

Challenges in Implementing Skill Development Initiatives at a Ground Level

Nitin S. N.

Assistant Professor in Commerce, KLE Society's J.G.College of Commerce, Hubballi, INDIA

Introduction

Skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development for any country. For the economy to grow at 8% to 9%, it is required that the secondary and tertiary sectors grow at 10% to 11%, assuming agriculture grows at 4%. In such a scenario, it is obvious that a large portion of the workforce would migrate from the primary sector (agriculture) to the secondary and tertiary sectors. However, the skill sets that are required in the manufacturing and service sectors are quite different from those in the agriculture sector. This implies that there is/will be a large skill gap when such a migration occurs, as evidenced by a shrinking employment in the agriculture sector. This scenario necessitates skill development in the workforce. India is expected to be home to a skilled workforce of 500 million by 2022. About 12 million persons are expected to join the workforce every year. This talent pool needs to be adequately skilled. The following sectors are expected to drive the growth of the economy as well as play a significant role in employment.

1. Auto and Auto Components
2. Building and Construction Materials
3. Building and Construction
4. Real Estate Services
5. Electronics and IT Hardware
6. Education and Skill Development Services
7. Food Processing
8. Gems and Jewellery
9. Healthcare
10. Textiles
11. Leather and Leather Goods
12. Organized Retail
13. Tourism and Hospitality
14. Transportation and Logistics
15. Media and Entertainment
16. BFSI
17. Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals
18. Furniture and Furnishings
19. IT

20. ITES.

The employment in the manufacturing and services sector would be in excess of 250 million persons. While the school education sector is about 227 million in enrolment, the combined enrolment in higher education and vocational training is about 15.3 million. By limiting to this to the technically and vocationally qualified and skilled workforce, primarily comprising of ITI/ITC (1 million), BE (1.7 million), Polytechnics (0.7 million), we can observe that the current pool of skilled talent is around 3.4 million.

It is thus estimated that the required capacity for training the new workforce as well as portion of the existing workforce would be about 15 million annually.

Challenges in Implementation:

As skill development in a large scale takes off, implementing agencies (government, institutes – both government and private, vocational training providers, and other such implementers) would be faced with challenges that come up at every segment of the ‘skill development value chain’. In other words, these are challenges that each skill development centre or groups of such centers are likely to face.

The various challenges would be pertaining to the following dimensions:

- How does a centre attract or mobilize students?
- Is there an ability to pay among trainees?
- What are the courses that need to be offered for each centre/institute, or regionally?
- Is there a demand for such courses/trades?
- Will an in-house system work or a franchisee system or a combination of both?
- How does one standardise content and delivery across a large number of centres?
- How is the training delivered?
- What is the infrastructure required and is it available?
- How can qualified trainers be found?
- Is there a system for third party assessment and certification?
- How will the project owner raise funding?
- What will the form of funding – debt, equity, grant?
- Is the model sustainable and viable?
- How would the institute guarantee placement linkages?
- How does the institute or the training provider connect with industry?

Conclusion

Given the magnitude of the skill development challenge, implementing agencies are likely to face challenges right from mobilizing trainees, developing standardized and scalable content, ensuring the availability of trainers, making available appropriate infrastructure, and coordinating placement and industry linkages. It is required that implementing agencies be aware of these challenges and prospect innovative ways to confront them.

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