employable in the coming few years.

SALIENT FEATURES OF SKILL INDIA MISSION

The 2015 policy on Skill development and Entrepreneurship focusses on improving the employability as well as encouraging a spirit of entrepreneurship among the Indian youth. Along with modern domains like real estate, tourism, banking, gems and jewelry, logistics, construction etc., traditional sources of employment viz. weaving, carpentry, welding, masonry, smithy, nursing are also promoted. This will not only provide employment to large number of people but will also encourage a healthy respect for these occupations.

The Skill India Mission aims to improve the rural employment scenario. It also aims to create a workforce of international standards capable of working in any condition abroad.

The various schemes and training programmes running in the country had varying levels of standards. This caused a lot of confusion regarding the capability of trainees outside their home environment. The Skill India Mission aims to bring about standardisation of skills through having uniform national standards comparable to international norms.

CHALLENGES IN REVAMPING WORKFORCE:

The biggest issue faced by policymakers and programme analysts has been the general perception of the people against many jobs considered menial. Public opinion holds that vocational training and degree implies lack of capability in the individual to complete a more traditional form of education. Hence people look down upon vocational courses.

Another obstacle in way of restructuring India's workforce is the low respect given to physical labour. Until dignity of labour is recognized, there will remain a tendency to look down on any work involving a more hands-on approach. This has negative impact on the self-employment scene also

as people will prefer working for low wages than risk setting up their own business.

There is a tendency even among business owners to treat skilled and unskilled workers at par. This disincentivizes the skilled worker reducing their efficiency and discourages others from going in for skill enhancement trainings.

Vocational training is not aligned with requirements of industry. This is a huge hurdle in providing a skilled workforce attuned to the needs of a rapidly developing economy.

CONCLUSION

The Skill India Mission fulfills the essential need of an umbrella authority encompassing a number of schemes and programmes in different areas of the country targeting specific weaknesses in order to help the country's youth become skilled and trained. It is a collection of diverse schemes like National Skill Development Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna, India Skill Development Service, Skill Loan Scheme and Pradhan Mantri Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan. The demographic dividend of the country can only be realised through a concerted effort to increase the skill level of the population and provide opportunities for skill enhancement through training and certification. Without investing in infrastructure that enables this kind of training and development, India is in danger of losing out on its demographic dividend which is only till 2040.

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Corresponding Author

Dr. Achinta Kr. Saikia*

Associate Professor, Department of Economics,
North Lakhimpur College