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Skill India Mission: A Timely Initiative

The effect of age structure on economic growth has always been a moot issue. An increase in the young working age group is beneficial for the economic growth of any country. According to the United Nations estimate, currently, the population of India is 1,342,763,001. India will become the youngest country in the world with a median age of 29. At present, India has a favourable 'demographic dividend', which means, it has a higher labour force than the population dependent on it. This favourable demographic dividend can be converted into human resources by providing them training in various skills.

Against this background, Prime Minister Narendra Modi created a separate 'Skill Development Ministry' in 2014, with a corpus of INR 1500 crore and an aim to train 24 lakh youth. This is the first-ever initiative by any government to create a Skill Development Ministry. On 15 July 2015, he launched Skill India Programme on the occasion of the first-ever World Youth Skills day. He said, "In the coming years, India will be biggest suppliers of workforce to the world". The logo of the programme is a clenched hand with a spanner and pencil. It clearly illustrates the empowerment of the Individual through skilling. The tagline of the programme; 'Kaushal Bharat, Kushal Bharat', exemplifies that skilling Indians will result in a prosperous nation. The programme has received international acclaim, various Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) was signed with the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, the United States of America, Canada, Singapore, European Union, Iran and Bahrain vis-à-vis skill development.



The Skill India Mission

Since the starting of the programme, the government has taken a host of initiatives to channelize the efforts. On 15 July 2015, PM inaugurated four new initiatives; National Skill Development Mission, National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015, 'Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana' (PMKVY), and the Skill Loan scheme. The aim of these initiatives is to train 40 crore people in various skill by 2022. Amongst them, PMKVY is the lynchpin of the Skill India programme. It is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The objective of this skill certification scheme is to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood. Individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Periodically, various schemes and programmes are added under the banner. To mark the completion of two years of the mission, 100 GST training centers, 51 'Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras' (PMKK) and 100 Yoga training centers were inaugurated on the occasion.

The PMKVY has emerged as an important scheme in the Left Wing Extremism affected states where it serves the twin objective of rehabilitation and employment generation. Through the schemes like 'Roshini', vocational skills are imparted with the idea to provide employment in nearly 34 LWE worst affected districts of the country (34 districts are in the state of Telangana-01, Bihar-06, Chhattisgarh-07, Jharkhand-10, Madhya Pradesh-01, Maharashtra-02, Odisha-05, Uttar Pradesh-01 and West Bengal-01). It helps the misguided youth to be self-reliant and be the part of the mainstream by living a dignified life. Furthermore, expanding its geographical reach, the MSDE has shown interest in setting up an International Skill Center in Assam. This will give a boost to India's Act East Policy and open up the frontiers with neighbouring countries of South East Asia.

In 2017-18 Union Budget there has been 16 per cent increase in the budgetary allocation for the programme. Three major schemes PMKK, Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for 'Livelihood Promotion Programme' (SANKALP)



and the next phase of 'Skill Strengthening of Industrial Value Enhancement' (STRIVE) was proposed.

Assessment

Until July 2016, 10 million people were trained. This is just 1/40th of the set target of 2022. The MSDE has signed MoUs with 14 other ministries and has been successful in using Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds. It is an ambitious endeavour by the government and for the first time, any government has taken such a forward-looking programme. Although the programme has taken off at a slow pace, there is a need to fasten the training process at the same time maintain the quality of the training. Weaving in of the prestigious institutions and universities like the Indian Institute of Technology and Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University will be beneficial for improving the quality. Furthermore, there is a need to create corresponding jobs for the trained workforce. All such skilling initiatives need to be affiliated to the entrepreneurship promotion programmes such as the 'Startup India' and 'Stand up' India schemes that are only just taking off.

Overall, in 2015-16 more than 10.4 million people were trained under various initiatives. However, to meet the target of training 40 crore people by 2022 require increased speed as well as scale. So far, the project has achieved success in a limited way. For the all-inclusive success of the programme, the private sector should also be involved in the process. A skilled labour workforce is a prerequisite for the success of other initiatives like 'Make in India', 'Digital India', and 'Smart Cities'. If we fail to tap the unique demographic dividend into sustainable economic and development outcomes there may be political, economic and social consequence.



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