

Skilling-India @Scale.Speed

Focus needs to be on employment rather than employability

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INDIA has a clear cut task set for itself, 500 million to be skilled by 2022 to meet industries' requirements till 2022. The ground level situation points to (i) 60% of the population within the

working age of 15-59 years, (ii) roughly 10 million drop-outs between class 6 to 10 and a further about 5 million drop-outs in high school to higher education; (iii) 10-25% employable skills among graduates; (iv) 12 million youths join the workforce annually; and (v) only 4-5% of youth formally learn a trade.

For sustained economic growth, India needs an educated, healthy, and adequately skilled population. The focus needs to be on employment rather than only employability.

At a strategy level, India needs to have a twin focus. While we need to skill the existing and projected school and higher education drop-outs for employment, simultaneously we need to rapidly restructure our schools and higher education system to reduce the drop-out rate, improve learning outcomes and mainstream skill development. The four key foundations for enabling this to happen are:

- Bridges between industry and formal education system;
- industry-based standards;
- rationalisation of multiple governmental schemes for skills development;
- and leveraging technology for



skilling. Fortunately, the green shoots of the first three enablers are already emerging and the seed for the fourth has been sowed by forming the ministry for skills and entrepreneurship.

There exists 84 different skill development schemes across 22 central ministries and departments. These are tasked with skilling 10.4 million people during 2014-15. In addition each state has many state level schemes. The skills ministry has been tasked with creating synergy, removing duplications and simplifying these 84 schemes, to increase the impact multi-fold for each rupee spent on skills de-

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velopment. NSDA and NSDC has also been shifted to the skills ministry from the finance ministry. Similarly many States are integrating the implementa-

tion of various skill development schemes under state level skill development missions. (Wadhvani Foundation has been creating such e-content in partnership with employers.) Technology can help alleviate the shortage of trainers and bring about improvement in quality. Once created, the same e-content can be deployed with speed at scale and low cost across the country.

While various pieces of the skill eco-system are coming into existence under government patronage, there are three challenges which need to be met. First is for policy implementers to leverage and implement the schemes with urgency. While intention is widely visible, there is significant inertia at the action level. The second is for academicians to open their minds and change existing paradigms about their notion of education. Economic empowerment, societal recognition and knowledge creation are three key goals of an education system. Economic empowerment can only happen when education designers and planners start giving equal importance and credits to skilling along with academic subjects. The third challenge is to get the employers to pay higher salaries to the skilled and certified people, which can act as a pull factor for youth to take up skill-based training and education. Successfully meeting these challenges would be key to reap the so-called demographic dividend.

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