

# Skill Development Programs in India- Emerging tool to address sustainable human development

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**Abstract:** India is amongst the youngest nations of the world as it is having an average age of 29 years. This is a phase where the country is enjoying demographic dividend at the same time facing challenges to meet the aspirations of its growing youth population. On the economic front, markets are far more dynamic as they are changing with every fraction of second. Job markets are no more predictable as what is successful today becomes obsolete in the near future. Hence, in order to address the need of changing times, Government of India has launched skill development initiative in a big way. Skill Development is one of the most important agenda for the Government of India at this point of time. The nation is well aware of the fact that for a sustainable human development, skilling the youth is the key. Therefore, a dedicated Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has been setup in November 2014 which is now a full grown ministry. Not only this, there are other key Central Ministries which are contributing in skilling its youth in a significant way. There are departments which are addressing the skill development needs of different target audience such as rural youth, urban youth, underprivileged sections of the society, women etc.

Indian Government is playing a major role to skill, upskill and re-skill its young and middle aged population so as to prepare a nation which is future ready. It has emerged as a funding agency which has infused large amount of monies so as to invest in the future of its young population. At the same time, it is attempting hard to regulate the quality aspect through setting up of regulatory machinery for skill development initiatives in the country. The implementation is being done under close watch of the Government so as to ensure that skill development becomes a major turning point of Indian youth in the coming times.

There is no two opinion that India being so diverse and big is facing a different set of challenges in meeting the skill development needs of its nation. At one place where diversity creates opportunities for number of skilling areas however, maintaining standardisation becomes a problem. Therefore, India's flagship program of skill development is a case in itself which other countries can refer and learn. There are success stories as well as lessons from which fellow countries can re-define their initiatives to offer sustainable human development.

**Keywords:** Re-skill, Regulatory Machinery, Skill Development, Upskill, Skill India

## Introduction

India is amongst one of such countries which is witnessing a demographic dividend with an average age of 29 years. India's demographic composition will have a significant impact on the country's economic and strategic capabilities. In the times to come, working age population of the country will be far in excess of those who will no longer be able to work. At the same time, industries are changing at a fast pace which is drastically affecting the labour force market dynamics. This raises a concern for need of sustainable human development.

Skill development initiative of Government of India can be mapped as an emerging tool working towards achieving national goal. Over the past few years, changes in the macro environment and the experiences gained through implementation of various skill development programmes in the country have necessitated changes in our approach towards skill development. **Skill India programme** was echoed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister as need of the hour for the country. Accordingly, various administrative and institutional changes have taken place in the skill

development landscape of the country. The programme envisions and lays the foundation to make India the ‘Skill Capital’ of the world, and emerge as a driver for other major initiatives such as Make in India.

Skill India initiative aims to address the employability issue by initiating a multi-skills development programme in a mission mode with focus on job creation and entrepreneurship, in both rural and urban areas covering all socio-economic groups of the population. It is an integral part of the Government's policy of “Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas” and its commitment to overall human resource development to take advantage of the demographic profile of our country's population in the coming decades. Thereby strongly leading to achieving some of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

### **Need to address sustainable human development goals**

Sustainable development has emerged as an acceptable framework for countries world over for effective policy designing and implementation. In order to address global challenges faced by nations at large, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup> were prepared with a view to tackle issues in a sustainable manner. There are 17 SDGs which lists out the anticipated goals for the world. Out of the 17 SDGs, Goal No. 4 and Goal No. 8 can be directly linked to the aspect of human development goals. The two goals are as under:

*Goal 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”*

*Goal 8: “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”*

Goal 4 primarily<sup>2</sup> advocates for the need of quality education and promotion of lifelong learning. At the same time India's skill development policy 2015 and flagship schemes promotes lifelong learning of which quality assurance is one of the main pillars. At the same time, Goal 8 talks about sustained, inclusive economic growth with an emphasis on productive employment and work for all. This can be clearly linked to the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister and the government to make India the skill capital of the world. The way Indian government has laid focus upon making skill development as an integral part of every initiative and bringing skill development as a cross cutting policy emphasis signifies the effort towards sustainable human development.

Skill development is critical not only to meet the aspirations of the youth, but also for ensuring economic growth of the country. Skill India Programme<sup>3</sup> was launched in a mission mode with an effort to develop the skills that industry needs to become more productive and competitive in the global market. The Hon'ble Prime Minister of the country heads the National Skill Mission in India.

The government is taking all efforts to make Skill Development an integral part of all government schemes. Instead of having only a few schemes of the Govt. of India which are meant for skill development, the aim is to weave skill development agenda an integral part of all schemes. For instance, the various other Central ministries such as Agriculture, Road and Transport Ministry and Ministry of Minority Affairs (which basically works for the upliftment of minorities in the country) are successfully imparting skill development trainings in close collaboration with skill development ministry. This ensures meeting the sectoral skilling need and making youth ready as per the requirement of a particular sector.

### **Skill development as an emerging tool for sustainable human development goals**

The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship has been created in November 2014 as a dedicated ministry to coordinate the skill development efforts of Central Ministries/Departments and States and all other stakeholders to catalyze the setting-up of large scale, for-profit sustainable vocational institutions in the country, by encouraging private sector participation through providing low-cost funding for creation of training capacity. Under the aegis of Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, multi-skills development programmes are run through a network of full-fledged organisations.

To begin with the Ministry has undertaken some key steps to strengthen the skilling ecosystem which are as under:

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<sup>1</sup> Gaffney. Owen (2014), Sustainable Development Goals Improving human and planetary wellbeing, *Global Change*, Issue 82, May 2014

<sup>3</sup> National Skill Development Mission A Framework for Implementation, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India- <https://www.msde.gov.in/assets/images/Mission%20booklet.pdf>

- a. **An Outcomes-based approach to Skill Development** – All skill development schemes of the Government of India focus on outcomes, and performance measurement in terms of percentage of persons actually placed in wage or self-employment.
- b. **Rationalization of the various schemes of the Government of India** – while difference in durations, costs etc. are valid if these are on account of the geographical or differences in the socio-economic background of the beneficiaries, most schemes of the Government of India had different norms which were not so justified, and created problems at the implementation level. However, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship issued Common Cost Norm<sup>4</sup> notification to bring standardization across all skill development programs.
- c. **Amendments in the Apprentices Act, 1961** – Despite the enormous size of the Indian economy, it is observed very few trade apprentices are engaged by the industry. Apprenticeship is recognized as one of the most effective ways to train people, but this was not happening due to the anachronistic Apprentices Act. This led to the need to bring much needed amendments so as to have a more collaborative approach with industry whereby apprenticeships can become a major source of skilling<sup>5</sup>. Taking a step forward, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship launched National Apprentices Promotion Schemes (NAPS) to provide financial support to the industries engaging apprentices under the Apprentices Act, 1961.
- d. **Strengthening Skill Development Structure in States:** Under the first National Policy on Skill Development, 2009, State Governments were advised to set-up State Level Missions for Skill Development to provide inter-sectoral coordination and an integrated approach to skill development. Most States have set up State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs) but faced a challenge of limited clarity on roles, multiple responsibility and lack of sufficient resources and handholding. The issue has been well addressed by the ministry and now major part of the skilling schemes is imparted with effective support of State Skill Development Missions.
- e. **Engaging with the Corporate and Private Sectors** – The private sector is an essential partner in the skill development agenda, and to boost the industry engagement 39 Sector Skill Councils have been set up using funds provided by the Government of India through the National Skill Development Corporation. The SSCs are industry-led bodies and are required to bring the industry viewpoint to bear upon the Government's skill development efforts, so that these are relevant to the needs of the industry.
- f. **Soft Skills and entrepreneurship component integrated into all Skill Development Programmes-** Language, computer literacy and financial literacy skills are made an integral part of all skill development programmes. These are coupled with soft skills that will teach the trainees the behavioural and inter-personal skills required in any organization. Entrepreneurial skills are also being imparted to enable youth to set up their own enterprises and generate more employment opportunities.

On the implementation front, skilling in the country is imparted broadly under the two verticals, long term skilling and short term skilling (STT). A nation-wide strong network of Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) caters to the demand of long term skilling imparting courses from 6 months to 2 years of duration. While a major flagship scheme Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana routed through a National Skill Development Corporation, a public private partnership and State Skill Development Missions, respective state government implements short term trainings to youth of the country.

India is a large country with diverse and various regional skillsets. A large number of workers in the unorganized sector have acquired skills through experience or other non-formal learning channels. However, due to lack of formal certification, they were not able to derive proper market value for their services. This issue has been well addressed under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) component of short term training under PMKVY scheme. RPL trainings are conducted for a competency-based assessment and certification, and providing formal certification to such persons could help them move into the formal sector jobs or access better paying opportunities.

### **Challenges for skilling as enabler to sustainable human development**

Although skill development has been a major thrust area for Government of India, there are series of challenges which hampers the efforts. Being a large country, the mobilization of candidates willing to undergo skill development programmes is one of the major problems cited. Studies have shown that lack of awareness is a major reason for the

<sup>4</sup> The Gazette of India, August 8, 2015, (Sravana 17, 1937),

<https://www.msde.gov.in/assets/images/Notification/Common%20Norms%20Notification.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Gayithri, Tantri & Rajasekhar (2019), A Critical Review of Apprenticeship Policy in India, Working Paper Series, The Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, 2019

relatively poor response to skill development opportunities. Opportunities for skill development and the benefits of the same need to be made known to people living in all parts of the country. One of the challenge at hand is to excite and engage the youth of the country to participate without inhibitions, hence delivery of skills must be decentralized to meet the local aspirations, demand and conditions.

### Way forward for skilling as an effective tool for sustainable human development

Some of the suggestive measures which can be undertaken to address the challenges and boosting skill development efforts for sustainable human development are as under:

- a. **Leveraging technology:** Despite various technological platforms which are existing already in the skilling space, there is a need to create mass coverage of the youth population through effective usage of technological platforms. Innovative technological interfaces can emerge as a creative platforms to address the sustainable human development goals.
- b. **Targeted approach to creation of Capacity:** To create a mass impact it is essential to rope in all players in this initiative. This involves identifying and working closely with the various Ministries which do not have any specific skill development schemes like mining, power, railways, coal etc.
- c. **Multi-skill requirements of the MSME Sector:** The MSME sector continues to employ a very large part of our non-farm workforce. As the MSME units tend to have a small number of employees, they need persons with multiple skills. There is a need to identify the group of skills that each group of the MSME units needs, and design programmes to meet these multi-skilling requirements. Promoting small and medium enterprises are also linked with other SDGs, hence strengthening them can also help in achieving other goals.
- d. **Market research and devising training curriculum in important sectors:** The sector needs dynamic research and pilot projects to upgrade the quality of training and curriculum on a regular basis and ensure that the upgradation is in sync with the levels of the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). There is a need to identify specific sectors that need rigorous research. Research based trainings and skilling can really be a focal point for meeting the need of long term human resource development.
- e. **Industry-Institute Linkage through wider coverage:** The linkage between Industry and Academia should not be limited to academic system at the lower end. The scope of this linkage should be widened to cover the entire education system including university, vocational and technical education.
- f. **Focus on apprenticeship:** With a highly demand-driven labour market, apprenticeship with industries is an important way forward. This will help reduce the disconnect between industry and vocational training centres as well as school education and vocational training, which has led to the training being less relevant to industry's needs, resulting in further alienating students from the vocational stream.

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