

Comparing the development of global skill enhancement with India as a special focus

"Skill is the unified force of experience, intellect and passion in their operation."

--John Ruskin

Mere literacy can't make a person employable; skills are equally important to make a person a valuable asset for the country. Skills include various kinds: technical skills, business skills, interpersonal skills, and many more. Skills make the youth more valuable, competent, efficient and knowledgeable in the market economy.

Skill development refers to the identification of skill gaps in the population and to enhance the existing skills of the working-age population in a country. This can be done by various schemes and policies of the government, civil societies, and even by private institutions. Skill development is important in the overall development of a student, to increase employability, reduce poverty, increase investment in the economy, high productivity etc.

The development of a country depends on the percentage of a skilled person present in the working-age population of that country. The more skilled population of a country, the more developed that country would be. Such as the USA and South Korea are the most developed countries in the world because 58% and 96% of the workforce is skilled there respectively. The working-age population in low and middle countries lack the basic skills required to get quality jobs that will further make them unable to work with the fullest capacity. On the other hand, the workforce of higher-income countries possesses all the necessary skills required to utilize their full productive potential so that they can contribute to enhancing the economy of that country.

According to World Bank Calculations, more than 2 billion working-age adults are not equipped with the most essential literacy skills required by employers; among them 420 million people are young adults under the age of 25 worldwide. In India, only 4.69% of the workforce is skilled, this is extremely low as compared to 24% in China, 52% in the USA, 68% in the UK, 80% in Japan. India lags far behind in upskilling the youth of the country. Reports indicate that among 1.5 crore job seekers every year only 10% receives some kind of skill training (2% with formal training and 8% with informal training).

In 2020, Coursera released their first annual report on global skill assessment that benchmarks 60 countries and 10 industries for business, technology and data science skills. In the report countries and industries were grouped into four categories: Cutting-edge (Rank 1-15), Competitive (16-30), Emerging (31-45) and Lagging (46-60).

The top ranks were dominated by European countries repeatedly. The top 3 ranks in all skills are represented below table:

Position	Data science skills	Business skills	Technology skills
1st	Russia	Switzerland	Russia
2nd	Switzerland	Austria	Belarus
3rd	Belgium	Denmark	Switzerland

India's place in the GLOBAL INDEX REPORT is alarming the need for more comprehensive policies and programs to upskill the working force of the country. India is placed at 51st, 34th and 40th position in Data Science, Business and IT skills respectively. It shows that India is lagging behind the other countries in all the basic skills that all the citizens who are capable of working should acquire.

Global Index Report shows that most of the skilled workforce of the world is concentrated in the European countries, North America and a few countries of Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa. European countries make up 80% of best-performing countries in Business, Technology and Data Science. Whereas 66% of the world population is living in lagging and emerging countries which indicates a critical need of upskilling this proportion of the global workforce. India is one of those countries where more than 95% of the workforce is unskilled.

So why is India and other low and middle-income countries lagging in the Global Skill Index? Some of the reasons can be summed up as follows:-

1. Historically deprived (Colonization)
These low-middle income countries were the colonies of the Western European countries that offered low-skilled labor to the developed world. Also, the new technology and industrial revolution first happened in the Western world and later in these colonies.
2. Proactive approach
The overall dominance of the European countries in every kind of skill is due to its proactive approach to upskilling advocacy of training and momentum to make learning on the job. But the low- middle-income country is just responding to it as a problem-solving issue and not taking proactive measures to upskill the youth of the country.
3. Insufficient resources
Poor and Developing countries don't have sufficient resources to invest in education, health infrastructure and Skill development programs. This is also an important reason for lagging in basic skills.
4. Lack of awareness
Lack of awareness about the importance or role of skills in the working-age population in the development of their countries can also be a reason.
5. Non-implementation or poor implementation of existing Skill development programs.
In some countries, there are Skill development programs, but governments are not able to implement them because of a lack of funds or proper plan to implement them. In India, there are many Skill development programs such as Skill India, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), 1.04 crore people benefited from the PMKVY program in India. But the implementation of this program in rural areas of the country is very low. The most unskilled person in India lives in a rural part of the country that needs to be upskilled.

Way Forward:

Here are some of the suggestions that emerging or lagged countries, in particular India, can do to increase the proportion of skilled workforce:

1. Proper implementation of existing policies is as needed as making another new policy so that more and more people can get the advantage of a certain policy.

2. Equal access to education in all parts of the country is very necessary to attain a high proportion of the skilled workforce. Most of the educated and skilled population in India is concentrated in urban or semi-urban areas. This is necessary to educate the youth in rural areas too.
3. Increase awareness among youths so that one can make an informed choice about the programme, he wishes to pursue through counseling. Also, enlighten the youth of rural areas about such programs of skill development so that they can also pursue some kind of skill training.
4. Need to make more comprehensive programs so that all groups of society can benefit from them whether they are women, or poor, low-middle class people from all parts of the country.
5. Women empowerment is not merely to improve the condition of women but it will contribute to making society and country better than ever before in every segment of life whether that is socially, economically or politically. Most of the women workforce in India is illiterate or unskilled so by skilling women the proportion of the skilled workforce will increase. For that, there is a need for a separate policy for skill development in women.

Conclusion:

In the changing economy pattern and the age of the covid-19 pandemic, a skilled workforce is the most important tool for the development of any country and it's also an index for a better life in a particular country. India is lagging in skill development in the world. By upskilling the youth of the country, we can reduce poverty and can attain a better lifestyle for the people that will contribute to the national economy of our country to become one of the biggest economies of the world.

Written by: Shallu Jaglan

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