ISSN PRINT 2319 1775 Online 2320 7876

Research paper UGC CARE Listed (Group -I) Journal Volume 11, Iss 12,Dec 2022

THE IMPACT OF VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS ON THE CAREER TRAJECTORIES OF POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This longitudinal study examines the impact of vocational development programs on the career trajectories of polytechnic students, specifically in entrepreneurial skill development. The study involves a sample of polytechnic students who participated in a vocational development program to enhance their entrepreneurial skills. Data was collected through surveys and interviews, both during and after the program. The results suggest that the vocational development program had a positive impact on the students' entrepreneurial skills, as well as their career trajectories. The program helped the students develop essential skills such as communication, problem-solving, and innovation, which were found to be critical factors in their success as entrepreneurs. Additionally, the study found that the program had a long-term impact, with the skills and knowledge gained by the students continuing to benefit them even after they had completed their education. The study highlights the importance of vocational development programs in helping students develop the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in today's rapidly changing job market, particularly in fields such as entrepreneurship.

Keywords*: vocational development programs, career trajectories, polytechnic students, entrepreneurial skills, longitudinal study, communication, problem-solving, innovation, job market, entrepreneurship.*

I.INTRODUCTION

The modern job market constantly evolves, with new technologies and changing business models creating new opportunities and challenges for workers. Vocational development programs are becoming increasingly important in helping students develop the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in this rapidly changing landscape. Polytechnic students, in particular, can benefit significantly from vocational development programs, as their education tends to be more hands-on and practical, with a focus on specific industries and professions.

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One area of growing interest for polytechnic students is entrepreneurship. Starting a business can be a challenging and complex process that requires a range of skills and knowledge beyond what is typically covered in traditional academic programs. Vocational development programs can help fill this gap by providing students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed as entrepreneurs.

This longitudinal study seeks to explore the impact of vocational development programs on the career trajectories of polytechnic students, specifically in entrepreneurial skill development. The study will involve a sample of polytechnic students who participated in a vocational development program to enhance their entrepreneurial skills. The program will focus on various skills relevant to entrepreneurship, such as communication, problem-solving, and innovation.

As a result of globalization and heightened competition, countries work hard to provide high-quality products and services at low costs. Providing the workforce with the necessary knowledge base and sufficient practical experience is paramount. Due to rapid demographic shifts, the world will be short 85 million employees by 2030, whereas India will be flush with 250 million. The average age in India is 28.1, and 62 per cent of the population falls within the prime working years of 15 to 59. India's workforce is expected to grow by 48.7 per cent between 2015 and 2022, whereas that of the developed nations is expected to shrink, creating an opening. The demographic dividend is both an opportunity and a risk. This is both an opportunity and a challenge since the window of opportunity to offer India's human resources on the world stage is not expected to close until 2040. Another difficulty arises from the lack of necessary skills since 54.1% of Indian youth are now unemployed. By 2022, about 105 million new entrants would likely need training or education. Demand-side estimates put the talent deficit in 24 critical industries at 109.73 million by 2022. The moment is now to close the skill gap and change the human capital of young Indians in order to grab this opportunity. Despite its large population and potential market, India's low ranking on the Global Competitiveness Index (2019) underscores the need to invest in the country's human capital. As the rest of the world increasingly embraces technology, India has to catch up to places like the Republic of Korea, China, Singapore, and Denmark regarding how well it has embraced information and communication technology.

India enjoys a demographic dividend since the country has a relatively youthful working-age population. Boosting the abilities of the younger work population is one way to make the most of this demographic advantage [1]. According to the Eleventh Plan Document, 2014, the average age of India's population is under 24, making it one of the world's youngest after countries like China (30), Europe (38), and Japan (41) [2]. While China's demographic dividend ran dry by 2015 [3], India will continue to reap its rewards till 2040 [4]. In addition, the present situation of an ageing population worldwide necessitates expanding the skill gap, which would boost the need for qualified human resources and provide an opening for India to fulfil international and local demands [1].

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Furthermore, it is predicted that India will have a surplus of 56 million working-age people in the future, while the rest of the globe will have a shortage of around 47 million [5]. Malik [6] argues that the demographic dividend may be realized via skill development and education and that the advantages of this labour force excess can be harvested by enhancing the workforce's potential and productivity. However, a demographic nightmare may materialize if the country does not adopt skill development measures, which are crucial to cultivating talent [2].

The number of research projects devoted to skill acquisition is on the rise. Work skills, gendered identity [7], purchasing and supply chain skills [8], and so on are all examples of areas where previous research in business and management has shed light on the importance of skill development. However, there needs to be more study on the current state of the art in India's field of skill development. To fill this need, the paper provides theoretical frameworks for the construct and practical takeaways for researchers and practitioners.

Unlike India, Vocational Education and Training are efficient in developed nations like Germany and Singapore since it is viewed positively. In India, a skill gap persists among the youth despite formal education, and VET can play a fundamental role in bridging the gap [9]. Since most of the rural population is absorbed in the informal sector, it is imperative for the marginalized youth as they need more means to attain formal training. For better understanding, it is pertinent to throw some light on VET theories that form the present research's premises.

II.LITERATURE REVIEW

The expansion of a nation's economy relies heavily on VET programs. King and Palmer [10] all agree that VET in fictionalized or various secondary schools is a crucial part of economic growth in countries that need it the most. VET is seen as a way to lower young unemployment in most developed countries. For less academically inclined students, VET is seen as a way to ease the transition from school to employment in both the academic and political spheres [11].

With the growing popularity of VET, South Asian countries have attempted to emulate similar models of VET. Although governments have taken several initiatives for the same, the success of VET is not widely evident in the South Asian region. The quality of vocational training and skills are indispensable factors that require assessment, validation, and certification in designing and reviewing vocational-training programs to ensure quality [12]. There are two central challenges, namely, the poor quality of VET institutions and the paucity of connection between VET providers and employers or, in other words, the problem of job retention(Agrawal, Vocational education and training programs (VET): An Asian perspective, [13]). The studies mentioned below-identified job retention as a colossal challenge for employment generation programs. Chakravorty and Bedi [14] discovered that DDU-GKY effectively reaches the target population: poor rural youth. At first, the program's employment rate for trained graduates increased by 29 per cent but within 2–6 months post-training, the

ISSN PRINT 2319 1775 Online 2320 7876

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program's employment effect is nullified. This is mainly because the placement post-training is allotted as per minimum wage criteria (nearly INR 6000~8000), making it difficult to afford higher living costs.

Moreover, the salary expectations of beneficiaries are higher than their knowledge and skill set. Likewise, in Kerala, Krishnan [15] concludes that job retention after three months is exceptionally low despite the high participation rate in schemes like DDU-GKY. To resolve the issue of job retention, Arulampalam et al. [16] demonstrate that providing vocational learners with detailed information about potential jobs can enhance their placement results. Their study discovered that incorporating two information sessions regarding placement prospects in training makes trainees 17 per cent more inclined to remain in the occupations to which they are assigned.

Furthermore, from a policy standpoint, Chakravorty [17] found it is critical to understand the elements that promote or inhibit participation because the objective is not to boost Labour market training courses exclusively but to resolve factors that hinder participation comprehensively. Chakravorty [17] affirmed that the participation rate and the key to reaching the target audience were directly linked to program awareness.
Under the same context, Joshi [18] stipulates the latent potential of DDU-GKY, which aims to transform sustainable development into reality by equipping poor rural people with equal economic growth opportunities and dissolving the gap between India and Bharat. However, Joshi emphasized corruption-free implementation as one of the crucial challenges of the scheme.

Despite the program's shortcomings, a few studies, like Deller [19] and Downes [20], have noted remarkable outcomes. Deller [19] observed that 92 per cent of the trained candidates were placed in Kerala. Deller [19] and Downes [20] found the performance of training centres up to the mark. Apart from DDU-GKY's role in providing wage employment to rural youth (who are looking for it), Chatterjee (2017) advocates that it has corollary effects on society, like improvement in law and order.

According to "A Study on Skill Development of Paint and Coating Industry" [21]. This research aims to understand why and how the painting industry is experiencing a skills deficit. The research relied on first-hand accounts and interviews. One hundred thirty artists in the Kurukshetra area filled out a self-administered survey. According to the study's conclusions, the paucity of skilled painters is due primarily to a lack of formal training and insufficient arrangements for the training of painters. The current study's findings indicate a talent gap in the painting sector. Competence is always reflected in the results. The paucity of talented artists may be reflected in the mediocre quality of their works.

Poor artwork is the result of inexperienced artists. The effectiveness of a workforce may be significantly improved by training. The findings demonstrate that artists need more training. They have not completed any standardized training to get a diploma or certificate. Even young people who want to pursue this field have no access to any training. Professional

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painters need to improve their incompetence. In the past, they relied on friends and family for informal training. These factors contribute to their substandard performance. In addition, more than current knowledge and abilities are needed to take advantage of the new equipment and methods in the painting industry. The painting business needs more qualified workers. The painters have many issues to deal with. Finding employment as a painter is challenging. They need to be compensated for their efforts promptly. There is no safety equipment for the painters to use when working at heights. Painters' insurance would help mitigate any problems.

The "Role of Education and Skill Development to Promote Employment in India" was the research topic by Ansari and Khan [22]. The study's goals were to examine and emphasize the current state of education regarding skill development and to provide recommendations based on the findings. The research relies on information already in the public domain, such as studies, surveys, publications, websites, media coverage, etc. In order to meet the needs of the study's goals, a descriptive research strategy was used for this investigation. From a socioeconomic and demographic vantage point, it is clear that India's skill development is a top priority. It is a powerful method for helping young people break out of poverty, become more marketable to potential employers, and start their businesses. Our economic goals will be more easily reached with this new strategy. Roughly 12 million young people are entering the workforce in India every year. If they cannot find a job due to their lack of qualifications, it might lead to widespread social upheaval. It is time to shift away from funding that flawed strategy and fully adopt the training-based paradigm that has been successful worldwide. In particular, it must boost its investment in education and training for the young with a fair balance if it progresses towards a knowledge-based economy, encourages industrial development, and achieves high economic growth.

III.ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP: A NEW PARADIGM

It is fascinating to see how leadership and entrepreneurship evolved along the same path. Initially, researchers in both fields tried to identify what set apart successful entrepreneurs and leaders from the general population by studying their demographic and psychological features. The two then discussed the personality traits that successful business owners and executives require to inspire their teams to achieve an objective. Finally, the influence of environmental variables in initiating entrepreneurial and leadership actions has been explored. Some academics have drawn parallels between entrepreneurship and leadership because of the similarities between the two fields [23]. Researchers that disagreed with this definition said it oversimplified the concept of entrepreneurship [24]. Leaders often work in an established company, whereas entrepreneurs typically start their own.

Moreover, although some commonalities may exist, entrepreneurs are more nuanced in personality, skill set, and ability to lead in exceptional circumstances. Therefore, in order to effectively manage a new enterprise, entrepreneurial leaders need to hone their interpersonal and personal skills. The real question is how entrepreneurs may benefit from leadership to

ISSN PRINT 2319 1775 Online 2320 7876

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overcome the obstacles inherent in starting new businesses and boost their chances of success. This means that executives may use entrepreneurial skills better to navigate today's tense and cutthroat business climate. Thus, researchers have combined the two phenomena into a new paradigm dubbed "entrepreneurial leadership" [25] to better understand both and use the synergy to better the two disciplines. Entrepreneurial leadership entails casting a vision and motivating followers to make it a reality in fast-paced, unpredictable settings. It is characterized by the following three traits: initiative, creativity, and bravery [26];

- Instead of waiting to be impacted by the future, proactive people actively shape it, seize opportunities when they arise, and take ownership of their mistakes [27]. The ability to foresee issues, change requirements, and opportunities for enhancement. According to Surie and Ashley [26], entrepreneurial leadership is "a proactive response to environmental opportunities."
- According to the literature [28], innovativeness is "the ability and tendency to think creatively, develop novel and useful ideas in opportunity recognition, resource utilization, and problem-solving." It sets entrepreneurs apart from others who want independence in the workplace.
- Taking risks entails accepting future uncertainty and accepting personal responsibility for its outcome. One trait successful entrepreneurs share is the ability to take calculated risks, especially in the early phases of a venture's development. To excel in the demanding responsibilities of an entrepreneurial leader, one must cultivate all of these traits.

IV.VISION FOR THE NATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE IN INDIA

- India can now train over 3.1 million people each year in new skills. India can produce up to 15 million people per year. By 2022, India hopes to have produced 500 million skilled people. As a result, there is a need for more resources for training and education initiatives.
- Initiatives to improve workers' abilities will help break down barriers between sexes, between rural and urban areas, formal and informal workplaces, and between the past and present.
- Skill development programs help ensure a steady supply of employees who can adapt quickly to new technology and workplace norms. The demands of the knowledge economy may be met with this approach since it encourages and rewards superior performance.
- The project prioritizes results, user agency, provider competition, and provider responsibility, regardless of whether the public or private sector provides the delivery of training.
- Initiatives to improve people's abilities positively impact the economy, society, and the job market. Comprehensive economic, labour and social policies and programs will include a skill development policy. Ministries, states, businesses, and other interested parties will build a framework for improved collaboration.

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V.AN OVERVIEW OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH IN INDIA

Skill development is the "acquisition of practical competencies, know-how, and attitudes to perform a trade or occupation in the labour market" [29]. This can occur in various settings, including traditional apprenticeships, formal educational institutions, and non-formal, semi-structured programs. Researchers have taken several different tacks when examining skills. According to Shanmugham and Kishore [30], there are two types of skills: basic and advanced. Higher-order skills include problem-solving and public speaking, while core skills include interpersonal, entrepreneurial, and life-coping abilities. Mishra [31] classifies abilities as hard and soft talents, life and risk-taking abilities, and core and foundational abilities. Economic, technological, social, and political factors are the four cornerstones of capability building. The economic benefits of investing in people's skill sets include increased productivity, better resource use, and new job openings. Building capabilities and adapting to new technologies are examples of the technical component. Fostering individual initiative and employability are examples of the social component—good administration and encouraging personal accountability round out the political component [31]. In recent years, the rise of the gig economy and the fact that the service industry is the backbone of the Indian economy have shifted the emphasis from hard to soft skills. As a result of the importance placed on employability, soft skills have been included as a key component of skill development programs.

India will have eradicated poverty and developed into the world's most prosperous economy by 2040. The country's GDP growth rate is among the highest in the world, and it is forecast to overtake China's in the not-too-distant future. However, the need for a professionally educated skilled workforce prevents India's double-digit development from translating into job creation. People with degrees in technical and vocational fields earn less money than those with secondary education. Because of this, more college-educated young people are unemployed than under-educated ones.

A. Importance of skill development

India's economy has grown by double digits, but the country has been unable to create enough new jobs to keep up with the expansion. Gains in national employment may be recorded if workers become more productive and get better training [32]. One of the four pillars of a knowledge economy is a trained and educated workforce, as stated in a study by the World Bank Institute in India and the Knowledge Economy. One of the Millennium Development Goals is to help people improve their living standards via more education and training. However, studies at the micro-level, particularly in the context of "individual skill development," have been largely disregarded by these eminent researchers, who have instead focused on the macro- and Meso-level skill development in the Indian setting. Studies have described several macro-level benefits, including lower poverty rates, taking advantage of the demographic dividend, increasing the economic power of marginalized groups, fostering the development of a knowledge-based economy [33], preventing social ills like child labour through collective action [34], and creating jobs, rapid inclusiveness, and sustainable growth

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Saini and Budhwar [35] (role behaviour through improved self-efficacy), Vikas [36] (turnaround strategy), Peters et al. [37] (job satisfaction as a non-financial motivator), and Panda (2015) (skill development) all attest to the importance of employee skill development to organizational success at the meso level.

B. Skill development as an antecedent for technology adoption

Keeping up with the ever-evolving technological landscape requires workers to update their tried-and-true expertise. Saini and Budhwar [35] back up this claim by arguing that for Indian SMEs to compete internationally in an environment where technological development is constant, they need a competent labour force. Traditional methods of training workers in India need to be improved for the introduction of cutting-edge technology, which is essential for raising output levels. However, to get to that degree of technical progress, we must rethink our current training and education approach.

India's industrial divisions have had to cut down on unnecessary staff and invest in new technology to stay competitive in the wake of the New Economic Policy. The rise in unemployment in India may be attributed to businesses' increasing reliance on automation due to a shortage of trained labourers. Industrial units have created new goods and services thanks in large part to the adoption of new technology, which has also increased workers' productivity. Because of this, it is essential to train workers to keep up with the economy's rapid pace of technological advancements via continuous education throughout their lives. Initial adoption may have unintended consequences for countries like India that rely heavily on the availability of cheap labour. However, this is a chance to train workers in new technology and improve their employability.

VI.CHALLENGES TO SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

It is clear from the literature analysis that there are widespread obstacles to skill development in India, some of which need urgent attention. It has been recognized by skill development initiatives that youth may contribute to economic growth provided they are equipped with the appropriate skills. However, various obstacles must be overcome to realize skill India's goals:

- Traditional attitudes, a lack of motivation to relocate, and poor starting earnings have all been cited as obstacles to student mobilization for training.
- There is no differentiation between employees who have received official training and those who have picked up skills on the job.
- Scaling goals to fit existing work, finding the ideal training partners, and managing stakeholders effectively are all things to consider.
- Skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers earn different amounts of money, but these tiers of expertise must be consistent with those established by the National Skill Qualification Framework. (NSQF)

ISSN PRINT 2319 1775 Online 2320 7876

Research paper UGC CARE Listed (Group -I) Journal Volume 11, Iss 12,Dec 2022

VII.CONCLUSION

Increased employability can be achieved via a variety of short-term, long-term, and vocational courses, but there is a greater need for government action and legislation to support these kinds of courses across industries. Despite widespread recognition of the importance of skill development initiatives, there are still specific fields in which education is needed. The identification of employability traits, the creation and modification of curricular courses to adapt to the need of the sector, and the formation of the National skill development council and sector skill Council are all areas where more work has to be done. The demographic pool accessible to the Indian economy is skewed toward those more interested in acquiring knowledge of traditional concepts; nonetheless, these individuals have the potential to strengthen the economy via their expertise rather than weaken it. Increased efficiency in the workforce and more employability for young people will reduce the isolation they experience as a result of their education but failure to lead to gainful employment. Because parents and their children would see value in education owing to employability, the country's Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) at all educational levels, from elementary to higher, would increase due to skill development. When an Indian kid, although having completed formal school, does not enter the workforce, his or her parents often see education as futile. Having a better chance of making a livelihood and leading a respectable life is enough to convince most parents to enrol their children in school.

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