

SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONG YOUTH AND WOMEN

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Given the realities of rapidly changing economic landscape in the country, entrepreneurship opportunities have emerged as an important source of meeting the aspirations of the youth. An all inclusive approach to strengthen the entrepreneurship development scenario in the country which is competent, quality conscious, market savvy, innovative and has globally competitive entrepreneurs, needs to be carefully mentored and encouraged.

Today, India is one of the youngest nations in the world with more than 62 per cent of its population in the working age group (15–59 years), and more than 54 per cent of its total population below 25 years of age. During the next 20 years, the labour force in the industrialized world is expected to decline by 4 per cent, while in India it will increase by 32 per cent.¹ This poses a formidable challenge and a huge opportunity for the country. The challenge lies in channelising this gigantic youth energy towards productive avenues and the opportunity lies in taking a competitive advantage over the other economies of the world by using our human resources. Skill development is key in ensuring that this opportunity is availed and the challenge is surpassed.

The Prime Minister has urged that we need to move away from a paradigm of “job seekers” to “job creators”. In a country like India where approximately 12.8 million labour force enters the job market annually,² it is not possible for the existing governmental and non-governmental institutions to generate enough jobs to accommodate all job seekers. It is imperative that a sizeable chunk of these job seekers venture into entrepreneurial activities so that not only do they make a living for themselves but also create job opportunities for others. Entrepreneurship is directed towards innovative problem-solving initiatives which can be turned into commercially viable ventures hence entrepreneurs add value to the society by simplifying the lives of people and creating new jobs in the process.



Literature on ancient Indian history has highlighted that occupation-based corporate organisations called *Shrenis* (Guilds) used to impart skills to the novice artisans by a system of apprenticeship. This shows that skill development has always held an important place in Indian culture. The need of the hour is to revive similar systems which impart trade-based and soft skills to the workforce in order to make them employable in the job market.

Skill Development for Youth

Our country presently faces a dual challenge of paucity of highly trained workforce, as well as non-employability of large sections of the

conventionally educated youth, who possess little or no job skills. Ministry for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was set up in November 2014 to give fresh impetus to the Skill India initiative and help create an appropriate ecosystem that facilitates imparting employable skills to its growing workforce over the next few decades.

A field where the initiative has lacked in India is in developing aspirational value for skill development programmes. Going to polytechnic colleges or Industrial Training Institutes is not something that many students aspire for as their first choice. The narrative around vocational courses needs to be rebuilt as stepping stones for students to move ahead in career by adding new skill sets. The skill development courses should be designed to have flexible curriculum and time duration where working professionals can pursue the courses while continuing their jobs.

Skill development and entrepreneurship culture needs to be built from the bottom to the top. Schools should have mandatory skill and entrepreneurship classes. It should be compulsory for each student to master at least one job skill and gain certification of basic proficiency in it before graduating from schools. Colleges should have compulsory credit courses for skill and entrepreneurship development courses. We need an integrated approach where skill development can be made an integral part of education system at all levels. In 2012, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) launched Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Vocationalisation of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (CSS-VSHSE) targeting both the school drop-outs and those pursuing higher education post school. NSDC has been supporting MHRD in this initiative since inception and has been a co-architect in shaping and implementing the scheme successfully.

Skill development initiatives can be used for reformation and rehabilitation of youth. In a bid to provide children and unemployed youth, who have been found in conflict with law, the opportunities to



realise their potential, NSDC in collaboration with Delhi Police has undertaken project YUVA (Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan), under PMKVY. Delhi Police has identified around 3,000 deprived youth in the capital region for imparting skill training in various trades. NSDC, through its training partners, is operating skill development training centres in the police stations across the capital city with the aim to train youth between the age group of 16 to 25 years. Along with skill training, development of soft skills, vocational skills, basic computer knowledge, spoken English are focused upon to enhance livelihood opportunities. Till date, YUVA scheme has helped training of over 2,300 candidates through 36 NSDC approved training partners in 45 skills and has placed 400 candidates. The youth are motivated to learn new skills and there has been zero per cent dropout rate till now.³

Skill development in rural areas contributes to improvement in productivity and working conditions in the agricultural sector while at the same time in enabling rural workers, particularly young people, to access emerging employment opportunities beyond the agricultural sector. The outreach and quality of skill development in rural areas needs to be improved so as to enable rural workers to acquire and upgrade technologies, improve linkages to value chains, increase agricultural production,

expand access to market and engage in off-farm activities which can generate supplemental income. Institutes for entrepreneurship training such as Rural Development & Self Employment Training Institutes (RUDSETI) need to be promoted further. The convergence with national employment programmes, such as National Rural Employment Guaranteed Scheme (NREGS), provides an opportunity for imparting skills training in rural areas.

Skill Development for Women

Women constitute almost half of the demographic dividend. The key challenge here is to increase their participation in the country's labour force, which is directly linked to economic growth of the nation. National Sample Survey (68th Round) results indicate that the worker population ratio for females in rural sector was 24.8 in 2011-12 and 54.3 for males. In Urban sector, the ratio is 14.7 for females and 54.6 for males. Female participation in the labour force has remained lower than male participation as women account for most of the unpaid work, and when women are employed in paid work, they are overrepresented in the informal sector and among the poor. They also face significant wage differentials vis-à-vis their male counterparts. It has been observed that LFPR (Labor Force Participation Rate) is the lowest for urban females.⁴

Poor ratio of participation of women in labour force gets repeated in poor ratio of participation of women in skill development courses. As per the All India Survey on Higher Education (2015-16) conducted by MHRD, out of all the polytechnic colleges surveyed, the total enrolment constituted of 83 per cent of male students and the remaining 17 per cent of females.⁵ This skewed ratio shows that skill development initiatives need to have a targeted focus towards women to increase the percentage of women in skilled workforce. Mainstreaming gender roles by skilling women in non-traditional roles

and increasing gender sensitivity in the workplace will have a catalytic effect on productivity and be a smart economic decision.

Regular vocational training programmes for women are being conducted through an institutional network of 16 central institutes—one National Vocational Training Institute for Women in Noida & 15 Regional Vocational Training Institutes for Women. These institutes provide training facilities exclusively for women in skills with high wage-employment and self-employment potential besides instructor training programmes.

Skill development for employability can be used as an agent of change in promoting women's employment. Women face a multitude of barriers in accessing skills and productive employment. Women are discouraged for getting into such vocations which are traditionally considered to be 'tough' such as automobiles and construction works. This restricts the job opportunities for women. Skill development programmes should encourage women to venture into traditionally male-dominated areas. Also, there are few areas where women are traditionally preferred such as in hospitality and tourism industry. These areas require soft-skills which can be acquired in a relatively shorter time frame and can fetch handsome income to female workers. National Tourism Policy has also highlighted the requirement of skilled workers in the tourism industry. Keeping this in mind women-centric skill development courses need to be designed to provide gainful employment to women in sectors where demand for skilled female workers is high.

In order to overcome barriers and facilitate participation, proactive measures should be taken such as providing hostels, scholarships, transport, training materials and loans to women pursuing skill development courses. Infrastructure and



programmes for skill development are particularly scarce in rural and difficult areas and thus the problem of access to training is most acute in these terrains. The women are increasingly becoming the main workers in rural households—as their husbands often migrate—but often equipped with only traditional and outdated skills and knowledge.

Skill development initiatives under MSDE need to work in synergy with policies of Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD). Ujjawala scheme for prevention of trafficking and rescue, rehabilitation and re-integration of victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, is a case in point. This scheme intends to provide rehabilitation services, both immediate and long-term to the victims of human trafficking. The rehabilitation initiatives of this scheme can be integrated with the skill development initiatives of MSDE so that the women rescued from difficult conditions can be re-integrated into the society in respectable skill-based remunerative professions. Similarly other schemes of MWCD such as Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), Swavalamban, Kishori Shakti Yojana, etc., which focus on skilling of women should be synergistically integrated with programmes of MSDE.

Skill development for self-employment will be an important component in skill development efforts in rural areas. Post-training support, including mentoring for access to markets, credit and appropriate technologies is an important part of skill development strategy for self-employment. Training modules should incorporate specific needs of target groups, for example, literacy, the level of education and the local language. The delivery of training should be flexible in terms of hours and duration to encourage participation, particularly among women.

Promoting Entrepreneurship in India

Entrepreneurship based on innovation has immense growth potential. However, the number of local entrepreneurs emerging every year in India is very low. The Global Innovation Index 2019 ranks India 52 out of 129 countries in innovation performance. Accelerating entrepreneurship especially that is based on innovation is crucial for large-scale employment generation in India. The



growth and prosperity of all economies remain highly dependent on entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurs are the essence of economic growth. They provide a source of income and employment for themselves, create employment for others, produce new and innovative products and services, and drive greater upstream and downstream value-chain activities. Supportive environments are increasingly essential to successful entrepreneurship and these are evolving across the world. The ideal entrepreneurial environment has five pillars: access to funding, entrepreneurial culture, supportive regulatory and tax regimes, educational systems that support entrepreneurial mindsets, and a coordinated approach that links the public, private and voluntary sectors.

We need to inculcate a culture of entrepreneurship since the formative years of students. Students should be made aware of what constitutes entrepreneurship, what its challenges are, and how they can contribute to the society by executing innovative solutions. Recent reports of Entrepreneurship Classes being conducted in some schools of Delhi are encouraging. Schools should contact the notable entrepreneurs of their cities and invite them for interaction with students. In the last decade, India witnessed young entrepreneurs making breakthroughs across different sectors through blue chip start-ups. The stories of the co-founders of such ventures should be a part of school curriculum to motivate students from a young age.

It should be realised that what makes entrepreneurship different from a normal business is the focus on developing innovative solutions for problems. Hence, a problem-solving aptitude is an important factor to develop entrepreneurship. This

aptitude needs to be cultivated from a young age itself. Schools should develop entrepreneurship labs where students should be encouraged to develop solutions for problems faced by their communities. Competitions should be organised at district, state and national levels where students can showcase their innovations and learn from each other.

While the schools can be the nurseries for entrepreneurship, colleges are the most appropriate places to develop the budding entrepreneurs. For this, colleges and universities should have incubation centres where students can start building their ventures. Universities should facilitate avenues for funding and networking for the student entrepreneurs. Special focus should be given on empowering women and students coming from marginalized sections to provide them with enough confidence so that they venture into the risky domain of entrepreneurship as per their interest rather than being compelled to take a safe job to secure a stable income. It is seen that the current crop of start-up founders have majorly come from the urban-based and premier college educated strata of society. Entrepreneurship needs to penetrate all layers of society so that problems concerning all sections of the society can be solved through innovative solutions. There is need for institutions like DICCI (Dalit Indian Chambers of Commerce) to hand hold entrepreneurs coming from weaker socio-economic background by providing them access to networking opportunities and business funding channels.

Government of India has announced the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship which focuses on towards promoting entrepreneurship. One of the prime factors which hinder entrepreneurship is the multitude of compliances to be made with respect to government regulations and laws. Rules and regulations are necessary in the greater interest of the society however for a new entrepreneurial venture it becomes a daunting task to hire specialized professionals to deal with various government departments. This problem can be solved by providing some relaxation in compliance for newly established start-ups. Tax deduction given under section 80 IAC of the Income Tax Act, to the newly established start-ups is a case in point. Such relaxations give start-ups breathing space to grow till the time they are capable enough

to stand on their feet. Similar relaxations can be given by other government authorities.

Synthesis of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

It is important to see skill development and entrepreneurship as complementary to each other. Entrepreneurship involves venturing into new avenues of economy where new problems are tackled which require the availability of skilled human resource. The lack of skilled manpower restricts the growth of entrepreneurial ventures. At the same time skill development initiatives need augmentation from entrepreneurs. There needs to be a continuous interaction between skill development centres and entrepreneurial ventures so that demands of the industry can be communicated to the skill development agencies which can incorporate the same in their curriculum to ensure higher employability of their pupils. Given the realities of rapidly changing economic landscape in the country, entrepreneurship opportunities have emerged as an important source of meeting the aspirations of the youth. An all inclusive approach to strengthen the entrepreneurship development scenario in the country which is competent, quality conscious, market savvy, innovative and has globally competitive entrepreneurs needs to be carefully mentored and encouraged.

Footnote

1. <https://www.msde.gov.in/assets/images/Skill%20India/National%20Policy%20on%20Skill%20Development%20and%20Entrepreneurship%20Final.pdf>
2. <https://www.msde.gov.in/assets/images/NationalSkillDevelopmentPolicyMar09.pdf>
3. <https://www.msde.gov.in/assets/images/annual%20report/Annual%20Report%202017-2018%20%28English%29.pdf>
4. http://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/reports_and_publication/statistical_publication/social_statistics/Chapter_4.pdf
5. https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/AISHE2015-16.pdf

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