

Skill Education System In India: Importance And Challenges

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Abstract

Skill education in India is often caught in a dichotomy of regular and vocational. India has a huge population with an average age of 29 years. Having such rich demography, Skill Education should transform this demography into a skilled workforce. However, there is immense lacunae in terms of both "Skill" and "Education". The shadow of this lacunae impacts differently to each and every section of the society. Women constitute about 50% of the population and hence it is vital to study the gender divide in skill education and analyse the impact of this divide. The present study attempts to trap the gaps in Indian skill education and understand various correlations it has especially on women. Interestingly, Skill Education has deep connections with the Social sphere which is not directly evident but has always been on the other side of the coin. Moreover, the present pandemic has widened the Gender gap further due to the pre-existing digital gender divide of 42%.

Keywords: SDG 4, Quality Education, Skill Education, Gender gap, Digital divide

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I. Introduction

As per the World Bank, India is fortunate that in the years coming by and till 2040, the population of the working age group would be in majority. This has increasingly been recognised as a potential source of significant strength for the national economy, provided we are able to equip and continuously upgrade the skills of the population in the working age group. With the increase in Knowledge, Globalization and competition, the huge need for a highly skilled workforce has arisen in India. Skilled workforce plays a major role in accelerating the growth rate of Economy. Skilled workers are not born. Every worker, when provided with the required opportunities to avail vocational education and training, will be successful in discovering their potential. The National Skill Development Policy has envisaged the task of training 500 million Indians by the end of 2020 to meet the emerging needs of rapidly emerging demand for skilled workforce in the economy. In India, skill education is critical from both socio-economic and demographic point of view. It is observed that countries with a higher proportion of skilled workforce tend to have higher GDP and per capita income levels. It also helps them to adjust to the shocks faced by the world of work due to unavoidable and unforeseen challenges.¹ For an economy to grow at 7% to 8%, with estimated growth of 2.6% agriculture and allied activities, Industry and services at 3.5% and 7.2% respectively, a emergence of multi-faceted skill development programs and a highly skilled workforce is of utmost importance. India has a huge population with an average age of 29 years when compared to China with an average age of 37 years and Russia with 40 years. Large Demographic dividends can be transformed into an advantage due to the presence of a significant proportion of the young population. This created a higher demand for skill education to cater to the needs of the young population.

II. Review Of Literature

The researchers have made an extensive review of literature to understand the importance of skill development in India.

Patil & Prof. Amaresh B Charantimath (2021) conducted a study on "Employability through Skill Development Programmes - an overview of significance of Employability skills". The objective of the study was to comprehend the need of employability skills and to study the skill gap - desired vs possessed. The study concluded that the skill gaps can be bridged with training, education and short-term courses. In spite of the efforts there is still a great scope in transformation of abandoned knowledge into skills. Various ambitious missions of Government of India i.e. Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, 5 trillion economy dreams etc can come true with collective efforts.

Vidhyadhar Banajawad & Mukta S. Adi (2020) conducted a study on "A study on skill development programmes for rural youth in India" with the objective to ascertain the current status, challenges and the Government initiatives for the skill development in India. The study concluded that skill development is currently gathering momentum and it is now evident that education and skills are fundamental in bettering

employment opportunities, shrinking poverty, boosting productivity, and promoting environmentally sustainable rural development. The immediate need is assimilating skills, policies and strategies on rural development. Incorporation of skill-based training and industry link placement facility in education is indispensable. Skill development is need of the hour to adapt and match the current requirements for youth in rural India for rural development in real sense. Thus, education / skill development is an immediate and important requirement for developing countries with large youth population such as India.

Anita Swain & Sunita Swain (2020) conducted a study on "Skill Development in India: Challenges & Opportunities". The study intended to analyse the data sourced from National Skill Development Corporation. It concluded that India, the 2nd populous country in the world with around 60% youth population, has a 'demographic dividend' and need capitalise on it for reaping the benefit which can add value to the economy of the country and also support 'Make in India' campaign by providing the skilled workforce in the country. The 'Skill India' mission requires more focus on entrepreneurship skills for enhancing job generation in the country. Various schemes like PMKVY, DDU-GKY etc. have been launched by Government of India for making Indian youth skilled and employable. Indian youth should be aware of such schemes, get required training and make themselves employable.

Rajni Singh (2019) conducted a study on "Research - based learning on skill development of engineering graduates: An empirical study". The study made an effort to explore the role of thesis/dissertation in engineering education for skill development and based on the empirical study of Indian engineering graduates, the study concluded that Research Based Learning contributes to the development of problem solving, domain knowledge, language and communication, communication & IT, general learning, academic knowledge, attitude and ethics skills. The study also brought out that Research Based Learning is best fit and improves problem solving more than other skills as Indian engineers lack those skills. The study proposes the necessity of incorporation of Research Based Learning using labs such as learning factory for re-engineering the engineering education to meet the increasing revolutions in industrial era and promote the required skills of engineering graduate.

Krishnamoorthy A. Srimathi H. (2019) conducted a study on "Skill Development - The Future of India". The study analysed the practices of skill-based vocational and higher education initiatives and concluded that the global requirements of work force have to be carefully studied and analysed and adequate steps have to be taken to impart the vocational and related skills mandated by the industries. This shall ensure a strong hold for the Indians in the global work force and sustain the development and growth of the country. The factors that improve skill development will be a mixed strategy of all the best practices on need-based analysis and requires introspections and revisions periodically. The cohesive contribution of all stake holders will ensure that our vocational and higher education system possess the perfect blend of necessary skills required to achieve the targeted goals.

Hansel Furtado (2018) conducted a study on "A study on impact of skill development at entry level job candidates in India". The objective of the study was to understand the gap between the job applicant's performance level & job expectation at multiple stage of one's life and to understand employability of candidates at entry level of job. The study concluded that the most essential aspect for every citizen of the nation is with booming technologies, organizations upscaling & a transitioning era as of such today. The conversion rate in with long-lasting sustainable effect on the market in a structured analytical way and it is important to consider before providing any initiative relating to developing human potential especially for candidates at entry level jobs because it is directly dealing with building the future of the next generation to lead.

Objectives

The study has included the following objectives;

- To study the importance of Skill Education and its impact on various marginalised sections of the society.
- To understand the brief scenario of the Skill Educational System in India.
- To study the challenges and opportunities in the Skill Education system in India.
- the importance of Vocational training for women and the challenges that Skill Education in India

III. Research Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature and is based on secondary data. The data required for the studies were collected from various books and publications related to the topic under study.

Scenario of Skill Educational System in India:

India has a very complex Skill education system with large and diverse levels of skill training across a huge heterogeneous population. It can further be divided into Education and vocational Training controlled broadly by three ministries namely Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Skill Development

and Entrepreneurship and Ministry of Labour and Employment. Elementary, secondary and higher Education is governed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and this caters to both college Education (Arts, Science, Commerce etc) and Technical Education (Engineering) and University Grants Committee and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) stands as the nodal body which controls the governing funds and grants.

Vocational Training in India is delivered both by private and public operated channels. They are governed by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship with a nodal body as Director General of Employment & Training (DGET). Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) largely constitute the public operated channels of Skill Training. There are a large number of Industrial Training Centres (ITCs), Vocational schools etc that constitute private channels for Vocational Training. In order to cater this huge working population government of India has taken multiple steps over a period of time. The Eleventh Five Year Plan detailed a road-map for skill development in India, and favoured the formation of Skill Development Missions, both at the State and National levels. To create such an institutional base for skill development in India at the national level, a ‘Coordinated Action on Skill Development’ with a three-tier institutional structure consisting of the PM’s National Council on Skill Development, the National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB) and the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was created in early 2008 .

These initiatives have also been passed on to respective state governments so that they could be adopted in the ground level. Many states have set up State Skill Development Missions as nodal bodies to support the skill development agenda in the respective states. SSDMs are significant in escalating the pace of skilling, through identification of some important sectors for skill development in the State, as well as coordinating with Central Ministries and State Line Departments, as well as industry and private training organizations. Each State has adopted a structure of SSDM that best suits the local environment and the State vision for skill development. While some States have elected to form the SSDM as a Society or Corporation under the Chief Secretary or Chief Minister, others have housed it under relevant Departments such as Labour, Human Resource Development, or Planning. Many states are starting to set year-wise targets for skill development, specifying the state budgetary allocation, and complementing Government efforts by encouraging private investment.

Table 1. State-wise ITI Count and Seat Count of few States

State	Public		Private	
	ITI count	Seat count	ITI count	Seat count
Uttar Pradesh	287	97,160	2,976	262,944
Maharashtra	420	81,764	566	35,572
Karnataka	275	28,692	1,223	62,876
Assam	30	4,004	6	652
India	3062	615,726	11,796	950,650

Source: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Table 2. State wise Seat Utilization of few States

State	Seat Utilization in Public ITIs (%)	Seat Utilization in Private ITCs (%)
Uttar Pradesh	69.66	91.5
Maharashtra	82.1	75.95
Karnataka	74.57	80.71
Assam	55.54	90.18
India	75.02	86.48

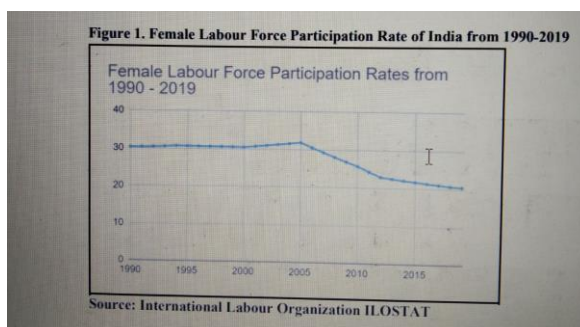
Source: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

From Table 1 and 2, It can be clearly observed that, Increasing ITIs and ITCs may not be a one stop solution for addressing the high rates of unemployment. With 3062 public ITIs in entire India with seat count of 615,726 and about 25% vacant seats clearly states that Accessibility, Quality of training, Lack of Choices, Availability of job opportunities etc. are the reasons for under-enrollment and under-utilization of ITIs. In terms of variety of the courses, although ITIs have various trades, they still do not cater to many unique requirements. For Example: Photography. So, this narrows down the scope and limits the exposure of the students.

Importance of Skill Education for Women:

Women constitute about 50% of the total population of India. However, the workforce participation is considerably less. Women are highly confined to the care Economy which acts upto the widening gap of Labour Force Participation between men and women. Surprisingly, the gap is widening even more in urban areas and also in upper middle class families where a family could afford putting women totally in the care economy and their contribution is not a vital requirement for the family Income. This makes women lose their financial

independence and makes them vulnerable to domestic violence and makes it extremely difficult to come out of such situations fearing loss of financial support. Also, having women exclusively for the care economy diminishes their scope for skill development which further affects the overall economy and GDP of the country.



From Figure 1, we can clearly see that the Female Labour Force Participation rate is constantly decreasing from 2005 to 2019 although other components of the economy such as GDP, Per Capita, GNP etc. are constantly rising. This clearly exposes the entitlement failure to accommodate women in the economic progress. For those women who tackle to manage their patriarchal barriers and look to develop their skills to be employable, the struggle still remains more or less the same. This is majorly due to unavailability of access to skill education in general and the Gender barriers makes it even more difficult.⁶ According to the Tracer Study of ITI Graduates conducted by the Ministry of Skill Education and Entrepreneurship in collaboration with Mott MacDonald, only 29% of the total enrollments in ITIs are of females.

Women who enroll in various training institutes do not have a wide variety of options to choose from. From an analysis of Administrative data of 367 ITIs done by EY, it was very clear that women's enrollment is seen highest in non-engineering trades compared to the engineering trades. The % of women enrolled in non-engineering trades varied from 58 to 64 between 2015 and 2019 whereas it varied from 8% to 10% for engineering trades. Women's participation in apprenticeship is dramatically less compared to males. Only 5.34% of the apprentices are female in the Manufacturing sector, 12.09% in the service sector and 18.77% in other sectors. India's gender digital divide makes it further more difficult for women to access the required information for trades like Internet of Things, Computer Operator Programming Assistant etc. The present COVID-19 scenario makes it worse as it affects their both training and post training lives.

Skill Development Challenges in India:

Skilling millions to transform them into a skilled workforce has always been a challenge. On the other hand, continuous evolution of Vocational training according to the market requirements has also been considered a challenge that India is continuously facing. Indian skill Education is expected to cater to the needs of skill requirement for almost four levels of jobs ranging from high skill level jobs usually called "White Collar jobs" and low skill level jobs usually called "Rust Collar jobs". There are perceptions that Vocational Training is comparatively inferior to the Formal Education and that discourages a lot of unskilled labour to take it up for upskilling.⁷ Here are the few important challenges faced by Indian Skill Education.

Lack of Integration between Skill Education and Formal Education:

Skill education in India is under an exclusive domain compared to formal education, they both are treated as separate entities and also fall under different departments of the government. The knowledge imparted in skill education is much different from formal education. Most of the companies consider graduates as over qualified, which compels them to pay them a reasonable amount and moreover they also do not possess the exact skill set required. It is more feasible for companies to recruit people who are not graduates but have required skills, this can let companies pay a lesser amount and harness more from people who learn a particular skill. Lack of integration between skill education and formal education is giving leverage for the companies to underpay both types of people. Countries like China have the most skilled workers, which makes China the factory of the world, in China the vocational and formal education are integrated.⁸ This makes the graduates highly qualified after the graduation, this gives them confidence and scope to explore their talents in fine jobs. Due to this available pool of skilled workers, countries like the United States of America manufacture products in China. Although India offered lucrative deals to many countries in terms of tax benefits, availability of cheap labour etc. under the Make in India scheme, India could not capitalize on this due to lack of availability of skilled laborers. This is the reason why India is now exploring "Assemble in India" for the time being and is focusing on skill development, which is reflected in the latest budget allocation of 2020, where around 3000 crores have been allotted to the skill development ministry.

Other issues:

The quality of training imparted in the public ITIs and the facilities provided are also questionable a lot of times. The adaptability to the changing demands in the job market are sometimes not met by the training that is imparted by the ITIs. Several issues have been raised regarding infrastructure, pedagogy, grading systems, and curriculum. Also, in addition to that, mobility stands as a hurdle in the path of the pass outs of ITIs. A student being a pass out from ITI cannot further mobilise to any degree of next immediate level in formal education. This remains as an extra Technical Qualification that might sometimes fetch us an advantage during admissions but cannot be the degree we can show to study further. This can also be seen as a disadvantage of not having any integration between the Vocational training and formal Education.

IV. Conclusion:

It is evident that the current skill education environment and infrastructure has serious flaws. The vital factor which the skill education needs is the ecosystem which is lacking in the current scenario. Separation of skill education from formal education is proving to be the main deterrent for the ecosystem. The whole story of chicken or egg is being repeated in the Indian skill and vocational sphere. Adding to this already crippled structure, India's gender and digital divide further keeping many marginalized out of this sector. The present COVID-19 situation further exposed this drastic divide which was ignored earlier. Digital infrastructure is needed while one is part of the course and also while one is working. Digital literacy has many times proved as a litmus test in this sector. Majority of women, especially rural women do not have access to the digital resources that lack both in imparting skills and also while they are employed. Many companies mandate a computer with decent internet connection which is a privilege for many women who are digitally illiterate.

Various measures to tackle the existing lacunae need to be strategically implemented to make the training effective and transform the trainees into a skilled workforce. Integration of Skill Education and Formal education, Introduction of Skill Education in Schools as a part of curriculum, broadening the scope of Skill training by increasing the choices, Established universities should introduce vocational courses which would help in narrowing down the gap. The skill education curriculum and the regular education syllabus should be integrated, so that it would promote holistic approach. This will also give opportunity to students for mobility among regular and vocational courses unlike the present scenario where they are rigid and are not open ended. The process of integration should be started at the school level which will give students enough exposure required to understand the structure of these courses and would give them enough time to make their decisions. This should also be continued to the university level, the established universities should also introduce vocational courses on par with regular courses which would serve two purposes, one is that it would reduce burden on the regular training institutes and also it would help in reducing the stigma around the vocational courses. Ultimately, it is the mindset which should also change, this could be possible with the government interventions with advertisements and also promotional programs which should bring behavioural changes towards vocational courses.

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