

DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS FOR RURAL YOUTH

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The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) expresses clearly that the foundational skills should be improved and rural schools are not performing well in this aspect. Due to this, there is a proliferation of private schools, colleges and universities in rural areas, many of which are indifferent in quality. This shows that on the one hand, the awareness and demand for education in rural areas have increased and on the other there is a massification in enrolment and access.

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A majority of India still lives in the villages. It also means that larger section of Indian youth and soon to be youths are also growing up in the villages. In recent times, with pro-active policies by the government, use of modern technologies and better connectivity, the Indian youth, residing in rural areas, have also moved ahead. They see good education, better employment and an honest pro-active government as their right, which would make the greatest difference in their lives. However, compare to the youth of urban India, their rural counterparts are still lagging behind in educational, social and economic developments. It is therefore, inevitable to develop the potential of rural youths to fully reap the benefits of Indian demographic dividends.

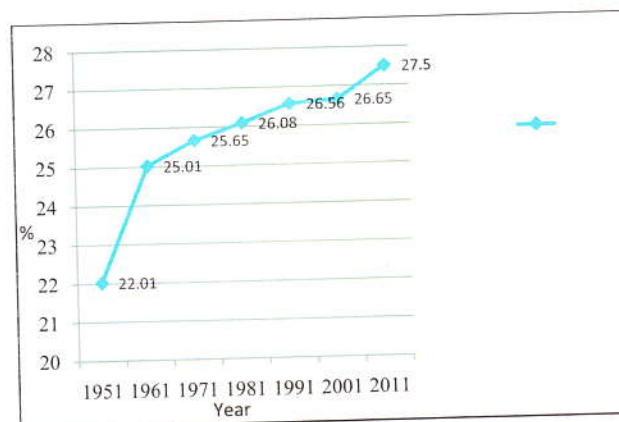


This article highlights some of the major issues of concern hindering the development of rural youth and focuses on how proper education and training can lead them to a prosperous life. In the process, it briefly discusses the diverse nature of Indian rural youth and their educational attainments. It identifies the gaps in policies and practices to develop the non-urban youths. Based

on the analysis, it suggests some of the ways, which could be followed to develop the youth for a sustainable and prosperous India.

Understanding Rural Youth in India

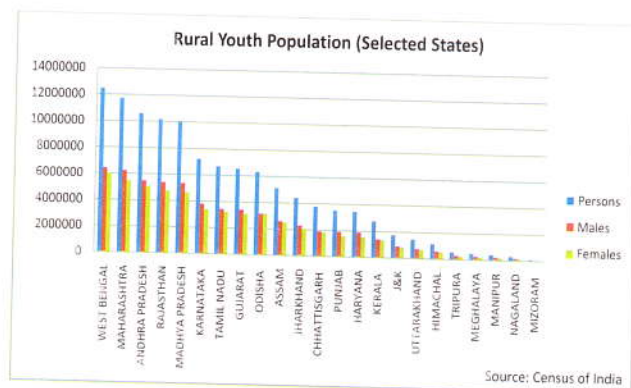
Globally, the highest proportion of young people aged 15-24 who are termed as youths, live in the developed countries. In fact, almost nine out of the 10 youth live in the developing countries. Together, youth make one fourth of world population and in India, the number of youths are the highest. However, it would be rather naïve to perceive that more youths equals to better national prospects, as it is the proper management of their education and skill development, which makes the difference. Moreover, to impart educational and training activities, it is important to understand the diversified nature of the youth of India, especially that of its rural areas.



Source: Census of India

It can be seen that there are considerable inter-state variation in the number of rural youths.

There are variations in the gender representations as well. Unlike the cities and metropolitan areas, rural India is deeply rooted in its cultural heritages. Considering these diverse social, economical, lingual and cultural variation of India, it is a significant factor in developing the youth of rural India.





programmes for youths have witnessed an upsurge. The policies recognize that the major focus should be on education, training and employment, health, family welfare, science and technology, arts and culture and citizenship development. The target population of the policies is mostly rural and tribal youths, out-of schools, female adolescents and youth, youth with disabilities, youths under different circumstances due to socio-political and other reasons. The government focuses on their development with new vision of skill India and a road map is paved as a part of its nation building activities. The section below provides a brief overview of some of the programmes.

It is important to prepare the base of the youth of the nation. Hence, there is a focus on improving schooling and reducing dropouts, especially in rural districts, starting from making them functionally literate. The Government has laid out a roadmap, which is pioneered by the Rural Functional Literacy Project (RFLP). RFLP focuses on imparting functional literacy to the youths (15-35 age group). The National Literacy Mission (NLM) and the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) under NLM created the base for it. The ongoing Saakshar Bharat Abhiyan, launched in September 2009, to impart functional literacy among neo-literate youths and adults, also aims to equip learners with necessary skills to improve earning capacity and living conditions.

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on the one hand, the awareness and demand for education in rural areas have increased and on the other there is a massification in enrolment and access. However, the issue of quality is not properly addressed yet, which is resulting in poor learning and lack of employability skills among educated youths.

The National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) / Aajeevika is designed as a special programme for rural development to address this. For basic skill



National Rural Livelihood Mission

development of the BPL rural youths, the Rural Self Employment Institutes (RSETIs) under NRLM have been set up, which enables them to undertake micro enterprises and wage employment. 25 per cent of NRLM's fund is allocated to the work skill development and innovation. It aims to reduce poverty by empowering people with skills and capacity building. Along with it, the Ministry of Rural Development has started a new scheme titled Himayat, or Skill Empowerment and Employment in J&K (SEE J&K). This is an example of inclusive education and capacity building of youth of diverse educational backgrounds and dropouts, undergraduates of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This model has the potential to be implemented in other states and especially to bring the youths of turbulent areas into the mainstream.

State governments are encouraged to setup skill development centres or the Kaushal Vardhan Kendras (KVKs) at panchayat levels. This will target rural youth, adolescent girls, among other. These KVKs will also work as counseling and guidance



centres for youths to help them take informed discussions. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) plays a catalytic role to create a self-sustainable model through private training partners to cater to the needs of rural and urban youths. Special focus will be to organize the Non-Governmental sectors in their skill development initiatives. Along with KVKs, the NSDC and NGO sector are working closely to develop the competences for the green jobs (agriculture, horticulture, renewable energy, eco-tourism etc.), gray collar jobs (informal manufacturing and services) and local trades, especially in rural areas.

As aforesaid, due to several initiatives more and more youths are getting benefitted. However, it is also important to integrate these initiatives with the lives of the inhabitants. Since about 58% of rural households, 52% of labour and 80% of rural population is dependent on agriculture, it is imperative to focus on agriculture in educational course. However, agriculture and allied subjects are not yet a major concern, at secondary and higher secondary levels. In other words, the curriculums in educational institutes for rural youths often negligibly include issues, which are related to their livelihood. For instance, livestock, fishery, forestry and other agri-related subjects form a negligible part in today's curriculum. The reform is necessary to bring agriculture in the mainstream education. Not many states have given emphasis to develop diploma and certificate courses in agriculture. However it is found that courses in agriculture for rural youth make them closely linked with their surroundings, relate to local agriculture and economy. Moreover, this will also make them better prepared for higher studies in Agricultural Universities and increase their chances of becoming agri-based entrepreneurs. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the NCERT may collaborate in this matter.



While developing new courses or revising curriculums, it is however important to focus on competence development and market demands. In this regard, improving language competence is a major issue and can prove extremely useful in today's interconnected world. While most of the rural schools and colleges teach in mother tongues, there is little or no focus on communicative English. However, English is the language of technology and work, and there is an unprecedented demand for it. It is an aspirational goal. Nevertheless, how far they focus on imparting quality language skills it is a matter of debate. As a result, rural youths feel less confident due to their lack of the working language skills. It is more evident among socially disadvantaged youths. They lack in their critical stages of learning.

How to impart language skills without sacrificing on further development of the mother tongue is a matter of concern. It seems important for the public institutes to come forward and understand the need of the hour. Also, using modern and penetrable technologies, such as mobiles could open many unforeseen avenues. It is observed that mobile phones have the reach in the remotest of places and this can be tapped to improve language competence (and other) among the rural youths. Along with the distance mode of education, such as

open schools and universities, more opportunities are to be provided. It is utmost necessary to improve the broadband connectivity in remote areas. The government and private sector can collaboratively improve the situation. Newly launched 'Digital India' is working on this aspect and one of the major target beneficiaries are the rural youths.



Here, it is important to note that all of these programmes will be successful only if they are implemented properly. There are many issues, but the core of it is related to the teaching/training-learning process. It is seen that in rural schools, colleges and training institutes, that lack competence development is also related with the type of teaching involved. The teachers and their teaching are rather traditional, information oriented and non-participatory. As a consequence, the youths do not develop necessary skills and rather focus on information gathering, most of which is already available online. The youths often find themselves unable to cope with different situation related to their higher education, training and employment. The situation is worse in the remotetribaleducationalinstitutes. As the demand for communication, interpersonal and other soft



skills increasing in workplaces, the importance of proper teaching is becoming even more important. In this regard, norms should be developed, where the recruitment and posting of teachers/trainers influence the equitable development of the youths. Better teacher training modules, also for higher education, should be developed to make sure that the planned initiatives actually reach its target with quality.

The way forward for the Rural youth in India

The above discussion represents some glimpse about the educational and skill development of the rural youths. It is certainly not an exhaustive discussion, which could perhaps reveal more micro level issues in greater detail. Nevertheless, it is seen that the young India is moving forward. The rural youths are not far behind either. Many of them are crossing the thresholds and entering into the world of education and skill development for a better

future. The massification of education and especially higher education is a proof that there are more first generation learners than ever before. Many of them are women and from socially disadvantageous groups, minorities and geographically remote areas.

The youths in rural areas often struggle to get well paid job. The reason could be many, but the most important are the lack of employability skills and also the lack of economic development in rural areas, which prevents the youths to move up in the ladder of professional development.

From a policy perspective, these are major hindrances in making substantial programmes for rural youths, as most of them are input based till date. There is a lack of substantial data to track the development of the youths, especially rural youths. The plans based on rather crude data often lands up from above as policy directives with no or minimal linkages with the livelihood of rural India. No wonder, they often fail to bring effective educational and skill related development for the rural youths.

It is therefore necessary to make integrated plans based on research evidences. The ministries which are involved in the development of rural India, such as the MHRD, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Health and so on should work in an integrated manner. The national data collection and analysis agencies, policy research centres should also collaborate in this regard. Careful inclusion of private partners may expedite the process of imparting education and skills among rural youths further.

How to improve the education and skills of the rural youths for a diverse country like India is a matter of detailed discussion. Any suggestion in this aspect would be rather premature. However it can be said that the importance of the development of youths and rural youths should be seen equally, with micro level planning based on empirical evidences.

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Cabinet approves Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 60 lakh youth to be trained afresh

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) with an outlay of Rs.12000 crore to impart skilling to one crore people over the next four years (2016-2020). PMKVY will impart fresh training to 60 lakh youths and certify skills of 40 lakh persons acquired non-formally under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The target allocation between fresh trainings and RPL will be flexible and interchangeable depending on functional and operational requirements.



The scheme, completely aligned to the Common Norms as notified earlier, would move to a grant based model where the training and assessment cost would be directly reimbursed to training providers and assessment bodies in accordance with the Common Norms.

Financial support to trainees will be given in the form of travel allowance, boarding and lodging costs. Post placement support would be given directly to the beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

Disbursement of training cost to training partners will be linked to Aadhaar and biometrics for better transparency and targeting. Skill training would be done based on industry led standards aligned to the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF).

In view of the recommendations of the sub group of Chief Ministers on Skill Development regarding the need to address the unique skill requirements of different States, State Governments would be involved through a project based approach under the PMKVY 2016-20 with 25% of the total training targets, both financial and physical, being allocated under this stream of the Scheme. The financial amount/budget for achieving 25% of the total training targets of next phase of PMKVY would be directly allocated to the States.

Mobilisation, monitoring and post training placement of trainees will be done through Rozgar Melas (placement camps) and Kaushal Shivirs (mobilization camps). There will be special focus on placement of trainees with incentives/disincentives linked to placement as envisaged in the Common Norms. A project based approach for Non formal training for traditional jobs is also proposed. PMKVY will, in addition to catering to domestic skill needs, also focus on skill training aligned to international standards for overseas employment in Gulf countries, Europe and other overseas destinations. There will be scholarship for student undergoing training in high end job roles under the Scheme.

Source: PIB