INCLUSIVENESS AND NATIONAL POLICY ON SKILL DEVELOPMENT: A SPECIFIC STUDY OF PRADHAN MANTRI KAUSHAL VIKAS YOJANA (PMKVY)

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Abstract
Skill development programs are necessary to capitalize on the Demographic Dividend. Multiple government policies like the Skill India Program and the National Skill Development Mission have been implemented towards this goal. The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the latest and largest endeavour of its kind to be implemented by the central government for providing skill development services to the population. This paper analyses the historical perspective of the skill development programs in India. It looks at the PMKVY specifically from the perspective of gender inclusiveness and analyses the challenges faced by the PMKVY over the course of its implementation.

Keywords: Skill Development, PMKVY, Gender Inclusivity, Policy Implementation

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Introduction

Economic growth is one of the major requirements for meeting the challenges posed by the millennium development goals, as it leads to lower unemployment and higher production levels in the economy. However, economic growth itself cannot account for the growth of the country if it is not catered towards the poor and underprivileged sections. It must be combined with structural and long-term macroeconomic policies which include facets of economic inclusion and empowerment with specific focus on investment into the growth and upliftment of society.

As stated in the Economic policy convention (no,122) of the international labour organization (ILO): "Each Member shall declare and pursue, as a major goal, an active policy designed to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment." Every member state participating in the convention agreed to spend full efforts in providing employment to all those who are willing and able to work after recognizing the serious and dynamic consequences of unemployment beyond the primary loss of income.

In developing countries like India, unemployment is a luxury few can afford. the government does not have enough fiscal power to support the unemployed part of the workforce as is the case in developed counties like the United States and some member states of the European Union. There is also a lack of insurance policies covering unemployment and while social ties are strong in the Indian Culture, it is hard for unemployed people to depend upon friends and relatives for prolonged support. Due to all the above factors, casual labour is the only recourse available for a major section of the workforce. According to (Charmes, 2000) employment in the informal sector is, contrary to the predictions of many economic models, growing with overall economic growth.

Informal Employment is the total number of informal jobs carried out in the formal sector enterprises, informal sector enterprises or households. (17 conference of Internal labour statisticians,2003). Even when the informal sector is limited to domestic workers and other unremunerated workers, this sector was responsible for 67% of the total employment in Asia in the 1990s (Beneria, 2001).

Skill development is critical to increasing productivity and is one of the most important drivers of growth and better living conditions (Christoph and Berg, (2009); (Sanghi S. and Srija, (2015)) . The importance of skills in improving productivity, income, and equal access to work opportunities appears to be particularly evident and significant (Bennell, 1999). According to Salvanes, 2003 those with less skills or less education will remain unemployed since both operate as accelerators for human resource development. As a result, it is necessary to improve the knowledge and abilities of the economically weak and socially excluded segments of society to further socioeconomic growth. Skill development might also be employed to empower a person and improve his or her societal acceptability or ideals (GoI, 2012)

The are many authors who are critical of the skill development endeavour of the government as they believe that this process is one of "pacification" (Gleeson, 1989). This pacification of the youth who are in the demographic dividend of 15-29 years is necessary because the job market is unable to cater to the needs of the growing working age population. The industry and service sectors of the Indian economy fall short of producing the required number of new jobs to provide gainful employment to the youth which is entering the labour force each year. According to this perspective, the unemployment prevailing in the economy is construed to be caused by a deficiency of skills on part of the job seekers and not because of a lack of jobs themselves, as provided by the employers. Skill development is just another gimmick to keep the youth off the streets and available for employment while new jobs are being created (Offe, 1984;1989). Thus, skill development is not only a case of developing human resources, but also a politically and ideologically motivated process (Burawoy, 1983)

Historical Perspective on skill Development

Skill development is an important driver in reducing poverty by increasing the employability and productivity of the workforce engaged in the informal sector by proving access to a host of skills necessary for sustainable enterprise development and inclusive growth (Sanghi S. and Srija, (2015)). The vital importance of the skill development sector was realised during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan when the National Policy on Skill Development was framed alongside the initiation of the Coordinated Action on Skill Development in the year 2009. These initiatives were taken with a vision of skilling, re-skilling and up-skilling the labour force of the country by the end of the Thirteenth Five -Year Plan (13th FYP) in 2022. The State governments also took the initiative to set up the State Skill development Centres along with many auxiliary initiatives to bolster the efforts made by the Central government. Due to a lack of

importance placed upon the skill development aspect of the labour force, there were many aspects of the entire endeavour that were not unified across the country. As such, a National Skill Qualification Framework was set up to standardise the vocational education training and skill development of the labour force in a uniform way throughout the country. Another pertinent aspect was the lack of knowledge and awareness amongst the target population about the various opportunities available to them for increasing their skills and employability along with a lack of critical knowledge of government schemes initiated in this regard. To bring the knowledge of government initiatives to the target beneficiaries, the Labour Information System was also set up.

Along with policy initiatives, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was also set up in 2009 according to the Companies Act 1956 to act as a nodal agency for running skill development centres across the nation by enlisting the help of the private sector in partnership with government agencies. Since its inception, the NSDC has opened 3026 training centres in partnership with 211 Private Sector Training partners to provide training to 5 million people by 2015. The NSDC is also working closely with 21 universities- both government and private- to align the course curriculum with the guidelines given in the National Skill Qualification Framework.

Despite the recognition of the need for immediate and expedited skill development of available labour force, and despite the setting up of numerous policy initiatives along with the creation of many vital public and private sector entities, the total effectiveness of these efforts was not up to par during the subsequent years under the Twelfth FYP. Thus, for synergizing and consolidating the efforts made by all the various institutions and policies framed during previous FYP, a separate ministry – Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)- was set up in 2014 along with efforts of standardising the schemes and policies launched by other ministries of the central government. Since 2014, the government has also launched many other initiatives like the National skill Development Mission, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Policy in 2015. The biggest initiative in this regard was the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) set up on 15th July 2015. This paper aims to study the gaps in the skill development sector in India and the extent to which such gaps have been filled by the government's flagship program: the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana.

Objectives Of The Research

Examine the provisions of the National Policy on Skill Development with special focus on Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

- Assess the significance of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) on skill development.
- Examine to what extent the PMKVY is inclusive.
- Assess the opportunities and challenges of PMKVY in inclusive development.

Existing skill gap in the Indian economy

The demographic dividend in which most of the population is part of the workforce i.e., between the ages of 15-59, comes only once in the life of the nation. Such a demographic dividend can be the major driving force for the nation to achieve higher levels of growth and development. The demographic dividend of developing countries like China would be over by 2015, while that of India would continue till 2040 (World Bank, 2012). To capitalise on such favourable conditions, it is necessary to frame policies conducive towards the holistic development of the labour force. The first challenge towards this endeavour is the estimation of the skill gap existing in the population of the country.

High levels of GDP growth and the gradual increase of the percentage of population coming under the classification of the workforce have increased the need to qualitatively assess the quality and level of training prevalent in the workforce. The total labour force available in India in the year 2009-10 was 470 million (NSS, Employment and Unemployment Situation in India (66th Rounds), 2009). According to a study conducted by (Mehrotra, Gandhi, Sahoo, & Saha, 2012), the general education level amongst those in the age range of 15-59 remains abysmally low. In the sample of 431 million people considered in this study, 126 million people were illiterate and an additional 102 million people were only educated upto the level of primary education and below. This vast population of illiterate people and those having education levels below the primary education level account for more than half of the total labour force available in the economy. Additionally, only 17.6 % of the labour force had been educated up to the middle level and only 12% of the population completed education at the secondary level. This leaves only 17% of the population with education levels above secondary education. People with graduation and above levels of education only account for 8% of the total labour force of 470 million in the year 2009-10 in India ((Mehrotra, Gandhi, & Sahoo, 2013)).

This low level of education is reflected in the population of the labour force engaged in primary sector activities in the country. As per Census 2011, conducted by the Registrar General of India, the total number of agricultural workers in the country have increased from 234.1 million in 2001 to 263.1 million in 2011. Additionally, the share of the labour force engaged in the agriculture sector (comprising of cultivators and agricultural labourers) has come down from 58.2 per cent in 2001 to 54.6 per cent in 2011. This means that a pattern of migration of agricultural labourers and other cultivators from the rural hinterlands of the country to progressively urban areas have been observed. Such changes can be explained by the availability better employment opportunities in industry and services, increasing urbanization, low income in agriculture etc (Mehrotra, Gandhi, Sahoo, & Saha, 2012). The low levels of education amongst those engaged in the agricultural sector is the major impeding factor in their search of better employment opportunities. Those who shift to urban areas to transition into manufacturing and other allied sectors, only find jobs in the construction and manufacturing sectors as low-level labourers owing to deficiencies in education and skill levels.

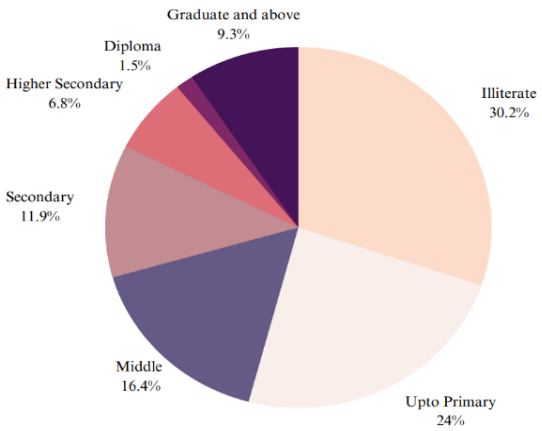

Figure 1.1: Education Profile of Labour Force in India (%)

Source: Estimated data from NSSO Employment Unemployment Survey 2011-12

Figure 1.1 (Adapted from (Mehrotra, Gandhi, & Sahoo, Estimating India's Skill Gap: on a Realistic Basis for 2022, 2013)) depicts the labour force education profile based on the NSSO Employment-Unemployment Survey (EUS) (NSS, 2012) . The youth unemployment rate is higher than the rest of the population due to a skill mismatch at the entry-level into the labour force. According to the NSSO EUS 2011–12, the rural male unemployment rate was 5%, the rural female unemployment rate was 4.8 percent, the urban male unemployment rate was 8.1 percent, and the urban female unemployment rate was 13.1 percent. When compared to educational status, those with higher educational qualifications had a higher unemployment rate. For example, among the 18–29 age group, the unemployment rate was 15.6 % in those who are educated till the level of graduation and above, 9.3% diploma holders and only 2.3% for non-graduates. The years of 2011-2016 were very eventful from the demographic dividend perspective as it saw an increase of 40 million in the youthful labour force (15-29) from 147 million to 187 million. This increase in the number of you was also accompanied by a decrease of 30 million people aged 29 years and above (Mehrotra S. , 2018). These numbers show that the major increase is because of the youth who are leaving educational institutions and joining the job market. Thus, it is important for the government policy initiatives to focus upon the youth, especially those who are entering the job market for the first time, to properly capitalize upon this favourable demographic dividend.

Existing levels of vocational training in India.

According to the (NSS, 2009), vocational training can be broadly understood as any kind of training which prepares an individual for employment in a specific occupation or vocation. Vocational training constitutes of providing education of specific fields so that they can acquire the skills to be employed in those sectors. It involves the imparting of training coupled with significant "hands on experience" of the target industry so that the person undergoing such vocational training is capable of being employed in their target sectors or has the necessary skills to become self-employed. The goal of such vocational training is to impart skills to the labour force, especially the youth (person aged 15-29), and making them employable in a vast array industries and other allied economic sectors.

Formal vocational training refers to such vocational training that is imparted in formal training centres and generally lead to certificates, diplomas and degrees. Formal training centres are recognised by government authorities at the Centre and State levels and follow a structured training program during the duration of the course. According to the (NSS, 2009) round, a structured training program (i) has a definite title and a prescribed syllabus and curriculum and (ii) has a specified duration of training. Formal vocation training programs also have some specific prerequisite eligibility criteria related to the age and education levels of potential applicants.

People engaging in their traditional vocations cannot be unskilled in their primary profession. Only when they change their vocations can they be considered as unskilled. The total number of people employed in the industry sector who have received formal vocational training expressed as a part of the total population of working in the industrial sector is only 44%. Out of the 219 million workers engaged in the agriculture sector, only 5% have received vocational training and out of this, 4.7 % of people have received their training from non-formal sources. (Mehrotra et. al., 2013; Mehrotra et al., 2012) Out of the total labour force of 460 million, only 10 % have received any kind of vocational training across all sectors of the economy and the percentage of people receiving formal vocational training is only 2.3%.

According to Mehrotra et al., 2013, the share of population which has received non-formal vocational training is similar in the agricultural (92%) and manufacturing sectors (86%). This shows the prevalence of traditional instruction techniques and non-formal vocational training in these two sectors, while the services sector has the least amount of people who are informally training expressed as a part of the total work force of that sector at 54 %. The high dependence of people in acquiring skills from informal and non-formal sources in the two key sectors of the economy which employ the largest proportion of the labour force only highlights the gross inadequacy of the formal vocational education training infrastructure in India.

The highest number of potential labour force entrants in the age group of 5-29 come from the northern belt of the country consisting of the states of Bihar, Chattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. The literacy rates in these states continue to be relatively low, forcing the youth from their state to be only eligible for low paying jobs involving unskilled labour. The challenge for the government now lies in providing skill development training in surplus-demographic states and reskilling and upskilling the skillsets of the labour force in the rest of the states through concentrated efforts made for recognising the prior learning of the target beneficiaries, strengthening the educational profile of the youth, and linking school education with vocational education provided at various levels of learning in order to bring as many people as possible working in the unorganized sector into the ambit of formal certification in accordance with the national skill qualification framework.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana: A Flagship initiative for skill development

"Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) implemented by National Skill Development Corporation. The objective of this Skill Certification Scheme is to enable a large number of Indian youths to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood".

(Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 2.0 (PMKVY 2.0) 2016-20, 2023)

This flagship program of the central governments has been implemented under a public private partnership model with the National Skill Development Corporation and under the aegis of ministry of skill development. This program in essence is a skill certification program which is the largest of its kind in India and a unique endeavour by any government in the international community. The first phase of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana was launched at the world youth skills day celebrations by the Hon'ble prime minister Shri. Narendra Modi on 15th July 2015. The program found immense success in its first year owing to the full support of the union and state governments leading to its approval for another 4 years. This new program was term PMKVY 2.0 and was successfully implemented from 2016-2020.

The PMKVY Steering Committee [(Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 2.0 (PMKVY 2.0) 2016-20, 2023)] was set up to guide the implementation process of the entire program across the country. The committee has set up some guidelines which are to be the core principles while providing a vast array skills and technical education to almost 10 million people over the duration of the program. The basic guidelines are:

(i) Short term training guidelines: there shall be a Short-Term Training program conducted at the PMKVY training centres (TC). The course curriculum would only focus on the skills classified by the NSQF as level 5 or below. The programs are designed for the benefit of the college dropout/ unemployed section of the labour force. The would be taught various skills like entrepreneurship, soft skills, financial and digital literacy. The training program would last be depending upon the job role for a duration ranging from 150-300 hours of training provided at the training centres. After successful training program, the training partners (TPs) are required to provide placement assistance. The entire cost of implementations of thew program shall be borne

by the government paid to the TPs according to the common norms.

(ii) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) guidelines: the program would give proper recognition to the skills learned by the applicant before training at the TCs. Such skills would be measured at certified at the TCs. This is in an endeavour to bring a majority of the unregulated workforce of the country under the classification system of the NSQF. Any institution recognised by the MSDE or NSDC is highly encouraged to provide RPL services in three different modes which are RPL camps, RPL at employer's premises and RPL Centres. These institutions can provide the necessary bridge courses to enhance the learning of the participants of RPL program.

(iii) Special Projects Guideline: this provision is for the special projects which may require some deviation from the framework or the short-term Training programs. Any stakeholder be it government institutions of the Centre and State governments or the autonomous bodies or a statutory body, can provide training to the participants in certain areas and job roles not classified under the Nation Occupation Standard. A platform shall be provided for imparting training in specific occupation in either the public or private sector.

(iv) Kaushal and Rozgar Mela Guidelines: this provision is for the training partners to arrange Mandatory Kaushal and Rozgar melas. These events would have proper media coverage and would be ensure the maximum involvement of the community in the entire event. Increased participation of the community in Rozgar melas and Kaushal Melas would ensure transparency and accountability on the part of the organizers as well as make full use of the vast traditional knowledge bank of the community.

(v) Placement Guidelines: All such skilling and certification programs should translate into real results in the form of increased labour force participation of the trainees graduating from the skill development courses. Maximum efforts shall be made on the behalf of the training partners to provide good employment opportunities to the participants which would end up providing gainful employment to the trainees.

(vi) Monitoring Guidelines: To ensure that the services are provided to the target beneficiaries in the most efficient, effective and economic way as possible, numerous safeguards have been employed. The participating training partners would employ techniques like self-audit, surprise visits and call validation along with the use of the latest Skill Development Monitoring System (SDMS) to provide quality vocational education to the participants of the program.

PMKVY and Gender Inclusivity

"Inclusivity refers to the fact of including all types of people, things or ideas and treating them fairly or equally" (Dictionary, n.d.). In the context of government policies, inclusivity refers to the inclusion of all types of target beneficiaries during the policy framing and implementation stages of government initiatives.

Almost 48% of the Indian population consists of women (Census India, 2011), however, the female labour force participation rate is abysmally low at only 23 % as compared to the average 55.6% labour force participation rate for men. Unemployment amongst women has also been prevalent since the years of 1972-73 and is continuing in an upwards trend till date (Sangar, 2013). These factors have a negative impact upon the financial autonomy of women, hampering their growth and social upliftment. Along with the historical biases and the structure of Indian society, it is of vital importance that government initiatives focus on the inclusion and safeguarding of the interests of women (Sangar, 2013).

The Eleventh FYP, provided a comprehensive roadmap for making a three-tier structure of institutions ranging from the central level to the state level and, finally the local level. The National policy on Skill Development (2009) also laid particular focus upon the challenges faced by women and other disadvantages groups of society while framing its policy (Sangar, 2013). The eleventh FPY, during its implementation also gave rise to the Skill Development Missions which envisaged to raise women participation in skill development programs by the end of 11th FYP by providing them with hostels, scholarships and transportation, amongst other benefits. The 11th FYP also aimed to expand the Women's Vocational Training Program and identify several sectors which could benefit from the increased participation and contribution of women.

Research analysis

Any workforce must have gender diversity, but this is especially true in India, where gender differences have historically been very large. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the gender breakdown of the workforce by age group to guarantee that organisations have access to a broad pool of talent. According to the data, trained men were found to have a younger age profile than women, with 73%

of trained men being under 25, as opposed to 62% of female candidates.

Figure 1 Adapted from PMKVY2.0 Research Analytics

In every age group, it is obvious that girls outperform males in terms of failure, NAA (% of trained), and dropout rates. In the youngest (14 to 18 years old) and oldest (41 and older) age groups, dropout rates are greater for both males and females. As a result, organizations need to concentrate on fostering an inclusive workplace that benefits workers of all ages, especially older workers who could bring a wealth of expertise to the table.

The NAA rate rises with advancing age, reaching its peak for both males and females between the ages of 26 and 30. After that, it keeps dropping for men, while it starts to rise again for women in the 36–40 age range. With increasing age, the failure rate primarily decreases, although for females in the 41+ age range, it seems to rise. This emphasises the value of age diversity and the requirement for employers to create plans that assist workers at all career stages.

The proportion of women in training and placements is greater in the "not educated" and 5th to 8th standard categories in terms of education. Female applicants with less education have lower NAA and failure rates, and female dropout rates are more extensive. The fifth through eighth grade level has the highest percentage of male dropouts. After graduating, the female NAA rate starts to decline as education level improves. The fifth through eighth grades are when the male NAA rate is at its highest level. Both males and females have an increase in failure rate with increasing years of education. Male failure rates are higher at higher education levels, up until postgraduate and beyond, while female failure rates are higher in the graduate category. In almost all facets of education, women surpass men. With growing years of education, the placement rate for both girls and boys falls, with the 'not educated' group having the greatest placement rate. This highlights the significance of giving both genders similar educational opportunities and the necessity for employers to hire people with a variety of educational backgrounds.

Figure 2 Adapted from Mehrotra et al., 2013.

According to state-by-state research, the proportion of placements over trainings for both men and women is higher in seven of the top 15 states. However, there are more placements than trainings for women just in two states: Punjab and J&K. The highest percentage of female trainees (72%) and placements (77%) are in Tamil Nadu. Among large states, Bihar has the lowest (37% and 38%, respectively). In five of the top 15 states—Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and Telangana—and in seven—including Haryana and MP—females make up more than half of all trained applicants and more than half of all placed candidates, respectively. Apart from Karnataka and Chhattisgarh, women currently outnumber males in practically all states, as well as minor ones like Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Sikkim, Goa, and Daman & Diu. Males outnumber females in states like Bihar, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. In all but eight states, female dropout rates are lower than male dropout rates. Women perform better in the healthcare industry as well. More than half of all training programmes and job placements in this field are for women. Female dropout rates in healthcare are lower than male dropout rates, suggesting that female students are more dedicated to their education. Additionally, compared to their male counterparts, female healthcare workers had a lower failure rate.

Female dropout rates in the automotive industry are higher than male dropout rates, which may indicate that this sector is less friendly to women. But female NAA rates are lower than male NAA rates, suggesting that people who complete their training have a higher chance of finding employment. In the green employment sector as well as the gem and jewelry industries, girls outperform males in terms of dropout rates (Chandrasekhar & Ghosh, 2018) Additionally, female dropout rates are lower than male dropout rates in the security and biological sciences industries. The NAA rates for women in these fields, however, are comparable to or somewhat higher than those for men. This shows that even while women might be dedicated to their training, they might encounter more difficulties in being hired in these fields. Women outnumber men in the NAA rate in the iron and metals and plumbing industries, implying that women who complete their training in these fields are more likely to find employment. However, women also fail at a higher rate than men do in similar fields, suggesting that they would encounter more difficulties in keeping a job.

The sector with the highest rates of male and female failure is capital goods. This implies that both men and women may experience major difficulties in this field and may need more assistance to be successful. In conclusion, there are numerous and intricate gender discrepancies in India's skill training programs. Compared to men, women are more likely to complete their training, drop out at a lower rate, and succeed at a higher rate. However, girls also encounter additional difficulties in securing jobs, particularly in fields where men predominate, like manufacturing and construction. Additionally, there are notable disparities between the states and industries, with some displaying more equitable outcomes for women than others. For instance, states like Bihar

and Rajasthan have a higher proportion of male trainees, whereas Tamil Nadu has the largest number of female trainees and placements.

Policymakers and training providers must adopt a comprehensive strategy to address these gaps that considers both the job constraints that different gender groups must overcome as well as their training demands. This could entail initiatives to enhance the representation of women in training programs and leadership positions, as well as focused outreach and support for women working in fields where males predominate. Given the crucial role these programs play in meeting the nation's workforce development needs and fostering equitable economic growth, there is an urgent need for more attention to be paid to gender discrepancies in India's skill training programs.

National Skill Development Mission and Skill India program: Recognized linkage.

The National Skill Development Mission (NSDM) and the Skill India program are two initiatives launched by the Government of India with the aim of improving the skill sets of the Indian workforce and making them employable in the changing job market. The two programs are closely linked as the Skill India program is the implementation arm of the NSDM The program aims to train over 40 crore people in various skills by 2022 through the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and its partners (Comyn, 2014)

The NSDM was launched in 2015 with the objective of training and equipping the Indian workforce with the necessary skills to meet the demands of the job market. The mission focuses on creating a more skilled workforce through various initiatives, including setting up training centres, promoting apprenticeships, and creating sector-specific skill councils. On the other hand, the Skill India program is the implementation arm of the NSDM and is responsible for executing the mission's objectives on the ground. The program aims to provide vocational training and education to the Indian youth and create a workforce that is job-ready and capable of contributing to India's economic growth (Sadgopal, 2016)

The Skill India program offers training in various sectors, including healthcare, construction, retail, and tourism, among others. The program is implemented through various schemes and initiatives, such as the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), and National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), among others. Under the Skill India program, the government has set up skill development centres across the country, including in rural areas, to provide training to the youth. The program also focuses on creating a conducive environment for skill development by collaborating with various industries, setting up sector-specific skill councils, and promoting apprenticeships. The NSDM and the Skill India program have several benefits for the country. They help reduce unemployment, create a skilled workforce, increase productivity, and boost economic growth. Moreover, the programs help bridge the gap between education and employability by providing hands-on training to the youth (Chowdhury)

Opportunities and challenges of the PMKVY

The efforts of the government initiatives on skill development and vocational education training of the youth labour force participants at all levels of the economy are facing their own fair share of criticisms and appreciation. The first problem arises due to the way the implementation of the PMKVY is structured. The training partners which provide the actual services are generally NGOs which derive the fund from the government and other large organizations. As far as the centrally sponsored centrally managed training centres are concerned, the strict regulations provide a better regulatory mechanism, however with the thrust of government initiatives being towards bringing as many partners from the private sector as possible into the ambit of PMKVY as training partners and investors, the prevalence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives has become a burden on the quality of education provided by the training partners. Most of the NGOs which run training centres follow the course curriculum approved by the NSDC, but they are paid according to the number of people trained and placed by the end of the program. This quota of participants is determined by the funding agency and some NGOs may compromise on the quality of education and screening process of the applicants to complete more batches of trainees. NGOs may focus upon only a small subgroup of the local demographic while selecting participants for their training programs and may also prefer people who have received such training before as a part of other courses. This leads to a decline in the community outreach of skill development programs while adversely affecting the mobilization of the youth in the more remote parts of the country where the PMKVY is implemented (Sharma, 2019).

The second major problem is with the nature of skills taught by the training partners under the

PMKVY. These training programs teach skills which are generally associated with the unorganized sector. Even though the government funds a part of the training institutes, it has its own separate recruitment policy which is not feasible for those who train in these skill development programs. Similarly, the corporates who fund skill development programs under their CSR initiatives often work in the industry or services sector and mostly hire their core employees from other institutions of higher education. The low-level positions, if any, are generally contracted out, resulting in a less employment opportunities extended to the trainees of the Skill Development program. Thus, these trainees have no other alternative than to become a part of the unorganized sector braving the added financial insecurity and overall instability in their daily lives.

The third major problem is that the NGOs who are running the training centres are not only required to provide training to the candidates but are also required to provide them with placement assistance. The training parts do not have adequate experience in placement services and often, do not have dedicated placement cells to help find jobs for successful trainees. The training partners mostly rely upon personal contacts to invite employers to the Rozgar Melas; a practice which is unsustainable in the long run and creates an unnecessary dependence upon the NGOs to find or change Jobs.

Finally, the speed at which the overall educational level of the populace is growing is nowhere near the required level. According to (Venkatanarayana & Naik, 2017) based on their analysis of the Census 2011 data, have concluded that those states which have a higher level of education and literacy rate also have higher correlated labour force participation in the main worker category(main workers are those who work for more than 6 months in a year), while those states with low literacy rates have increased labour force participation in the marginal worker category(those working less than 6 months in a year). Thus, it is imperative to improve the education and literacy rates of marginalized states so that more people can successfully transition towards becoming a part of the main worker category of the labour force and securing jobs with higher rewards payment and stability.

Conclusion

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana is a commendable endeavour in the Indian skill development sector. Being the biggest of its kind, it has faced several challenges which need to be addressed for future programs. The issue of stagnating job growth would be the biggest challenge for the PMKVY as well as future programs, otherwise, the increased youth labour which has received the necessary skills and training would have no opportunities to convert their newly acquired skillset into tangible results by securing for themselves a financially secure future and contributing positively to the growth of the nation. As the current scenario stands, the skill development sector has become a mere catchment area (Gleeson, 1989; Sharma, 2019) for the trainees of the skill development programs, acting as a placeholder for them as they endlessly transition between training centres and brief periods of employment. The PMKVY has a lot of room for growth and hopefully, the highlighted issues are addressed by future renditions of this promising program.

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