Chapter 7
Best Practices in Skills Implementation:
The Indian Story

Tamanna M. Shah

iD https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9609-0191
University of Utah, USA

ABSTRACT

The future world will see a radical shift in the nature and availability of jobs. Such a shift would entail youth to be equipped with new-age skills. For nations with a competitive advantage of diverse talent bases, the threat of unemployment looms large with serious consequences. India is no exception. As one of the youngest populations globally, 365 million Indians would be eligible to join the workforce in the next decade. Such a demographic dividend would contribute positively only if there are matching economic opportunities to absorb it. Transforming India's demographic surplus to demographic dividend requires policymakers to timely harness the power of skill development. This chapter explores how the skill mismatch is being addressed in India by following certain best practices that are purpose-oriented and ensure quality. Based on the case study of a leading vocational and employability training company, IL&FS Skills, the best practices in skill development for long-term sustainable impact are explored in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

While the world ages, India is undergoing a population explosion. Since 2018, India recorded more working-age population (people between 15 and 64 years of age) than the dependent population (children aged 14 or below as well as people above 65 years of age) (Thakur, 2019, n.p.). The Economic Times reported that this working-age population bulge is expected to last till 2055, or 37 years from its beginning. "Such a demographic dividend would contribute positively only if there are matching economic opportunities to absorb it" (Shah, 2019, p. 216). Otherwise, it would create chaos, uncertainty, and alienation in society. However, while offering an economic opportunity to fast track such growth, India should "urgently address the problems of low school completion rates, strained facilities, and questionable practicality of the curriculum" (Shah, 2019, p. 216). While this may be addressed through a variety of skills initiatives and vocational training, such skills initiatives ought to conform to the needs of the industry, technology, and future trends in occupational skills. Following a well-defined, well-evolved set of best practices can ensure the success of such skills initiatives.

Vocational education and skill development increase productivity of individuals and the profitability of employers thus help expand national development. A 'talented' workforce, which exhibits flexibility and is highly skilled in their occupation, is the most critical human capital in the development of a country. Rapid technological changes require individuals to learn and relearn skills throughout their working lives to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness. In keeping with this philosophy, in recent years, the Government of India has emphasized aligning vocational education containing employability skills matching the emerging needs of the markets. However, the desired synergy among various stakeholders is still missing. Education through skill development leading to employability and employment would impart definitive impetus to the desired transition. This can be called a 3Es approach: Education - Employability - Employment. 3Es approach can best be achieved by public-private-partnership (PPP).

Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) is an essential measure for the development of skills of the youth, which can make them future-ready. TVET bolsters the socio-economic development of the country through its twin objectives: providing technical knowledge from the beginning of the learning process and imparting necessary vocational skills to reduce dropouts and make youth employable. Providing vocational training, therefore, is an effective way of reducing unemployment and migration to urban centers. The creation of such a 'culture of skills' ensures enhanced productivity, growth, competitiveness and job satisfaction, all of which contribute to social mobility and poverty alleviation. Such a skills culture was given shape by Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India in

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