

The Agenda for Youth Empowerment through Market-Relevant Skill Training: A case study of Skill India Mission

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Abstract

India's youth demographic makes up one-fifth of the world's population and empowering them is crucial for the country's future success. To become a US \$5 trillion economy, the Government needs to develop tailor-made strategies, policies and schemes that maximize the potential of the youth population. The Skill India Mission is one such scheme that aims to empower youth by providing necessary training and skills for the job market. However, the scheme's implementation has been plagued by various challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, low awareness, lack of quality trainers and limited industry participation.

This study aims to determine the need for the Skill India Mission scheme, identify the impediments in its implementation and to propose resolutions to the problems. The study concludes that the Skill India Mission is necessary for India's economic growth and social development. Government can address the challenges of implementing the scheme by improving infrastructure, increasing industry participation and enhancing awareness.

Keywords: India, Youth demographic, Skill training, Skill-India mission, Industry participation, Job-market

Introduction

The academic objective of this research study is to analyse the challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of the Skill India Mission scheme, which aims to empower India's youth population with job-relevant skills. The study intends to identify the impediments that hinder the scheme's successful implementation to propose solutions to address these challenges and to highlight the significance of this scheme in realizing India's ambitious economic goals. The research aims to provide insights into effective policy-making and implementation strategies that can lead to the empowerment of India's youth and foster the country's economic and social development.

Smart governance is crucial to this process, with transparency, accountability and effective regulatory mechanisms being essential to empower young people with inspiring ideas and opportunities to achieve their potential. Effective coordination between policy and sectors, with an

emphasis on market-relevant skill training, quality administration and anti-corruption measures, is necessary to ensure that public resources are used effectively and youth empowerment is achieved in letter and spirit.

Determinants of empowerment

- Empowerment is a complex construct influenced by agency, access to resources and opportunity structures. The ability to exercise agency is closely linked to individual or collective access to resources, which can include both tangible and intangible assets such as material and financial resources, education, skills, knowledge, expertise and participation in social networks. The opportunity structures of employment which comprise framing institutions, rules, norms, social relationships and power dynamics, further shape and constrain agency and access to resources⁶.
- Empowerment processes are believed to occur through changes along four different pathways which allow for a more structured understanding of change processes². Therefore, by analysing empowerment from this perspective, it is possible to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms that drive positive change.

(a) The material pathway involves changes in access to and controls over material resources reducing poverty in India. Changes in income, fulfilment of basic needs and earning capacities are included here.

(b) The perpetual pathway encompasses changes in the self-perception e.g. self-esteem, self-confidence, diversifying the existing skill development programmes) as well as changes in how self-employed and skilled workforce are perceived by others (e.g. respect, recognition)

(c) Changes in the level of knowledge, skills and awareness of the wider environment are associated with the cognitive pathway.

(d) The relational pathway considers changes relating to social interaction (e.g. decision-making, investment power, participation and social acceptability wherein vocational courses are looked down upon and this needs to change).

Although these four pathways are listed here separately for conceptual clarity, it is important to note that these pathways are related to one another and mutually affect one another. Or, to put it differently, empowerment processes are expected to occur through changes in different aspects

along various pathways. The numerous aspects of change can be thought of as ingredients for empowerment.¹

Obstacles in skill-development in India

As of the 2014 report, India's formally skilled workforce is just 2%. Additionally, there is a huge problem of employability among the country's educated workforce. Lack of vocational or professional skills makes it difficult for the youth to adapt to changing demands and technologies of the marketplace. The high level of unemployment is due to the failure to get jobs and also due to a lack of competency and training. Casual workers, who constitute about 90% of the labour force, are poorly skilled as they do not get adequate training. Current vocational training programmes do not meet their demands. Another factor that acts as an obstacle to skill development in India is the myriad of labour laws. There is a problem with the lack of infrastructure in the current training institutes.

Another problem is the poor quality of trainers available. Students trained by such trainers are not employable in the industry. Off late there has been a big issue with the standardisation of skills in the country. New schemes are designed to resolve this issue by having nationwide standards that also stand up to international benchmarks.

In the background of various issues, problems, challenges and multiple factors affecting the process of empowering youth, the popular government scheme "Skill India Mission" creates opportunities and space for the development of talents and is aimed at developing those sectors which have been put under skill development for the last many years and also to recognize new sectors for skill development assumes greater importance.

Economic empowerment and economic development are closely related. There is a bi-directional relationship between economic development and youth empowerment. Empowerment concerning youth can be defined as "improving the ability of youth to access the constituents of development – in particular health, skill-training, learning opportunities, rights and political participation". Skill training has a direct correlation with youth empowerment at large.

Youth's right to health care, right to education, right to employment, freedom to practice any profession, freedom of speech and expression and rights to information and technology come under a single gamut, affecting the entire process of empowerment of youth in various fields, yet there are disturbing trends of forced labour, discrimination on basis of caste in one's right to choose a profession, sexual and gender-based violence, lack of opportunities, lack of participation of youth in country's politics and policy-making processes. All have been reported on a large scale from across the nation. Here the role of government comes into the picture. Today's youth is tomorrow's adults forming society. Therefore, there is an acute need to care for and do

the needful for their empowerment since their adolescence itself.

The state is supposed to ensure not only opportunity creation and skill training of the youth but also to create a conducive environment where they are at peace and bliss through various measures and support systems aimed for their growth, as a mark of indicator of national development at large which ultimately revolves around effective policies, pro-youth programmes calling for its implementation through the capacity-building of the institutions. Various new schemes have been launched, out of which Skill India Mission, seems to be the most effective in handling the challenges of major issues related to youth's lives making headway through.

Skill India Mission

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has been formed in the year 2014 with the responsibility to ensure the implementation of skill development programmes in the country under the umbrella scheme Skill India Mission launched in 2015. Considering the diversity in India, some notable sub-schemes and interventions like the National Skill Development Mission (NSDM), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Indian Skill Development Service (ISDS), National Policy for Skill Development and entrepreneurship, Skill loan scheme and many other schemes have been undertaken for supporting the advancement of skill development domain in India. All of these have been focused on the agenda that would enable the citizens to enhance their contribution to nation-building.

The chief objective is to empower the youth of the country with adequate skill sets that will enable their employment in relevant sectors and also to improve productivity. The vision of Skill India Mission for 2025 adopts an ecosystem-enabling lens to transition India to a high-skills equilibrium and help create positive outcomes for individuals, enterprises and the economy. The three outcomes to be achieved through vision are:

- Enable individual economic gains and social mobility;
- Create a skills market that is learner-centric and demand-driven and
- Facilitate aspirational employment and entrepreneurship generation, improve overall productivity for enterprises and catalyse economic growth.⁸

The Skill India Mission has several features that make it more effective than previous skill development missions. It focuses on improving youth employability and encouraging entrepreneurship. The scheme offers training and support for traditional types of employment like weavers, cobblers, carpenters, welders, masons, blacksmiths, nurses etc. New domains will also be emphasized such as real estate, transportation, construction, gem industry, textiles, banking,

jewellery designing, tourism and other sectors where the level of skill is inadequate. Training will be of international standards to cater to demand abroad. Customized need-based programs will be started for specific age groups. The course methodology will be innovative involving games, brainstorming sessions and case studies. Recent initiatives to implement these strategies have been launched such as:

- (a) Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 2.0 – launched in 2015 to encourage and promote skill development in the country by providing free short duration skill training and incentivizing this by providing monetary rewards to youth for skill certification. After the successful implementation of pilot PMKVY (2015-16), PMKVY 2016-20 was launched by scaling up both in terms of sector and geography and by greater alignment with other missions of Government of India like Make in India, Digital India, Swachh Bharat etc. The scheme was aligned to Common Cost Norms and had a total budgetary outlay of Rs 12000 Crores.¹⁰
- (b) Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK) – To make vocational training aspirational so as to transform India into the skill capital of the world. The MSDE has established visible and aspirational Model Training Centres (MTCs) in every district of the country.
- (c) India International Skill Centres – In order to bridge the global shortage of labour force in the coming years by reaping the demographic dividend of young Indian labour force, Indian International Skill centres are set up to provide skill training and certification benchmarked to international standards.

The first part of the Skill India mission comprises implementing of curriculum-based skill training courses wherein trainees would gain certifications and endorsements from industry-recognized learning centres.⁷ Through this initiative, the Government aims to train more than 400 million people in the country in various skills by 2023. Some of these key skills are:

- **Apprenticeship training-** This programme was launched to enhance apprenticeship and to provide new opportunities in the country by providing post-education job training to graduate/diploma holders in engineering.
- **Technical international training programme (TITP)** – This programme encourages international cooperation by facilitating transfer of skills, technology and expertise among the participating countries and thereby, assisting in developing human resources. The program provides opportunities to students for professional development courses in Japan's industrial society for a set period (3-5 years).
- **Online skilling** – The 'e-Skill' India portal links B2C e-learning sites that operate digitally and build & source e-learning content.

The second part of this scheme revolves around incorporating skill-based learning in school curriculum,

creating opportunities for both long and short-term skill training and employment.

Since implementation, the mission has helped boost employment. According to data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), unemployment rate dropped to 6.5% in January 2021 from 9.1% in December 2020, while the employment rate increased to 37.9% in January 2021 from 36.9% in December 2020.³

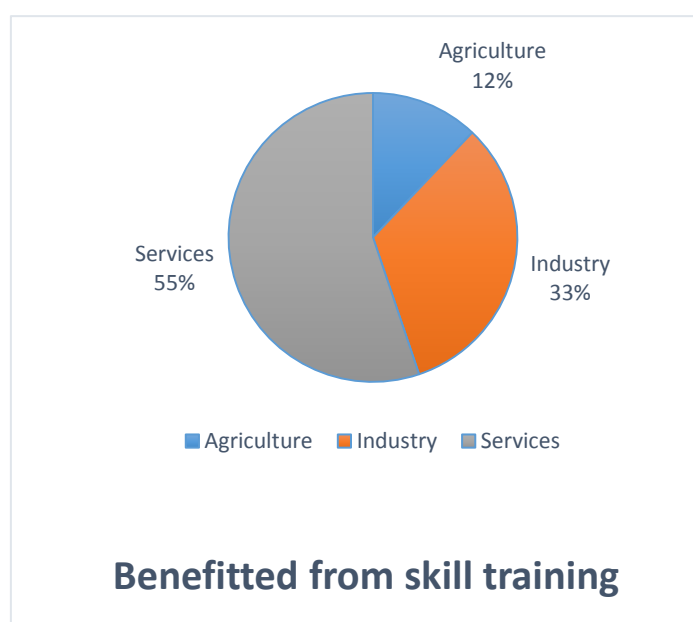
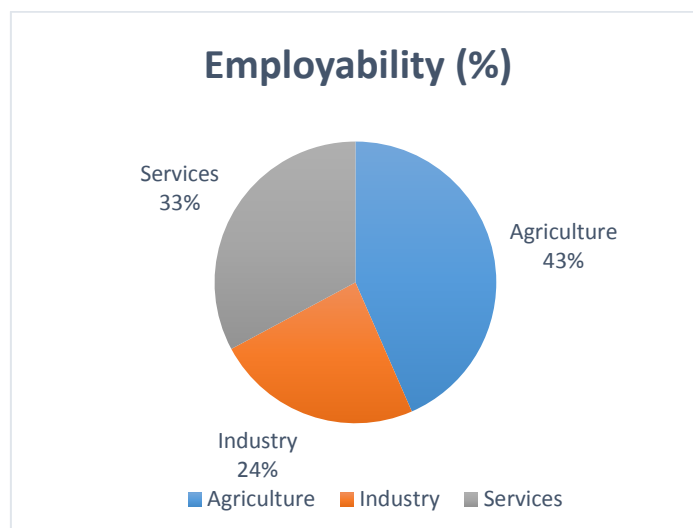
The third part of this report emphasizes the need to encourage the effective participation of youth in society at grass-root level. In order to address this need, district administrations have creatively demonstrated community-level activities that raise awareness about promoting skill-learning and market-relevant education approach. Initiatives under National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), a key department under MSDE as a public-private participation company, provide training capacities via the NSDC partner ecosystem in 29 States and 4 Union territories. There is at least one NSDC partner centre in 560 districts (an average of seven centres per district). These centres work as not-for-profit public limited company aimed to catalyse India's skill landscape. The organisation provides funding to build scalable and profitable vocational training initiatives. The understanding of the NSDC provides viability which would make every sector attractive to private sector.⁴

Case study

The case study was carried out on a small-scale by interviewing to get first-hand perspectives from people below the age of 25, people in the age group of 20-29 employed in private sector, youth working in unorganized sector and policy experts; to corroborate some of the findings from prior studies on the topic and at the same time to offer some new insights. The proportion of people employed in agriculture sector is high in India (figure 1) whereas the impact of skill training programs on agriculture sector is low (figure 2). People working in industry and services have benefitted from the program.

The skilling initiative aims to improve earnings and employability prospects for urban and rural youth. It is a huge investment and it has good intentions. Moreover, after completing the programs, these trainees indicated that they did not work since they ended up pursuing further education. This signals that the process of selecting participants is weak and needs strengthening. The main recommendation is to focus on improving the quality and relevance of training by identifying trades and skills that employers demand, increasing apprenticeships, conducting better screening of candidates, standardizing certificates and providing support after the training for a period of six months to a year.⁵ Most importantly, both Central and State. Governments have a critical role to play in spreading awareness about these skilling initiatives. This could come in the form of

campaigns to target audiences, engaging with NGOs and strengthening the NSDC.⁹



Conclusion

The Skill India Mission is a comprehensive and innovative scheme that aims to empower India's youth by providing them with the necessary skills and training to succeed in a rapidly changing world. The current administration has taken several steps to address looming labour market challenges. In addition, some recommendations are suggested in the short, medium and long run to create jobs and prepare the workforce for future disruptions:

- Skill India mission has to connect skilling initiatives with private sector.

- Improving the communication and coordination of industry skilling initiatives.
- Continuing efforts to foster entrepreneurship and a start-up ecosystem.

By recognizing and nurturing the potential of India's vast young population, the scheme seeks to ensure not only economic independence but also social, participative and skill development to live a dignified life. With the mission extended to every State in the Nation, it is poised to achieve its goals in the near future and help India become a global leader in skilled human resources.

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