

Impact of covid19 on the skill development movement in India

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ABSTRACT

This research paper endeavors in understanding the skill Development Movement in India and how the it has been impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of challenges faced by Skill Development Trainings, opportunities which have surfaced and strategies adopted by Government, Companies & individuals to overcome challenges towards Skill Development Trainings during COVID-19.

The success of a nation always depends on the success of its youth hence, Government of India has launched Skill India Mission to empower the youth of the country with required skill sets and make them more employable and productive in their work environment. Skill India is certain to bring a lot of advantage and opportunities for its young workforce. Now, Skill India is not only limited to the domestic market but even caters to the global market demands and promotes cross geographical exposure and opportunities in the international market projecting India as an evolving skilled society with lots of possibilities, prosperity and progress for all. However, the entire progress has been disrupted due to COVID-19 pandemic as it adversely affected and slowed down businesses across all sectors. The companies in their endeavor to reduce cost especially the labour cost during the 'new normal' now prefer workers who are more adaptable and equipped with new-age technology. Hence, it is important that the young students are imparted diversified skill sets so that they remain employable in the post-pandemic world. In such scenario, it is important that all kinds of skill training Programmes are continued to strengthen the work-pool so that when the situation improves, the trained workforce is ready to for immediately resuming the activities quickly picking up with speed and agility. The skill de

The research paper has made a literature review analysis regarding its challenges, prospects of skill India and Make in India. Secondary data collected from various websites, journals, etc.

Keywords: Skill development, Skill India, covid-19 pandemic.

1.0 Introduction

Skill has many meanings but generally it connotes to knowledge, ability, quality, proficiency and competency of a person that enables him to gain expertise in a particular field and perform particular tasks. Skills are primarily of two types (i) Soft Skills (ii) Hard Skills. Soft Skills are personal habits, personality traits with which one does his work either alone or in group. Examples of soft skills are Leadership skills, Organizational skills, Life skills, communications skills, people skills / interpersonal skills and personal attributes like creativity, empathy, open-mindedness, integrity etc. Soft skills are sometimes inherited and sometimes developed through life experiences. A person can develop such soft skill only when he is interested and put in effort in mastering these skills. He can learn by himself from self-help books, audios, internet etc but the best is to find a mentors / coach who has practical experience and expertise in such areas and is willing to help / guide. Hard Skills are technical knowledge that we gain through our education, training or work experience. Hard skills can be quantified and verified from one's academic and formal training certificates.

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Many employers also test the prior learning of hard skills before recruiting employees and impart trainings to its employees to refresh their hard skills to do the existing job more efficiently or equip them with additional hard skills required to take up future jobs. However, both hard skills & soft skills are required in every job though the degree may vary with level / position. Hard skills are required for performing technical tasks in a job and Soft skills are required for working in team and creating a congenial work environment. More of hard skills are required at operational level and as one moves higher up in his career, he requires more of soft skills to think critically, set goals, formulate strategy / action plan, organize, collaborate, connect, communicate, manage team, solve problems, get things done, analyze information and review for continual improvement. Most employers look for candidates with hybrid skills i.e. combination of both soft skills and hard skills. However, employers may prefer candidates with better soft skills if the technical skills are equal. Today there is a paradoxical situation where on the one hand young men and women entering the labour market are looking for jobs; on the other hand industries are complaining of unavailability of appropriately skilled manpower. Enormous skills gap exists between what industries demand based on the rapid economic growth and the skills that young people acquire through education and training.

1.1 Objective of the Study:

The main objectives of the study are:

- To understand through the review of literature the Skill development Movement in India.
- To understand the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the Skill development Movement in India.
- To provide some suggestions based on the observations and findings of the study.

1.2 Research Methodology:

The study in this paper is based on exploratory research based on the secondary data and information sourced from internet, relevant books, journals, magazines, articles, media reports and Government portals on Skill India, etc.

Being looked into requirements of the objectives of the study the research design employed for the study is of descriptive type. In depth analysis of the research study have been adopted and available secondary data have been extensively used for the study.

1.3 Literature Review:

The investigators have reviewed the literature with reference to skill development Movement in India which will give an understanding about the research conducted in the field and research gaps to be filled by further research.

Arora & Chhadwani (2018), conducted a study entitled “Analysing the impact of skill India as a tool for reshaping Indian economy”. The study aimed to analyse the need of skill India campaign in reshaping Indian , analyse the programmes under skill India campaign in reshaping Indian economy and analyse the impact of skill India campaign in reshaping Indian economy. The study was mainly descriptive in nature was based on secondary data & information which was collected from the concerned sources and were as per the need of research. The relevant books document of various ministry departments & organizations, articles, paper & website were used in the study. The findings of the study indicated that “to further increase the momentum & see to the proper implementation of the Skill India campaign the government set a target of skilling 400 million persons by 2022, but its pace is in slow rate than the set target. At this pace, the 2022 target appears to be very difficult. And training to job transition rate is very low than the expectation. In its first phase, the government trained some 1.97 million people against a target of 2.4 million. And the skilling to placement ratio is

low. Skill India is aspiring programme of Government of India. At present India faces a severe shortage of trained workers. Only 2.3% of India's work force has formal skill training compared to 68% in the UK, 75% in Germany, 52% in USA, 80% in Japan and 96% in South Korea. Hence there is an urgent need to impart skills in more efficient way. For contribution in growth in Indian economy to compete with other developed countries of world it is necessary to see that in the whole process of skill India campaign, training to job transmission rate proper skill acquisition & implementation rate is undertaken in an effective manner."

Furtado (2018), conducted a study entitled "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 stages of one's Life and understand employability of candidates at entry level job. Both Primary data & Secondary data were used. Primary data search was taken to have an assumption-based analytical view considered in findings and Secondary data was obtained from, online websites of organizations supporting skill development in India. Few reports that state the present scenario of skills along with the need & requirement of building the skills & character of an individual were considered. Online search engine optimization & multiple online findings were also considered. The findings of the study indicated that "Skill development in India is the most essential aspect for every citizen of the nation as with booming technologies, organizations up-scaling & a transitioning era as of such today. Though there have been many services being provided by the government & other organizations, it is important to see the competitiveness also being build along with its actual reach to candidates at entry level jobs, which in most terms is not the actual case resulting to a loss on the youth's potential being built for the nation. Irrespective of the various initiatives taken by the government & other organizations as well, the conversion rate is with long-lasting sustainable effect on the market in a structured analytical way, 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. Students and candidates, prior to applying for jobs must work on building their set skills as this would not only ensure in impressing the interviewer but also result in having been selected, thus attaining your dream job".

Kumar & Ramya (2017), conducted a study entitled "A research paper on - Economic prosperity through Skill India: A study of key success factors and challenges". These main objectives of the study were to know the awareness of skill development concept, know the problems faced in self employment and provide some suggestions based on the observations and findings of the study. The research was based on the primary data and the secondary data. Primary data was collected by distributing the questionnaires to respondents and through telephonic interviews with respondents from various places in and around Mangalore city. Random sampling was used in selecting the samples for the study. Secondary data was collected from websites related to the topic. The findings of the study indicated how Government is caring to abolish unemployment problem. Majority of the respondents were aware of the Skill India Campaign due to various publicity schemes of Government which is highly commendable. Out of the respondents selected for survey majority have undergone the skill development training under different areas and have benefited them in their overall development. This shows the popularity of the schemes and good response from the youth. The survey reveals that even after the training the respondents had faced some major problems while setting up their own business, which need to be tackled. Almost all the respondents were motivated through Skill India Campaign and have encouraged others for self employment.

Prasad & Purohit (2017), conducted a study entitled "Skill Development, Employability and Entrepreneurship through Make in India: A Study". The main objectives of the study were to understand through the review of literature the effect of Make in India initiative on employability, to understand the present status of skill development in India, to analyze through the

review of literature if the Skill Development measures will help to bridge the gap of existing skills and required skills of workforce and Labour force in India and to understand the Challenges in Skill Development Initiatives in India. The study was based on exploratory research based on the secondary data and information was sourced from libraries, relevant books, journals, magazines, articles, media reports and Government portals of Make in India, Skill India, etc. Being looked into requirements of the objectives of the study the research design employed for the study is of descriptive type. The authors adopted to have greater accuracy and in-depth analysis of the research study. Available secondary data was extensively used for the study. The findings of the study indicated, “the overall status of skill capacity available, skill requirement, skill gap and initiatives taken by Government of India for Skill Development. To make the ‘Make in India’ project successful, youth of the Nation should be empowered with Formal Education, Technical and Vocational training to meet the Industrial and Market requirement as per global standard. Despite various efforts and investments in shaping the skills of a huge labor force there are grave drawbacks in the System. Even after the Government investing a lot in training costs and infrastructure, creation of robust workforce for the industry is still a fantasy. As a fast-growing developing economy, besides white and blue collar, India also needs Grey collar- knowledge workers which include ICT skills, problem solving, analytical and effective communication skills and rust collar-skilled workers at the grass root level in currently unorganized sector and un-benchmarked sectors like construction, agriculture and related trade. Government, industry leaders are constantly from time to time launching new skill development initiatives but somehow it is not reaching the casual workers who dominate the Indian work-force. Stakeholders Industry leaders, Government etc have realized that none of them can work in isolation. They will need to collaborate as the stake involved is huge. Mandatory Monitoring and Quality Certifications should be in place which will ensure high standards training programs with prime focus on enhancing the employability. Sector specific Labor Market Information System at national and state level is to be established for reducing the skill mismatch which can help in the reliable and realistic assessment of economic trends and labour market. Supply and demand of skilled manpower can be mapped with the help of Human Resource Planning which is also one of the important components. These exercises can help to anticipate skill gap over a period of time at different levels, sectors and geographical areas. A designated agency should work on generating information from the LMIS and HRP exercises. Government employers, national, state and local level training providers, trainees and prospective trainees should be disseminated with information so collated so that they can use it in their skill development plans. The information at National level can be disseminated by NCVT by receiving inputs from state and local levels. Counseling, placement and guidance can be provided by strengthening and upgrading the Employment Exchanges. In a male dominated society, there has always been a limited scope to develop their skills for women and girls in rural areas due to social, economic and cultural constraints. The payment of wages is also on lower side. Socio-economic empowerment of rural women can be attained by investing in their skill development. They can be provided with basic education, technical training and other women extension services. Support by self help groups and NGOs can help in improving their conditions by making them understand the importance of basic education and also by making the change in attitude of society towards women. A designated agency should design the courses and introduce them at various levels on the basis of emerging opportunities for skill development and employment generation. The change should be brought from education system which needs to be renovated and restructured. Young population even after having degree is not able to fit in the industry due to lack of expertise to compete. The vocational training should start from High School. Students should be made industry ready by making the curriculum for professional courses such as Engineering and MBA in a way that provides complete on the job training. The standard and quality of training need to be upgraded. Soft skills training along with technical skills will bring desired results. Moreover, with the passage of the

Companies Act 2013, the mandate for Corporate Social Responsibility has been formally introduced and it is likely that the total CSR spends will increase for employability linked programs to promote skill development. Prime Minister in his maiden speech said, Skill development should be accompanied by a spirit of ‘Shram-ev Jayate’ – giving dignity to labour. Skill development and entrepreneurship is one of the top most priorities of the new Government due to which first time an independent ministry has been created to take the mandate forward. Finally, it is important that the intended beneficiaries of the skill development program join training programs with an inspiration to learn and make them self-reliant to live a better life. Short duration skills course through SDIS-MES Scheme, Dual course system as Germany pattern and Apprentice Training scheme 1961 revised 2015 should be implemented and monitoring properly. Basic Infrastructure i.e. Tools, Equipments and Machineries in ITIs should be replaced as per latest technology and as per Market need. All Government Sector, where Technical knowledge is needed, in Recruitment procedure minimum qualification should be ITIs. The Strengthening Capacity of Vocational Instructor Training Provider Institute i.e. FTIs, ATIs, MITIs and CTI under Directorate General of Training (DGT), Ministry of Skills Development and Entrepreneurship”.

Sandhya Rani (2016), conducted a study entitled “Skill Development Training Programmes for Reducing Gender Inequality in India”. The main objectives of the study were to highlight the importance of skills for the development of country, focus on gender inequalities in possessing skills in rural and urban India among women and study the programmes providing skill Training for both women and men. The paper was totally relied on secondary data. The data required was collected from the necessary published and unpublished information and from the internet sources wherever necessary. The findings of the study indicated that “the initiatives involving both the States and the Centre, often with private partnership will lead to the establishment of credible, trustworthy and reliable training, testing and certification edifice linked to global standards and responsive to the needs of the ultimate consumers of skill. With an estimated 58.6 million new jobs in the International Economy inviting skilled personnel for quality jobs beckoning the Indian Youth, the government and Private Sector will act in a concentrated manner so that these opportunities materialize and operate as an employability guarantee. Skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development of any country. They have become even more important given the increasing pace of globalisation and technological changes provide both challenges that is taking place in the world. As India moves progressively towards becoming a ‘knowledge economy’ it becomes increasingly important that the XI Five Year Plan should focus on advancement of skills and these skills have to be relevant to the emerging economic development.”

Pandey (2016), conducted a study entitled “Improvising Skill Development & Employability Potential through Higher Education, Research & Innovations in India”. The main objectives of the study were to look in to the current policies supporting skills development programme, identify the gaps between government and private programs that need to be filled is duly intended during the study with a aim to collect lessons learned from past policy interventions, how higher education institutes can contribute in successful skill development of the country which is the flagship programme of the government. The study was mainly descriptive in nature based on secondary data & information was collected from the concerned sources as per the need of research. The relevant books document of various ministry departments & organizations, articles, paper & website were also used in the study. The findings of the study indicated that “the Private sector plays a major role is overcoming the gaps in Government policies. However, their motive is to expand and scale up their very own enterprises. Thus, their process of skill development may vary. There is a lack of innovation in Skill development programmes. Almost all courses and curriculums are catering to industrial needs. It is the time when at one side employment opportunities are being created in industries, on the other hand Climate and environment is severely getting affected by fast industrialization, besides other

factors. Therefore, skill development programs must be framed innovatively such that there is environment protection, optimal utilization of bio-waste and earning of livelihood can happen, all at same time. There appears a lack of trained trainers to impart necessary formal skill. Going by the different figures mentioned in article, target to create skilled workforce of 500 million by 2022 is large and no. Of certified trainers is very low. There is a strong need of trained trainers at different levels who can serve full time in a institute to provide full attention to the registered candidates. There are plenty of Government Schemes but most of them are in collaboration with private sources, or indirectly benefitting enterprises. More than 20 Ministries/Departments run 70 plus schemes for skill development in the country. However, there are gaps in the capacity and quality of training infrastructure as well as outputs, insufficient focus on workforce aspirations, lack of certification and common standards and a pointed lack of focus on the unorganized sector. Government intervention in skills development can make its impact on grounds like external benefits to skills that are not captured in market practices, Market imperfections that distort the benefits and costs of skills development, weak private training capacity and inequitable access to good quality skills training.”

Saini (2015), conducted a study entitled “Skill development in India: need, challenges and ways forward”. The main objectives of the study were to study the present skill capacity of India, study the challenges faced by skill development system in India and suggest possible solutions or ways forward. The study was mainly descriptive in nature, based on secondary data and information was collected from the concerned sources as per need of the research. The relevant books, documents of various ministries/departments and organizations, articles, papers and web-sites were used in the study. The findings of the study indicated that “India’s transition to one of the largest and fastest growing global economies during the last decade has been a remarkable phenomenon. In order to sustain its growth trajectory, an efficient and continuous system of skill development for its workforce is critically imperative for India. In order to capitalize the demographic dividend, India will need to empower its workers with the right type of skills. The drop-out rates of educational institution were estimated to be 50% in the age group of 5-14 years and 86% after 15 years of age and in contrast to this the participation rate of the workforce rises rapidly after 14 years of age and it results in a semi-literate workforce which finds it difficult to absorb higher form of skills. 38% of Indian workforce is illiterate, 25% has education below primary or up to primary level and remaining 36% has an education level of middle and higher level. 80% of Indian workforce does not possess any marketable skills. Only about 2% have received formal vocational training and 8% non-formal vocational training, thereby implying that very few new entrants to the work force have any marketable skills as compared to developed economies such as Korea (96%), Germany (75%), Japan (80%) and United Kingdom (68%). In-nutshell, it can be said that despite making considerable progress in terms of literacy, high incidence of illiteracy cripples the Indian workforce even today. The above facts are a stark reminder that India’s demographic dividend can rapidly convert into a demographic nightmare if skills are not provided to both new and existing workforce. There is a need for increasing capacity and capability of skill development programs. In this direction, both the Government and its partner agencies have undertaken various measures/ initiatives for the effective implementation of the skill development system in the economy. But still India faces a number of unresolved issues and challenges that need immediate attention of the policy makers.”

Misra (2015), conducted a study entitled “Skill Development: A way to leverage the demographic dividend in India”. The main objectives of the study were to understand the present skill development policy initiatives in India and find out the ways and means to produce world-class skilled manpower domestically through effective use of skill development schemes of Government of India. Primary data was collected through personal interview with government officials and training providers. Secondary data were collected through government policy documents, schemes, case studies, research papers & documents of various international agencies like ILO, WB, OECD etc. The

findings indicate that “India is in demographic phase and is in position to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend by providing trained manpower to fulfill the global and domestic need for skilled manpower, the Government of India had initiated National Policy on Skill Development, to facilitate its target of imparting requisite skills training to 500 million people by 2022. However, on the other hand, there are lots of challenges in the way of achieving target such as quality of training, standardization of curriculum, recognition of course globally etc. India has lot to work on policies for the skill development and put efforts for effective implementation of these schemes. The adoption of a much more robust approach is essential for putting in place a quality skill education and training framework in the country. The existing skill development policy should be modified in accordance with the need of the industry and global market. By establishment of Skill Development University in every state will fulfill the need of academic curriculum design, assessment and certification as per the global standard. Private participation will be more appropriate in infrastructure development and training to the participants. Target to train 500 million people by 2022 can be achieved through effective use of schemes by proposed restructuring of Skill Development Mission.”

Das (2015), conducted a study entitled “Skills Development for SMEs: Mapping of Key Initiatives in India”. The main objective of the study was to critically examine national skills development initiatives in India as the country embarks on building skilled manpower to meet the demand of SME sectors in the coming decade. The paper was based on quantitative and qualitative secondary data collected from different sources including MIS (management information system) reports generated by the implementing agencies and host ministries of the respective SD missions. The Planning Commission of India also compiled several datasets for strategic planning of national missions. Data collected were analyzed, visualized and presented using spread sheet application software. The findings indicate that “many of the government missions or national programmes fail to reach out to the targeted beneficiaries due to lack of awareness and monitoring mechanisms. However, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and to some extent the National Skill Development Mission (NSDM), have increased awareness among their targeted beneficiaries. They have also established ICT-enabled monitoring mechanisms that help in quick identification of gaps in implementation. Data presented in this paper also indicate that these missions have attained good enrolment from targeted communities. In some SD centers, economically weaker sections, but not part of the marginal communities, also benefitted. Economic prosperity is linked to equitable access to vocational and professional skills enrichment training in all industrial sectors including informal sectors.”

Kanchan & Varshney (2015), conducted a study entitled “Skill development initiatives and strategies”. The main objectives of the study were to understand the present status of skill development in India, the challenges in skill development in India, Skill development initiatives and strategies in India and its impact on India. The research paper was an attempt of exploratory research, based on the secondary data sourced from journals, magazines, articles and media reports. Looking into requirements of the objectives of the study the research design employed for the study was of descriptive type. Available secondary data was extensively used for the study. The investigator procures the required data through secondary survey method. Different news articles, Books and Web were used which were enumerated and recorded. The findings indicate that “Presently 80% of the workforce in India (rural and urban) doesn’t possess any identifiable and marketable skills. Therefore, bridging this gap through various skill development initiatives could make India the global hub for skilled manpower, and also result in a surplus of skilled manpower of approximately 47 million 2020 (FICCI). Despite various efforts and investments in shaping the skills of a huge labor force there are grave drawbacks in the system. Even after the government investing a lot in training costs and infrastructure, creation of robust workforce for the industry is still a fantasy. As a fast-growing developing economy, besides white and blue collar, India also needs Grey collar- knowledge workers

which include ICT skills, problem solving, analytical and effective communication skills and rust collar-skilled workers at the grass root level in currently unorganized sector and un-benchmarked sectors like construction, agriculture and related trade. Government, industry leaders are constantly from time to time launching new skill development initiatives but somehow it is not reaching the casual workers who dominate the Indian work-force. Stakeholders (Industry leaders, Government etc) have realized that none of them can work in isolation. They will need to collaborate as the stake involved is huge.”

2.0 Analysis and Findings:

2.1 Skill development movement in India:

India is a young country with 65% of its youth in the working age group. It is projected that the total workforce of India would be around 404.15 million by 2023 which will include around 59 million youth (*Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18*). Skill development of these youth can help in reaping this demographic advantage as it would add value to their personal growth and ultimately boost economic growth of the country.

Skill India Mission, an initiative of by the Government of India, was launched on 15 July 2015 to empower the youth of the country with required skill sets and make them more employable and productive in their work environment. The success of a nation always depends on the success of its youth and Skill India is certain to bring a lot of advantage and opportunities for its young workforce.

Earlier, the skill development of youth was being ensured through implementation of the Apprenticeship Act, 1961 the compliance of the said Act was being monitored and implemented by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and Ministry of Labour & Employment (MOLE). The Apprenticeship Trainings of the Trade Apprentices were monitored by MOLE through Directorate General of Training (DGT) and ITI framework and the Apprenticeship Trainings of Engineering Graduates, Technician and Vocational Apprentices were monitored by MHRD through respective Board of Apprenticeship Training (BOAT) / Board of Practical Training (BOPT). With launch of Skill India Mission, a separate Ministry for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was formed to focus on enhancing employability of the youth through skill development. The entire apprenticeship training framework under MOLE has been transferred to the new Ministry i.e. MSDE and the training framework under MHRD are still continuing. Accordingly, now the Apprenticeship Trainings of the Trade Apprentice (designated trades for ITI and below qualification) & Optional Trade Apprentices (Engineering & Non-engineering Optional Trades formed as per Industry requirement) are monitored by Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship through respective Regional Director of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (RDSDE), Sector Skill Councils (SSC) under Directorate General of Training (DGT) for Designated Trades and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) for Optional Trades.

The skill ecosystem in India is re-energizing the country's workforce with reforms and policy interventions by Government of India. As per MSDE, *“Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) alone has till date seen close to 92 lakhs people get skilled and prepared for a new successful India. More than 720 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs) have been established till date to support skill development infrastructure in the country. Effort is also being made to recognize and certify skills acquired through informal means through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program under PMKVY, which has brought a major shift from unorganized sector to an organized economy and So far, more than 50 lakhs people have been certified and formally recognized under RPL”*

The primary objective of Skill India Mission is to standardize, align and ensure implementation of common norms across all skill development programs (including ITI ecosystem) in the country for garnering better results in all vocational education and training programmes.

Comprehensive reforms have been introduced in the Apprentices Act 1961 by (i) giving control to the private sector to maintain industry standards as per market requirement and (ii) giving regulatory rights to the industry where they can even set the target for apprentices that they require. This is a big opportunity for industry to leverage and benefit from the scheme. National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) has also been introduced to promote a sustainable model of skill development and industry-connect. Under this scheme, the Government of India provides financial benefits for apprenticeship. As per records, 7 lakhs approx. apprenticeship trainings have been conducted so far.

Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana (PM-YUVA) has also been introduced with the aim of educating and equipping potential and early stage entrepreneurs and catalyzing a cultural shift to support aspiring entrepreneurs. The candidates are linked to the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) scheme of the government to get assistance in initial business funding.

Now, Skill India is not only limited to the domestic market but even caters to the global market demands and promotes cross geographical exposure and opportunities in the international market. Soon India will evolve into a skilled society with lots of possibilities, prosperity and progress for all.

2.2 Skill Development Trainings during COVID-19:

COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected and slowed down businesses across all sectors. The companies in their endeavor to reduce cost especially the labour cost during the 'new normal' would prefer workers who are more adaptable and equipped with new-age technology. Hence, it is important that the young students are imparted diversified skill sets so that they remain employable in the post-pandemic world.

The resumption of full-fledged work in industries seems far till the pandemic is in control or some medicine / vaccine is available in the market. In such scenario, it is important that all kinds of skill training programmes are continued to strengthen the work-pool so that when the situation improves, the trained workforce is ready to for immediately resuming the activities quickly picking up with speed and agility.

The Government of India on its part is already encouraging students and workers to acquire new skills and utilize their time effectively during this pandemic situation. The National Skill Development Corporation's (NSDC) eLearning aggregator portal, eSkillIndia portal offers more than 400 curated courses from various knowledge providers. During this pandemic, eSkillIndia has partnered with English Score, SAS India, Saylor Academy (USA) and UpGrad, to provide various online opportunities to interested skill-seekers.

As an emergency response and experimentation in skill development, industry and workforce has quickly migrating from classroom / on the job training to online / distance learning to neutralize the pandemic situation by adapting to the virtual mode and allowing young workforce to continue their skills upgradation and preparedness for the new normal. The pandemic has also taught that short term solutions can be and have to be found to create long-term positive impacts.

2.3 Challenges faced by Skill Development Trainings during COVID-19:

Skill Development is facing the following challenges during the pandemic:

1. Operation of Training Institutions:

The main challenge with Training institutions are to remain operational, to establish and maintain communications with and between trainers and students, and to continue to provide their services to the community, despite having suspended face-to-face classes.

2. Work from Home Norms:

The mandate to move employees to working from home has made it impossible to provide in-person, classroom-based skills training.

3. Temporary control over training premises by Govt.

Many training institutions are also supporting national crisis response measures as their training room/ workshops are being used to manufacture personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer etc for healthcare purpose or their premises are being used as temporary quarantine centers, isolation facilities or makeshift corona hospitals.

4. Lack of Access to Digital Platform:

Lack of smart phones/ mobile devices, mobile/internet data packs, the ability to recharge, fluctuating internet connectivity and a dearth of discipline are now a reality. It is required to explore aspects like 'learning and training anywhere, anytime' and work on the concept of lifelong learning.

5. Lack of Preparedness:

Technical preparedness is required to strengthen the ability to organize digital education, skilling and mobilizing teachers / trainers so that they continue offering effective e-learning.

2.4 Opportunities for Skill Development Trainings during COVID-19:

Every challenge opens doors for new opportunities. COVID-19 pandemic has shut many doors at the same time have also opened many doors and people slowly accept and adapt to the "New Normal". New dimensions and horizons which were obscured till date have suddenly been visible and vibrant. The same is true for Skill Development Trainings; the opportunities revealed during the COVID-19 pandemic is enumerated as under:

1. Upskilling for the New Normal

As many industries, business and process have become obsolete, forcing them to close down, the jobs being carried in such business have suddenly become useless resulting in loss of job. To remain in business, the industries have to adhere to the norms of "New Normal" and adapt quickly by embracing the change. It requires to prepare the work force for such new functions and upskilling them through Skill Development Training. Now it would be extremely necessary to be quick in response to any future disruptions as in future such disruptions can be expected at any moment of time. Change is the only constant and one who have a change before the change actually hit would win, one who change with change will just manage to survive and one who will not change will perish. It is true for both the Industry as well as the workers. The workers should also come forward on their own to avail such facilities and upskill themselves at their own cost and not depend on his/her employer as the pandemic has shown how the employers back out from their responsibilities and leave the workers to their fate. The pandemic has proved as a strong wakeup call for all.

2. Concept of any time learning / learning at one's convenience

As many of the Training Centers have been forced to shut down adhering to the social distancing norms, the Physical Trainings have been hit. But at the same time, it has opened doors

for online trainings through various online platforms where in one can download and learn anytime and at his/her convenience. If the learner wants, he can go through that learning any number of time and repeat the sessions for better understanding and clarity. Example of such trainings are the NPTEL courses being offered by Government of India. This aspect of learning was never given much importance and emphasis was always given to the physical trainings. Many employees due to their time constraint for physical trainings used to be deprived of trainings, now they can attend such trainings online from anywhere and at any time.

3. Reach beyond geographical boundary

With concept of online trainings & webinars using the latest video-conferencing platforms the earlier limitation of geographical boundary has been broken and people at far off locations can come together for a learning / training. Now, there is no limitation on the capacity of the Training Hall or attention capacity of the trainers.

4. Access to the best of trainers

Due to the online facility renowned trainers from around the globe can be accessed online directly from their institute / home without requirement of their travel to long distance and they can be accessed by different organizations at the same time making best use of their time also saving their money.

5. Affordability of training

No more travel to long distance or staying in training hostel / hotels is required, the cost of trainer can be shared over a large audience making the training highly affordable to all participants. Also, organizations which would have otherwise not afford training from such renowned trainers / global leaders can now access to them.

6. Pooling of resources

Organizations which otherwise do not have good training institutes can have the facility to pool the resources of other organizations and can jointly have structured training programmes on skill development.

2.5 Strategies adopted towards Skill Development Trainings to overcome challenges during COVID-19:

All stakeholders for Skill Development Training have understood the challenges faced during COVID-19 and have adopted the following steps:

1. Strategies adopted by Government

- i. Ministry of Skill Development and Ministry of Human Resource Development (Now Ministry of Education) issued guidelines & instructions to corporates making them mandatory to release stipend to apprentices undergoing skill training in spite of their actual attendance at the Skill Development Training Centre or on-the-job training. This was done with a purpose of support the Skill Trainees / Apprentice Trainees financially during the pandemic situation.
- ii. Health & Safety of the trainees are the responsibility of Employer as mandated by statute under Apprentices Act, 1961. During the pandemic, Ministry of Skill Development and Ministry of Human Resource Development (Now Ministry of Education) issued guidelines making Employer responsible for medical expenses of apprentices if they get infected with corona virus.

- iii. To encourage Corporates for engaging apprentices for Skill Development, Government of India has allowed corporates to book their expenses on stipend paid to apprentices beyond the minimum stipulated number, under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

2. Strategies adopted by Industry / Companies

- i. Consultant / trainers are being hired to make online modules of different trainings or arrange for conducting online trainings through webinars to impart skill training from home when the Skill Training Institutes were shut with Government orders and on-the-job trainings were also hampered.
- ii. Collaborating with peer industries / companies to pool their resources towards skill development training programmes.
- iii. Coordinating with Government agencies to ensure compliances of statutory provisions on Skill Development.
- iv. Formulating policies to absorb some of the trainees / apprentices directly or indirectly in their organization or peer industries after their completion of training so as to help them in employment after Skill Training

3. Strategies adopted by individuals

- i. During this pandemic, Individuals have understood the necessity of skilling themselves and not depend on the Employer for skilling them. It is seen individuals now a days look for various webinars and training programmes available online and voluntarily avail such skill development trainings so as to upskill themselves and remain employable during the pandemic and beyond.
- ii. Individuals are now appreciating & supporting the efforts being taken by their Employer and the Government towards Skill Development Training as it is all in their own interest.

3.0 Suggestions & Recommendation:

3.1 Solutions for Skill Development Trainings during COVID-19:

The following are some solutions to the challenges faced by Skill Development during the pandemic:

1. Work virtual:

The Training Institutions have to migrate to online mode and adopt virtual platforms to run the show digitally from home adhering to the guidelines issued by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India and respective State Government.

2. E-learning:

Online skilling can be done through live sessions using Zoom/Google/Microsoft based platform. It is also possible to explore many mobile applications that support and promote Digital Learning. Many bigger IT companies like TCS are offering their Learning Management Systems (LMS) free of cost to NGOs to facilitate and streamline online deliveries. Other organizations can offer access to such knowledge platforms and online learning resources to facilitate self-learning. The course material can be downloaded and kept for ready reference. The students need not revisit it online every time. COVID-19 has accelerated the adoption of fully digitized approaches to re-create the best of in-person learning through live video and social sharing.

3. Training through Radio and TV:

The Maharashtra government had already sought air time on national television and radio from the

Central government to conduct educational programmes for children residing in areas where online learning could be a problem due to lack of internet access.

4. Access to digital platform:

It is highly important to redirect resources to places with low digital access or where the resources are unavailable. Service providers and companies need to come forward to invest in recharging mobile data packs or internet connections for students from the lower strata.

5. Access to digital devices:

Skill training has to be practical by ensuring that all the training materials and props reach the homes of the students, especially those who live in slums / rural areas. Private companies can come forward to fund smart phones/ tablets as a part of their CSR initiatives to bridge the digital divide. Organizations / NGOs should also come forward and conduct mass drives where people can donate their old laptops, tablets, smart phones or any other mobile devices that can be refurbished and provided to students from poor backgrounds.

6. Support of Government:

It will be highly beneficial if the Government (i) issue instructions and bring required regulations for proper functioning of Telecom companies and incentivize them, if required, so as to improve internet infrastructure and ensure uninterrupted internet access availability across all corners of India (ii) strengthen systems for the recognition and validation of digital learning (iii) increase investment in digital solutions for practical skills development (iv) improve coordination amongst education and training institutions, employment services and local authorities (v) support teachers and trainers to operate in the new environment and (vi) ensures strict compliance of Apprenticeship Act, 1961.

3.2 Recommendations:

1. Beyond the electronic connection, we need to connect emotionally - especially in times of anxiety and uncertainty. The Management is in panic mode as the business are trapped in the tornado of global recession, the workers are in panic mode due to job loss and salary cuts. The future is in fog. But, at this moment of challenging time Industries & Individuals need to come together and collaborate at this testing time to face the challenge and converted it to advantage in favour. The Government needs to extending a helping hand and promote hope not despair.
2. Doing nothing and waiting for normalcy would be foolish as it emerges seems the change permanent. The quicker one adapts to the post-pandemic “New Normal”, the better he / she can position himself / herself for the future possibilities. For adapting the existing workforce as well as the future workforce needs to be adequately skilled for the new requirement of the “New Normal”.
3. The entitlement mentality of workforce cannot be nurtured anymore. The individuals have to take up the skill development initiatives themselves without waiting for the Industry or Government. The pandemic has shown how the carpets can be pulled under our feet. The vanity of job security has been evident. Individual’s wellbeing is his/her own responsibility. Earlier, the efforts of Industry / Government to skill the work force was not being seriously appreciated by the workforce now the pandemic has taught that workforce needs to appreciate the skill development efforts in their own interest.

4.0 Conclusion:

Every challenge has an opportunity hidden in it. The disruption due to covid-19 pandemic is temporary but the changes would be permanent. The process of change has been expedited and have given birth to new possibilities. But these possibilities would be only for those who embrace these changes. The industries and individual who will adapt well will exist rest will perish. Panic will push further to perish. They both need to understand the requirement of “New Normal” and skill up to meet it so as to welcome the new dawn of change.

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