PARADOX OF SKILL TRAINING

High targets, low performance

Skill gap, from Page 1

While the campaign was able to register names of lakhs of youth as potential candidates for the programme, only a fraction of them were eventually interested in pursuing the training. Ever since, the department has had to strike off several names, trying to maintain a list of only genuine candidates.

As against the aspirational number, according to official data, in 2019-20, the government had skilled 32,289 candidates, with another 14,832 ongoing training, by the end of February 2020.

Albeit its endeavour for a complete overhaul of the 2008 policy, some of the earlier problems still persist: Not all skill centres are clued into the market needs of the region in which they operate and in many instances the candidates who Skill development in

find employment, are found lacking in skills needed for the job.

Reflecting on the current situation, KAS-SIA's Prithvi Raj said there was a wide gap between the training imparted in the skill development centres and the market demand. "There's no doubt that the candidates are coming with certificates. But there is a lot to be desired when it comes to their skills. Either the training was not imparted well or the candidate did not focus properly in class. Often, we find that there is no sense of ownership in such training.'

According to official data, there are a total of 480 government-recognised skill training centres across Karnataka, of which 422 are dedicated for training pertaining to CMKKY and 58 for Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).

Another prominent issue raised by those in the industry was that skill training was heavily focused on one or two sectors, failing to tap into diverse market requirements. "Initially, there was a heavy focus on the garment industry. Hence, on various counts, the programme was unable to meet the larger industry demand. We have to look at future skills such as robotics, data analytics and the like, to tap into the demand," according to a government official, who sought anonymity.

Add to it, several skill centres offered training without understanding the demography and geography of the region, experts said. According to a recent research publication 'India's Changing Cityscapes: Work, Migration and Livelihoods' collaborated by Supriya RoyChowdhury (Institute for Social and Economic Change) and Carol Upadhya (National Institute of Advanced Studies), skill training had to a large extent become a numbers game, wherein training centres were required to produce the requisite quantum of graduates and placements to meet the requirements of their funders (governmentagencies or corporate social responsibility initiatives). "However, there is little effort on the part of sponsors, the state or the institutions themselves to determine the effectiveness of the training in produc $ingsustainable\, employment..." according\\$ to the report.

In Raichur, for example, several training centres were engaged in imparting skills like tailoring and sales management in a place where there were no gar-

Pravasi **Kaushal Vikas** Yojana (PKVY) Aims to train and upgrade skills of potential migrant workers from

Karnataka (2019 - 2020)

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal

Vikas Yojana

Total candidates trained

6,280

Training in progress

6,572

Chief Minister's Koushalya

Karnataka Yojane

Goal is to train **500,000** youth every year

Total candidates trained

Training :

trained

Total budget

₹10 CT

Total budget

₹5 CY

Amount

utilised

~₹75.64 cr

Amount

utilised

in progress

14,832

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK) Aims to establish model training centres in every district of the country

Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

Aims to enable PMIVY youth to take up industry-relevant skill training. PMKVY courses are run by training partners under Sector Skill Councils set up by the National Skill Development

Corporation.

Apprenticeship

scheme in

Karnataka

2019-2020

300K

Target for apprenticeships

51.641

apprenticeships

Govt estimates a shortage of 712K skilled and 388K unskilled labourers in Karnataka by 2022

*National Skill Development Corporation estimation

The PMKVY target

Training 10 million youths (2016 - Oct 2020)

As of March 2020, 6.8 million youth were trained

of this, 1.54 million (22.7%) were placed in jobs

IN KARNATAKA

308K youths were trained

45K youths were placed in jobs

Distribution of workforce in Karnataka by sectors

	In million	in%
Agriculture and allied	13.6	55.7
Manufacturing and Mining	2.7	11.1
Shops & Establishments / Trade	2.2	9.0
Construction	1.7	7.0
Information Technology / Biotechnology	1.0	4.1
Real Estate / Renting & Business activities	0.6	2.5
Hotels & Restaurants	0.5	2.0
Others	2.1	8.6
Total	24.4	100

National Employability Through Apprenticeship Program (NETAP)

- 200K apprentices placed across India in six years; 12% in Karnataka
- Duration of 3 36 months
- Trainees from 18 35 years of age
- Sectors covered: Manufacturing, Retail, FMCG, FMCD
- Apprentices can be paid consolidated stipend equal to the minimum wage, irrespective
- Stipends qualify as CSR funds

How the PMKVY scheme works

The PMKVY is a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE). It is essentially a certification course, that aims to help youth to take up industry-relevant skill training. It primarily does this through three

a) Recognition of prior learning (RPL) programme, that certifies individuals already skilled in a particular job/trade.

b) Short-term training between 150 - 300 hours imparted by PMKVY training centres (TC) for school / college dropouts. These TCs are run in association with NGOs and industry bodies.

c) Special Projects, which are skilling projects which fall outside the recognised job roles. Any corporate organisation/government body which gives 80% captive placement or 90% wage employment can take up special projects. Training can occur at the premises of an industry body or special camps.

What's the problem?

When it comes to checking the compliance of TCs, 40% of the grades are given to 'adherence to PMKVY branding', 'distrubution of induction kits' & 'availability of training'. 20% of the marks are awarded for 'continuous availability of trainers' or 'continuous training of trainees'. A centre needs 40% marks to be in compliance with the guidelines. As of March 2019, some 264 centres were suspended for some form of irregularity.

Source: Data submitted by state government to the Karnataka Assembly in March 2020; Karnataka Skill Development Policy 2017–30, Regional Directorate for Skill Development, National Skill Development Corporation Annual Report 2017 - 18, MSDE Annual Report 2018-19, , Replies in Rajya Sabha by MoS for

COMPILED BY PRAJWAL SUVARNA

employed and no malls offering retail jobs, the researchers have observed. "This shows that a local employment market analysis, which should be a prerequisite for designing skill training programmes, had not been undertaken..." their report

Such an approach posed practical difficulty, making employment sustainability a big issue, pointed out Shashidhar, who runs Bharani Foundation, a skill development centre in Mysuru, recognised by PMKVY. "For instance, if one were to give training for the garment industry in Mandya or Maddur, candidates will not get jobs locally. They will have to come to

day from their home to explained. Instead, he felt that the skill centres needed to focus on local needs. Taking the example of Mandya again, skills such as organic seed production, solar roof technicians, electrical hardware work and the like, would go a long way in generating employment, he said. According to him, diversifying the areas of skill training also required public awareness about potential opportunities

in lesser-known areas of work. While market relevance is one big aspect, another area where the government had to stringently monitor was the authenticity of the training imparted. Even though the government had established a stringent monitoring system,

commuting every requirement.

o a large extent, the existing skill development scheme has turned out to be a certification programme, more than employment generation. Several educational institutions are taking undue advantage of the government schemes, without ensuring appropriate jobs for those who take up these training programmes. The government needs to overhaul the system, especially when, in a post-Covid scenario, India is expected to attract huge outsourced business from Western nations. We need to improve the capability of MSMEs, for which, we need to improve the quality of skilling," observed Business Coach and Entrepreneur Karan Kumar.

Concurring with the industry ex-

velopment schemes more diverse and demand-oriented, MLA o Constituency S A Ramdas, opined that the government should look towards diploma colleges and training institutes such as Industrial Training Institute and Government Toolroom and Training Centre to take the skill training to grassroot level, Ramdas, who leads Bharath Informal Workers' Initiative, works on the issue of labour and skilling.

"The training should provide links with prospective employers. For instance, were the government to tie up with the builders' association, they can give onsite training to aspirants. The government can think of giving stipends to candidates during the training period. This will ensure that the skilling will lead

ment factories in which tailors could be Bengaluru for jobs, which leaves them not all centres were fulfilling the training perts on the need for making skill deto employment," he said. 'KSDC will provide skilled manpower as per industry needs'

eputy Chief Minister **C N Ashwath Narayan** is in charge of skill development and higher education, which makes him feel confident that he can deliver results. "I specifically asked for the skill development portfolio," he tells *DH*'s **Bharath Joshi** while acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead. Excerpts:

Is the government planning to revamp skill development schemes in light of the Covid-19 pandemic?

The basic tenet of the state's skill development schemes is strong. Hence, the requirement of revamp does not arise. Having said that, it's imperative to adapt to the situation. In view of Covid-19, we're adding more elements and delivery mechanisms. We've created online.kaushalkar.com to offer online skill courses. Initially, free courses in collaboration with RV Skills, IBM, Nasscom will be offered. Going forward, courses can be paid for. We're facilitating a Skill Registry to connect skilled workforce with customers. The Karnataka Skill Development Corporation (KSDC) has implemented an online aptitude test for aspirants to identify their strengths and skill training will be provided based on their

Industry experts believe that India will have a lot more opportunities coming from outsourced jobs. which will require the country to

recommendations.

be prepared with skilled force. How does Karnataka plan to handle this

During the lockdown, the KSDC initiated discussions and virtual meetings with the private sector and industry associations to know the skill deficit post Covid-19, so that their needs can be catered to. As an outcome, KSDC is gathering the industry requirements and will provide skilled manpower specific to each organisation's needs. The KSDC is also reaching out to industries that have lost skilled manpower due to migration. Crucially, the KSDC is the nodal agency for migrants and repatriates into Karnataka. Skilled repatriates with international experience will also augment the industry requirement to cater to those jobs that are coming to India from China. All trainees undergoing the KSDC skill training under CMKKY scheme should be provided with soft skills. This will enhance their employability quotient both domestically as well as abroad.

It is said that skill development schemes are being misused with funds from the government being claimed for skill training without ensuring quality.

Uniform quality training can be provided only by certified trainers. There is a dearth of certified trainers in the country. Training of trainers, thus creating master trainers, is one of the key focus areas of the department for



C N Ashwath Narayan

2020. Karnataka will create training material in English and Kannada, provide training and accredit training centers that have certified trainers. We're also creating training pedagogy for master trainers. This will ensure standard delivery protocols across the

What does the government intend to do to stringently monitor the functioning of skill development centres?

There are already several measures in place. The training is periodically monitored through inspection by the district skill development officers. Payment is released only after inspection

and recommendation from the District Skill Mission. The department is currently telecalling the candidates for their feedback. We have a mechanism where trainees can reach out through the online portal kaushalkar.com for grievance redressal. We'll strive to uphold quality by adapting to any gaps that we notice.

Studies show that skills that aren't relevant to the needs are being imparted.

The term 'relevant needs' is very subjective – every organisation has a different DNA and hence, there will be a cultural gap. The department can provide skill training and general soft skills. It is the onus of the employers to fill the specific gaps. Skilling can be successful when all stakeholders can partner for equitable creation and distribution of the skill pool in the country. The very objective of skill training is to provide means of livelihood through employment or self-employment. The final payment is also linked to the same. If the skilled youth are employed, then it means that there is a requirement of that particular skill. The curriculum is provided by the industry through Sector Skill Councils and content is being developed. Hence, the content and curriculum are from

The 2017 Skill Development Policy was developed keeping in mind the

the industry.

shortcomings in the earlier 2008 policy. However, little seems to have changed..

It's a known fact that there are concerns on quality and measurement (of skills). We're making use of distance education and online training for self-learning. We're also trying to avail common facilities instead of spending money. If someone needs to get trained, h/she should be connected to places where things are really happening. We can't afford to create a lab environment. I can't ask a person who wants to learn carpentry to spend thousands of rupees to get material and learn. Instead, it makes sense to take the person to where carpentry is happening. I've visited some of the world's best skill training places. Skilling costs more than engineering. In some countries, children are exposed to this hands-on culture from as early as Class 6.

And what about post-skilling employ-

Tackling demand-and-supply is a challenging area. It's mandatory for every company to enroll its (skill) requirements in the employment exchanges. They need to notify. But if they don't notify, there's no provision to take action against them. If companies notify, we'll get to know which sectors need manpower and what's the shortage in the number and skills. We can have an excellent, vibrant ecosystem.

Skill training has become a numbers game



CAROL UPADHYA

The crisis of youth unemployment – especially educated unemployment – has become a major area of policy concern, one that has been reframed as that of 'skills deficit'. While employers often complain about the 'unemployability' of potential hires, countless educated youth are unable to find jobs that meet their expectations. The Skill India Mission was set up to address this crisis, by harnessing India's 'demographic dividend' and channelling the desires and energies of youth for productive employment through skill training.

However, skill training policies and programmes are riddled with gaps and contradic-

The National Skill Policy introduced in 2009 marked a significant shift away from vocational training through government institutes, towards the privatisation and outsourcing of skill development. Today, training programmes are delivered by a plethora of private organisations (both for-profit companies and NGOs) which draw on government and corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds for their ac-

Skilling programmes are managed and funded by a range of agencies and organisations such as the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and a series of Sector Skill Councils (SSCs).

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), the flagship scheme of the Ministry, serves mainly as a funding agency and is implemented through the NSDC.

The multiplicity of initiatives and agencies has created a complicated skilling 'ecosystem' imparting a wide variety training, both in terms of content and quality. In 2016, a government-appointed committee found that the uptake of skill training as well as post-training job placement have been inadequate.

The report was critical of the promotion of short-term skilling and certification programmes in place of longer-term vocational diploma courses, suggesting that the new approach may not deliver marketable skills.

The current policy framework has also been criticised for its target-driven orientation and its focus on short-term 'top-up' courses for youth with secondary or higher educational qualifications. Moreover, skill centres are tasked with the responsibility of finding employment for their trainees and so tend to push them into contractual low-paying jobs to fulfill their targets.

These issues were explored in a field-based study of skilling and service sector employment conducted by the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) and the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru, during 2017-19. The study found that skill training organisations in Bengaluru are highly motivated by the goal of alleviating poverty through training and job placement - especially by targeting vouth from disadvantaged, rural backgrounds with at least a Class X education.

On their part, semi-educated rural youth are motivated to join skill training courses - which are often free or subsidised-mainly by the prospect of learning English and computer skills as well as by guaranteed job placement.

Trainees are channelled into high-volume, high-turnover jobs such as retail sales, transportation & logistics, back-office customer support and beauty & wellness, mainly in Bengaluru. Thus, skill development programmes encourage the migration of rural youth to the cities. Indeed, service sector companies actively seek employees from provincial towns and villages because they are thought to be more pliant and 'loyal'. Skill training centres appear to play a major role in facilitating this continuous flow of workers into the urban service economy.

These jobs are typically characterised by low salaries, insecurity of employment, onerous working conditions, lack of a clear career path, and hence high levels of employee turnover. We found that many trainees had returned to their home towns within a few weeks of joining work, with little to show for their training and work experience in Bengaluru. They were unable to sustain themselves in the city on the salaries they were earning, given the high costs of accommodation and other living expenses especially since they needed to save enough to help support their families back home.

These problems stem from the Skill India policy framework itself, which has turned skill training into a numbers game.

To access funding, training centres need to meet targets of producing a certain number of graduates and placements, but they lack the capacity or motivation to provide extended support needed to ensure that these vulnerable trainees find a stable foothold in the city.

The skill training centres we studied thus contribute to the creation of an army of footloose urban service workers, catering to the requirements of service industries for a 'flexible' non-permanent but constantly replenishable workforce, thus raising questions about current skill development policies and programmes.

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