
Impetus for Skill Development – Key to Human Resource Development

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ABSTRACT

Skill development is now a priority in India. Emphasis must be on dedicated schemes for capacity building in rural India. Formation of a well-established infrastructure exclusively for skill development must be initiated. Professional Skill and employment-oriented training must be provided to rural youth for creation of skilled labour force. Since the Indian market is growing lucrative with a strengthening buying power of a section of its populace, many foreign companies are keen to invest. This will bring up many industries in various sectors in the nation, which will have a huge demand of skilled labour in coming times. Directing the Make in India initiative to rural India will bring about an impressive development in the overall economy of the nation. Manufactured produce in these industries will cater to both rural and urban consumption in addition to a sharp boost in the country's export.

Human Resource is the productive power in human beings and unlike the material resources; human resources are the participants as also the beneficiaries of the economic development process. On the demand side goods and services produced are used by the human beings to improve health, enhance general educational levels, alleviate poverty and on the supply side, human resources and capital form essential ingredients of production system which transforms natural and physical resource into goods and services.

This paper is an attempt to highlight the importance of skill development and human capital as the prime drivers in making India a developed nation. Further, unlike natural resources, human resource doesn't deplete with use, and hence there is an urgent need for tuning the human capital for the country's economic development.

KEY WORDS: *Skilled labour, economic development, human resource*

INTRODUCTION:

HRD in Retrospect: When we look at HRD in India in retrospect, we find that there have been three stages. The first was the ancient when India was the leader. The second was the 'medieval stage' which, though it recognized the concept of a welfare state ideologically, did not replicate it in reality. Further, it gave birth to feudalism, perpetrated traditionalism and did not react favourably to a faster development of material and human resource.

The third stage is modern in which India entered with numerous problems due to foreign subjugation and other factors. Until India became free, the human factors were neither recognized as a 'resource' nor as a 'power' for a long time. Though the country had millions of biological beings, we were not in a position to state the quality of human resources in terms of their potential, capability of power.

Industrial revolution gave a new dimension to the concept as the skilled artisans were being developed through "learning while doing" or "on the job training" methodology. In the West the concept was evolved by Robert Owen who emphasized human needs of workers in 1803. But it was F W Taylor who brought about revolution in management thinking by stressing inclusion of human values in management. Subsequently, Elton Mayos' studies at Hawthorne plant of Western Electric, likert demonstrated that better utilization of human resources is possible by treating them as human i.e., HRD with emphasis on human values.

Now let's have a prospective outlook of HRD

All over the world changes have been taking place in the social, economic and technological spheres and India is no exception. Indian business has to make sure of the enterprise's capacity to survive against changes that are taking place world over. Further, the change has to be managed successfully. *If obsolete machinery is dangerous obsolete people are disastrous*". So, there is an urgent need to develop the human resources lest the economic development/growth may get retarded.

HR – India: Opportunities galore

It is estimated that, by 2018 the number of workers between 55-64 will expand by 52% in the US while the European will see its young workers (20-29 years) decrease by 20% over the next two decades. In contrast, India emerges young and vibrant not only with 54% of its population below 25 years of age but also with a good talent pool.

Advantage India – Demographic Dividend: If 54% of India's youth are under 25 years of age, it is also a fact that a large part of this population comprises of rural and semi urban youth who are not exposed to quality education and most are school dropouts. So there will be a mismatch in terms of skills. There is another dimension to this problem. In addition to needing more engineers, doctors and MBAs, India needs the ability and institutional mechanism to produce leaders in various dimensions.

The need for emphasis on rural India is based on the fact that almost three fourth of the populace lives in villages. Needless to highlight the expense of rural India, the majority of the country's landmass is within rural landscape. These areas not only produce bread and butter of the nation, but also have abundant and rich natural resources. However, a multidimensional deficiency in almost every facet of development has plagued these areas, dragging its populace to urban locales in search of livelihood and employment.. The rural populace has been deprived of education, financial support, infrastructure and employment turn to a sheer wastage of human resource.

Rural India, in fact, can be the most efficient powerhouse for national development. A number of implications highlight its prospects. The first, as stated earlier, three fourth of Indian populace belongs to the villages. Therefore, the Indian human resource is primarily based on rural areas. Furthermore, more than 65% of the total population in India is under 35 years. This signifies the large potential that the country possesses in terms of labour power. Secondly, since most of the country's resources are concentrated on remote areas, by leveraging manufacturing and industry in rural landscapes, the nation can utilise them in an efficient manner. It will reduce the cost of manufacturing that will eventually help end customers. Productivity will increase, impacting export and foreign exchange. Hence, these regions will be turned into prerogative engines to drive the nation towards progress.

Recent initiatives by government are ambitious to bring pace in the country's development. Initiatives such as Skill India and Make In India are enthusiastic steps. However, they will need to be at par with unique aspects of the nation surrounding distribution of the populace and economy. Without bringing rural India under the ambit of active development, holistic progress of the nation is impossible. Government should ensure that recently rolled out measures should adequately focus towards empowerment of rural youth and communities.

Rural India has immense potential to add an intriguing feature to manufacturing and export. India is famous for many unique items and products across the world. Numerous indigenous products of India have a prodigious value in international as well as in the domestic market. For instance, handicraft, handloom and textiles, orchids, herbs and similar products have huge commercial viability in the global market. Industries associated with these products should be developed with bases in rural landscape throughout the nation. This will bring about a sharp breakthrough in indigenous industry and manufacturing of the nation and enable rural communities to become self-dependent with economic empowerment. Furthermore, industries such as tourism have enormous prospects in a country such as India.

Ministry of Rural Development has a budget of Rs 1500 crore yearly for their flagship scheme under NRLM- National Rural Livelihood Mission as DDU-GKY: Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushal Yojana. The scheme trains unemployed youths under the BPL category on various skills in order to provide them employability. However, this is insufficient for the size we have available in our country. We need similar

schemes for all categories of people, be it BPL or General. Skill development schemes that focus on infrastructure development in rural India are the need of the hour. It could be a great initiative if government schools can add vocational training along with other subjects across the nation. Apart from these, schemes should be floated to use school infrastructure in post school hours for training and skill development. There should be special incentive schemes under Make in India policy for Industries to set up their units in rural locales utilising local resources.

The 2001 census indicated that 72.2% of the total population is distributed in about 638,000 villages while the remaining 27.8% lives in more than 5,100 towns and over 280 urban agglomerations. From these demographics, the diversity of distribution in rural and urban localities is quite evident in India. While national leaders of pre-independent India such as Mahatma Gandhi emphasised on rural empowerment, post independent reorganisation of the country has been quite ineffective to convert such ideas into reality. Government initiatives for a developed India are not indifferent to rural backdrop, but the process is apparently inadequate. Either the functioning of government initiatives is with glitches or with serious setbacks on policy fronts. Issues such as farmer suicide still rage the country when the bright face of a rich India shine abroad in other nations.

What needs to be done?

Our universities need to support the pace of economic reform with matching educational reform and development in R & D. One of the most disconcerting aspects of Indian research is that it has not grown in proportion to the growth of the Indian population and GDP. For instance, in the decade between 1980 and 1990 (the pre-liberalization decade) Indian researchers in the field of physics were publishing papers in international journals at a rate that was almost three times that of China. Since then, between 1991 and 2004, Chinese researchers have increased their contribution almost 6 times, whereas the Indian contribution has not grown in proportion. This in part, can be explained by greater opportunities to publish at home or to present at national seminars. However, it must also be noted that whereas the Chinese government has taken a highly proactive role in setting up cutting-edge research institutions and encouraging advanced research, Indian governments have been starving India's universities and research labs for funds.

To fully leverage the possibilities that are now opening up and to overcome competition from other challengers, we need an education system that produces a far greater number of graduates and professionals of far better quality. Further, we must eliminate illiteracy, ensure elementary education for all children and substantially increase the enrolment rates in secondary, higher secondary and tertiary levels so as to fulfill our potential both as individuals and as a country. In a nutshell, this requires a major overhaul of our educational setup, a relook at policy and a change in mindset. And this is no idealistic dream as we can see from successes within our own country: examples like Kerala for primary education and literacy or the technology aided accelerated adult-literacy program of the Tata group in Andhra Pradesh.

Need for Strategic Manpower plans:

As we have seen over the next three decades, India will have the largest pool of working age people in the world. With the large pool of people in our country and shortages in other countries, there is a unique and huge opportunity for companies in India and for the Indian economy overall. The benefits to the economy are estimated at an additional inflow of \$200 billion of incomes and the creation of 40 million new jobs by 2020. But we must seize this opportunity and to do that we need to train the people accordingly. What is required is a strategic rather tactical approach to manpower planning, as people will not be provided ready made either to the head hunters or corporate recruiters.

In the 60's when Singapore's Economic Development Board (SEDB) was preparing to make Singapore a "developed" country it knew that key was the development of skills. Further, the Singapore Government was aware that its aim to have a higher GNP per capita than other countries implied that incomes and wages in Singapore would become higher than in other countries. Therefore, unless the skill levels in Singapore were also higher than in other countries, the foreign companies would take their business else-where as wages in Singapore rose. Accordingly the board invited Tatas to help them in this regard and they did it.

So the challenge is not a Herculean one and we can do it provided we chose to. Let's consider another example. When Tatas were invited by SEDB at the same time Telco was building its new factory in Pune. As we all know usually know automobile factories start with an assembly line first, obtaining components from elsewhere. But at that time the required inputs were not available in India and were forbidden for import at that time. Telco took up this challenge.

A comprehensive manpower plan was made, with innovative schemes to convert raw, young people-post-graduates in Engineering for design, graduates for planning and ITI graduates for works – into the capabilities required for the work to be done. Thus, machines and tools were designed and built in Pune. With them components were produced for new truck models.

So in the Indian context, what we required to do is as under:

- J Reframe the people related challenge as strategic manpower planning and not tactical HR or personnel management.
- J Partnerships between companies and government agencies
- J Innovation in the approach

In addition, our universities should play a crucial role in this strategy. The following steps, if taken in right earnest, would go a long way in successfully overcoming the challenges, i.e. if human resources are to really contribute to India's economic development:

- J Professional management and autonomy to the universities
- J Creating the right environment for attracting leading faculty
- J Our universities should choose applicants who, besides being intellectually outstanding also show the greatest potential to transform into leaders.
- J Our universities should leverage industry as a source of research initiative and funding etc

Conclusion:

Education and training is the most dominant dimension affecting quality of human resources in terms of knowledge and skill. They provide the means for taking advantage of technological changes as well as furthering technological progress. So the challenge before the think tanks, academics, corporate and institutions of research and advanced education today is to rediscover the fineness of the balance between the flourishing of human being as a source of potential and the utilitarian employment of the human being as a source of yet another resource.

For India to graduate from being a nation of software coolies to an advanced industrial and technological nation like Germany, Japan or Korea *much work needs to be done* . Not only we need to improve our educational standards across the board, but also need to upgrade the capabilities of high schools and hundreds of colleges scattered across India's smaller towns. Further, there needs to be a significant change of mindset so that there is a healthy interaction between the research community and those who are responsible for implementing public policy.

The dream of India becoming a super power aligned with countries such as the US, and neighbouring China, can be transformed to reality only with proper utilization of its resources. Human resource is the best resources of any nation and for India; our rural populace can become the driving factor for development and industrialisation. Time has arrived to hone this asset and utilise it for the best.

We need substantial private involvement and adequate legislative cooperation to make this nation building dream happen. There is much optimism and buzz about India's potential and future. Further, many have spoken about education for liberation. A radical new thinking and a dramatic new thrust to education are essential if, we are to fully exploit the opportunities opened up by the emerging global knowledge economy.

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